



water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**OPENING ADDRESS BY WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
MINISTER, EDNA MOLEWA, AT THE 4TH MUNICIPAL WATER QUALITY
CONFERENCE, SUN CITY, NORTH WEST PROVINCE,**

08 JULY 2013

Programme Director

Mayors

Councillors

Our partners

Senior officials of our Department and their Counterparts

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed an honour for me to be here today and I am particularly pleased to welcome you all to this important occasion, "THE 4th MUNICIPAL WATER QUALITY CONFERENCE".

Allow me to send my get well wishes to our icon and first democratically elected State President Nelson Mandela, who is currently undergoing treatment in hospital. May the Good Lord extend his hand to him and allow him more time with us. The importance of this occasion to us must be married to the struggles he wedged on behalf of all South Africans to strive for a better life for all in a non-racial, non-sexist country. Let us honour him even more as we celebrate this month as Nelson Mandela Month.

Even as we confer from today, these words must be the cornerstone of our deliberations, understanding that our responsibilities are to liberate our fellow citizens. At his inauguration on the 01 May 1994, he directed us as such and I quote: "Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another and suffer the indignity of being the skunk of the world".

The importance of high quality water for human consumption, and high standards for waste water management in the economic development of our country and sustainable environmental management can never be overemphasized. Over time, we as a country have continued to produce potable water of absolute world standards. Our drinking water has been and continues to be among the top of the ladder worldwide. It is with a great sense of pride that we must maintain such high standards. Those who have travelled abroad would know how even in some first world countries, you would be warned about the quality of water, thus be directed to bottled water instead.

Our department, therefore, plays a critical role in the health of our nation and to economic development. Our work, therefore is critical in making meaningful contribution towards the reduction of poverty and

unemployment. It therefore goes without saying that we must tirelessly continue to adopt relevant, efficient and effective strategies to ensure meaningful contribution by all sector partners in our endeavours to sustainably manage our water resources for the greater good of our people.

*It is indeed my hope and wish that at the end of this Conference your passion in the management of our water resources will be reignited and all of us will go back to our work with a new slogan: **“WATER IS KEY TO HUMAN AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT”***

Programme Director, Ladies and Gentlemen, there’s no doubt that in striving for continuous improvement in water resources management, all of us have critical roles to play for better management to be realised. The success of our endeavours will depend on our ability to work as a collective and face the challenges that face the sector head on together as well.

I therefore want us to move from a common understanding that water resources management is multi-dimensional and as such requires a multi-pronged approach. To that end the Department of Water Affairs seeks to increase its effort, time and again, to fully realise its mandate and we need all of you to do the same. We are partners in this.

We view continuous training of our employees and capacity building of under-capacitated Water Services Authorities as key to achieving the high standards that the Department aims to achieve in both waste water and drinking water quality. To us, training and capacity building of our people is not seen as a cost to the Department but as an investment that has no price tag. We regard the investment that we put in training and capacity building as the basis for a solid foundation for our current initiatives and for future generations. In this regard, it is my belief that a highly skilled workforce is indeed a productive and motivated workforce. Consequently, the department will undertake a process that will evaluate the impact of the support and capacity building initiatives that are rendered by the department.

In the same breath, as a Department we will continue to emphasise the need to implement better water management systems than before. We will continuously emphasise the message that every one of us has an important leadership role to play towards achieving the objectives that we have set for ourselves. Our municipalities will have to take the lead and ownership of our initiatives as they are the sphere of government that is closest to our communities. The delivery of government services happen at that level.

A small reminder. We recently hosted the Climate Change Conference of the Parties 17 (COP 17) hwere at home. We need to remember that the inevitable adverse impact of climate change will therefore have to resonate

in our strategies to better manage our water resources management. The concept of thinking globally and acting locally should be the guiding principle as we strive to serve our people.

Ladies and gentlemen, we need to finalise and implement our enforcement protocol and ensure that there are consequences for Water Services Institutions that do not comply. Failure to comply with the enforcement protocol will be viewed in a very serious light as it does not only compromise water resources for the future generations but also has an immediate and direct negative impact on our efforts to reduce poverty and unemployment.

The department will continue to give Excellence Awards as an incentive to improve performance and aim for higher standards. The use of excellence awards is a common and effective way of acknowledging excellent performance and motivation that is used in both the public and private sector across the world. The increase in the number of institutions that are receiving Blue and Green Drop awards is testimony to the effectiveness of our awards programme.

I am aware that according to our programme for the Conference and as per tradition, we were supposed to release the Green Drop report and the subsequent awards for those who performed well according to our assessment. However, I have been advised by our technical team of

experts that they require more time to finalise the technical assessment of the report and I have granted this extension. Similarly, I have made it clear to them that their process should be wrapped up within the next three months. As soon as that work is done, I will ensure that we release the report.

As our country has hosted world class events such as the FIFA World Cup in 2010, also continue to receive eminent world leaders from our continent and the world at large, there is no doubt that our country has become an important destination for international decision-makers, tourists and investments.

Our membership of the BRICS and the recent visit by the President of the United States of America, Mr Barack Obama, are testimony to the important role that our country continues to play both locally and internationally. We as a sector have a prominent role in the manner in which our country is viewed. We play a critical role to ensure security of supply as well as good quality of that supply.

Locally, a high standard of water management ensures a healthy nation, and a healthy nation is a prerequisite for sustainable economic development of our country.

We need to and must remember our role on the continent as well. We are African first before we are anything else. Therefore our interactions with our colleagues and counterparts in the region and on the continent must never be undermined. It is crucial for us to share our expertise and knowledge with others, as well as to learn from lessons from across our borders.

Remember and maintain our participation as members of SADC, AMCOW and the African Union.

I therefore hope that we will all join hands in doing our best in order to ensure that each one of us plays a leadership role in pushing back the frontiers of poverty and serving our communities. Together we can do more!

I thank you.