



water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**ADDRESS BY WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS MINISTER,
EDNA MOLEWA, AT THE 4TH MUNICIPAL WATER QUALITY
CONFERENCE GALA DINNER, SUN CITY, NORTH WEST PROVINCE,
10 JULY 2013**

Programme Director

Mayors

Councillors

Our partners

Senior officials of our Department and their Counterparts

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am particularly delighted to be present here at the “THE 4th MUNICIPAL WATER QUALITY CONFERENCE” Gala Dinner and to be amidst representatives from the entire water sector. I must admit that I very disappointed not to be with you when the Conference started on Monday and I know I may have disappointed you too. I am,

however, happy that you could start the Conference in my absence and I have been assured that it has been going relatively well.

Your presence in this important gathering for the water sector is a clear indication that indeed you take the importance of high quality water seriously, especially for human consumption. It is for this reason that this Conference has made a huge impact in creating and maintaining high standards for waste water management in the economic development of our country and sustainable environmental management. It has ensured that we, as a country, continue to produce potable water of absolute world standards. It is through efforts such as those that come from this gathering that our drinking water has been and continues to be among the top of the ladder worldwide.

It is, therefore, 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. In our country, we continue to enjoy tap water freely without any fear that it might not be safe.

The Department of Water Affairs, as a leader of this sector, plays a critical role in the health of our nation and to economic development of our country. Our work 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, therefore, pleasing to see that we can use this Conference to determine how meaningful our sector partners can contribute to our programmes and strategies of making our water safe and contribute to the health of our nation.

*It is indeed my hope and wish that since the beginning of this Conference your passion in the management of our water resources has been reignited and by the time it ends 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 a critical role to play for better management to be realised. The successes of our endeavours will depend on our ability to work as a collective and face the challenges that may engulf the sector head on as a stronger collective.

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, our Department 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.

An assessment that we have conducted and international benchmarks suggest that continuous training of our employees and capacity building of under-capacitated Water Services Authorities are key to achieving the high standards that the Department aims to achieve in both waste water and drinking water quality. To this effect, we view training and capacity building of our people not 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.

Ladies and gentlemen, I hope our officials who have been here since the beginning of the Conference have already mentioned to you that 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.

South Africa has an important role 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.

Lastly, I want to talk about an issue that I'm told may have brought disappointment to many of you present here – the issue of the Green Drop Report and the Excellence Awards. As per tradition, we were supposed to release the Green Drop report and subsequently present the awards for those who performed well according to our assessment. I cannot say I am surprised by the reaction that is said to have come from many of the delegates present here because I was also as disappointed as you were, if not even more disappointed. Believe you me, the circumstances around the delay of the report, which affected the Awards, were well beyond my control. Therefore, I understand your reaction and I assure you that the report will be released as soon as we have concluded all of the verification and approval processes including submission to Cabinet. This should not take more than three months. As soon as that work is done, I will ensure that we release the report and have a suitable awards ceremony for the top performers.

I want to assure you that we will continue with the Excellent Awards as an incentive to improve performance and aim for higher standards. We still believe that 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 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.