



water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE HONOURABLE DEPUTY MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS, MS REJOICE MABUDAFHASI, MP, DURING THE LAUNCH OF THE TSHIKALI ADOPT A RIVER PROJECT IN MATSILA VILLAGE, LIMPOPO

10 APRIL 2014

Programme Director;

Honourable Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Mr Andries Nel;

Your Worship the Executive Mayor of Vhembe District Municipality, Cllr Tshitereke Matibe;

Your Worship the Mayor of Makhado Local Municipality, Cllr David Mutavhatsindi;

Councillors;

Khosi Vho Matsila;

CEO of the National Heritage Council, Mr Sonwabile Mancotywa;

Deputy Mission Director of USAID Southern Africa, Mr Stephen Collahan;

Officials from all spheres of government;

Tshikali Adopt a River volunteers;

Members of the community;

Members of the media;

Ladies and gentlemen

I would like to express our most profound appreciation for the warmth hospitality afforded to us since we arrived here in Matsila village.

We are gathered here at a time when the people of South Africa are commemorating Freedom Month under the theme: *“South Africa – A better place to live in”*.

This year’s Freedom Month celebrations happen coincidentally as we mark the milestones achieved since the advent of democracy in 1994. It is indeed a good story to tell about the 20 years of our freedom and democracy.

This month also marks the anniversary of the brutal killings of our freedom struggle heroes, Solomon Kalushi Mahlangu and Chris Thembisile Hani, who fought for the freedom that we are enjoying today.

We remain steadfast that the struggle continues but this time we are embarking on the struggle to conserve and protect our finite water resources, hence we call on communities, other government departments, municipalities, private sector, NGO’s and any other stakeholder to Adopt a River.

In 1994, only 59% of our South African people had access to clean and safe drinking water, and by 2013 we had progressed to a national average of 95.2%. It is indeed a good story to tell.

Ladies and gentlemen, lest we forgot, South Africa is a water stressed country, we are ranked within the 30 driest countries in the world and yet we still pollute our water resources. The little water that we have should be Conserved, Respected, Shared and Enjoyed by present and future generations in our country.

The Department of Water Affairs launched the Adopt A River project as part of the River Health Programme. The Adopt a River project enables voluntary active participation of communities to ensure sustainability of the

water resources.

The municipalities, sector partners, tertiary institutions, schools, private sector, agricultural communities, industries, community leaders and women in the vicinity of targeted rivers are the key role players of the Adopt a River project.

I would like to commend the 150 women residing along the Tshikali River, who have volunteered to adopt this river. The identified waste and challenges in Tshikali River are mainly dumping of solid waste, rubbles, debris blocking the flow of the water and alien vegetation along the river banks.

We acknowledge and recognise your patriotism to guard jealousy against anything that might seek to threaten the health of our natural resources.

On the same breath, I would like to acknowledge the role played by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Resilience in the Limpopo River Basin (RESILIM) for supporting this initiative done by the volunteers by providing training on water quality monitoring, identification of sources of pollution, introduction to waste management and how to handle solid waste and health and safety training.

As we all know that empowering women is one of the smartest investments any country can make towards its development. We believe that sustainable water resources management will be achieved by full participation of women.

An African heroine, an environmentalist and a Nobel Peace Laureate, who lived a selfless life dedicated to the protection of the environment, the late Professor Wangari Mathai, once said,

I quote

"I have seen rivers that were brown with silt become clean-flowing again ... The job is hardly over, but it no longer seems impossible."

Unquote

Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to officially launch the Tshikali Adopt a River project.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Khosi vho Matsila for your wisdom and guidance that you always provide to your community working together with government.

I would also like to thank the Honourable Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Mr Andries Nel for the partnership and support towards the success of the Adopt a River project.

We thank the Vhembe District and Makhado Local Municipalities for the cooperation and commitment towards this project.

Not forgetting our partner the USAID for the continued support.

Lastly we thank the government officials from all spheres of government for the sterling work and commitment towards the success of this event.

I thank you.