



**water & sanitation**

Department:  
Water and Sanitation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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## **SPEECH BY DEPUTY MINISTER MS P TSHWETE ON THE OCCASSION OF AN OFFICIAL WELCOMING CEREMONY OF THE CUBAN WATER SPECIALISTS AT THE SHERATON HOTEL IN PRETORIA ON 15 FEBRUARY 2015**

*Honourable Minister Ms Nomvula Mokonyane*

*Your Excellency Ambassador Carlos Fernandez de Cossio and your delegation*

*The Director-General of Water and Sanitation*

*Heads of the Water Sector Partners*

*Executive Management of the Department*

*Our Cuban Engineers*

*Members of the media*

*Ladies and Gentlemen*

*First of all, I would like to extend a sincere welcome to all of you for joining us today for this official welcoming ceremony of our Cuban Water Specialists who have come to South Africa to partner with us in our efforts to ensure that we improve the delivery of water and related services to the majority of our people. In addition, I would also like to greatly appreciate the political will and leadership that was provided by Minister Mokonyane that ensured the successful arrival of these men and women.*

*I am humbled today by the presence of the Cuban engineers in our country and I have trust that the journey we have been travelling together from the days of our liberation struggle will ultimately lead to the total emancipation of our people and*

*enjoyment of their human rights at all fronts. The struggle for liberation was for all of us to be free in our own land and today we have the responsibility as the two nations, to ensure that basic needs are afforded to our people. Water is such a basic right and our Constitution affirms that.*

*We have achieved democracy in South Africa and our ultimate goal is to eradicate poverty amongst our people and this is a journey we want to travel with all those who have given us courage and hope during our dark moments. Cuba is amongst those countries and it is for this reason that in the water sector, we value the Cuban expertise to address some of the challenges confronting our water resources management systems.*

*We have engaged at length with our Cuban counterparts on issues of water resources management and I must indicate that we are in agreement that together we can do more and for that reason, we will stop at nothing to ensure that we partner with like-minded countries such as Cuba in this mission.*

*Honourable Minister, when you sent me to represent you in Havana, Cuba to accomplish the mission of recruiting the engineers to South Africa, my heart was filled with joy because I knew that it was the right thing to do. I believed that our brothers in the struggle for liberation are once more there for us and this mission will succeed as it has never been the other way around when they pledged to partner with us. Indeed and most importantly so, the Cuban hospitality was extended to me and my delegation and we had wonderful discussions on water issues which left me realising that we share a lot and we can contribute towards the development of both our countries especially in the water sector.*

*The courage and spirit expressed by these men and women I encountered who were almost prepared to board a plane the next day to South Africa, confirmed that we greatly need each other in this war against underdevelopment and poverty of both our countries.*

*Ladies and gentlemen, my experiences in the water sector have grown tremendously since I joined the department and I can proudly say that my visit to*

*Cuba contributed immensely to that. We were taken through the whole water value chain and it was also so inspiring to learn that preserving and maintaining infrastructure is a great tool if we are to succeed in solving our water challenges.*

*My brothers and sisters, you don't know how happy I am that you have finally arrived in South Africa; you have arrived at a time when we are experiencing the hot summer season; however, I am quite certain that you will enjoy your stay and make the most out of it.*

*Your Excellency Ambassador Carlos Fernandez de Cossio, together in this mission with our engineers, the prospects of succeeding look bright and I cannot emphasise this anymore than I believe. We are grateful to your country and we hope the 36 Water Specialists will have a productive and wonderful time in South Africa.*

*I Thank You.*