

**MESSAGE ON THE OCCASSION OF UMNGENI WATER'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY  
BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF WATER AND SANITATION  
MRS PAMELA TSHWETE  
SOUTHERN SUN, ELANGENI MAHARANI HOTEL, DURBAN  
20 FEBRUARY 2015**

**Programme Director, Premier of the Province in absentia, Members of the Executive Council, MEC Mabuyakhulu on behalf of the Premier, Executive Mayor of eThekweni and all other Councillors, Chief Executive of Umngeni Water and other Board Members, Board Members from other Water Entities, Religious Leaders, Leaders of Political Parties, Community Based Organisation, Non - Governmental Organisations, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Good evening, Molweni, Dumelang, Sanibonani, Goeienaand.

Let me take this opportunity and thank the organisers of this programme of activities commemorating Umngeni Water's 40th Anniversary.

I would also like to congratulate you on your 40th Anniversary, I wish that this be the opportunity to embrace all in the water family as we improve the quality of water service to many South Africans out there.

The Department of Water and Sanitation is especially happy with the launch of the book tonight which is a story about the themes and perspectives in the life journey of Umngeni Water. Books generally tell a story and provide us an opportunity to share information and learn from the experiences of others.

In the writing of books, those who were there before us in the history making processes of any phenomenon take time and reflect on their successes and failures which today constitute a body of wealthy experience. It is therefore our responsibility to read and learn from this rich experience in charting our way forward and in our endeavours to employ new strategies and technologies in the management of this entity and the provision of water and sanitation.

Ladies and gentlemen, the planned conference on innovation, water resource management and water demand management is also another exciting event. It is in conferences where we engage, agree, plan and commit on new

approaches on how to conduct business, manage relationships, identify credible game changers and develop new partners .

The planned conference must respond to the State of the Nation Address issues as raised by the President on 18 February 2015. The President has referred to the critical water and sanitation infrastructure development. Here we need to increase the production of potable water and install bulk water infrastructure as well as reticulation networks to all rural communities without constant supply of clean water.

Secondly the President raised the need of an action plan for water supply to areas affected by water shortages. This means the upgrading and refurbishment of water treatment works, repair of non functional boreholes. Our country urgently needs a water plan that will talk to all required resources in the treatment and reticulation of water.

Thirdly the President alluded to water management through War on Leaks programme. In this initiative the provincial municipalities working with their communities, the water entities and training institutions and youth structures must work together to end the high water losses experienced in most municipalities. We need to ensure that water is supplied seamlessly between the municipality and the individual household as it is the case between bulk water suppliers and the municipalities. **For us these three areas constituted the business of that day and everything else which happened on that day is the responsibility of Parliament to deal with.**

The four decades of existence we are celebrating today of Umngeni Water came at a huge price which our fore bearers had to pay in the developmental stages of this entity that has since grown into this world class facility whose services are enjoyed across the spectrum of our society.

This entity began with a mere view to consolidate and centralise the provision of water under the water boards across the country. This function was at the time limited to very few water boards and there was not much experience out there in those days.

The establishment of Umngeni Water, was a new course in the water management services and those in charge were expected to go with so much accuracy and precision.

There was very limited room for technical inaccuracies, administrative shortcomings and faulting of processes through unauthorised consumption and unbilled consumption. Resources were not adequately allocated as required, there were different views between the water sector authorities and those in former government administration. The inferior government policies of the time prevailed over progressive views of the water and sanitation planners.

There was so much opposition to some envisioned rollout plans especially those targeting the rural poor and the black communities. The role and function of this new entity was not known to others and there were so many questions that remained unanswered.

It was through hard work that Umngeni Water gained respect and correct positioning in the supply and delivery of bulk water to municipalities. Today we can safely say their record is known by many throughout the country. They have a foot print in most municipalities across the provincial boundaries. They have touched and improved many lives both in the urban and rural areas. **I am sure now the balance sheet also looks good.**

*These planned commemoration events are in keeping with a number of international and regional conferences and events held in the past and in the recent future to look closely in the provision of water and sanitation.*

*These conferences represent many world platforms organised to deliberate in the water and sanitation related matters. In these sessions, it was vitally important to be informed of what the consumers of water want, what they can contribute, how they will participate in decision making?*

*Participants also looked into what types and levels of service to be rendered, location of facilities and operation and maintenance procedures? It will only be this level of participation and engagements can efforts to provide water and manage sanitation can be truly effective and sustainable.*

*Subsequent to the platforms our own government has further noted that, sustainable management of water resources and sanitation provides great benefits to the society and contributes to the economic development of the country as whole. Thus, it is critical, first, to continuously relook in our methods of provision and supply through involvement of all stakeholders in water resource management and sanitation*

*policies and to ensure that the specific needs and concerns of all social groups are taken into account.*

Ladies and Gentlemen in the supply of water and management of sanitation the challenges of today have now assumed a different posture from those of forty years ago. We are now confronted by the following:

**Vandalism of Infrastructure.**  
**Unauthorised Connections.**  
**Ageing Infrastructure.**  
**Lack of Reticulation.**  
**Lack of Maintenance Plans.**  
**Shortage of skilled engineers.**

Whilst eradicating the apartheid legacy we should also address these challenges facing us today. We should workout plans and mechanisms to incentivise those communities that are saving water.

We also need to continue to encourage and build strong relations with Local Government, Human Settlements and the beneficiary communities. Community participation must be encouraged through local steering communities that monitor the water situation in each locality.

In order to sustain our current efforts to provide water and manage sanitation, we need to buy the skill that we do not have to manage our facilities. However we will also continue to train community technicians and artisans to provide maintenance services against water leaks.

Ladies and gentlemen we will only succeed when we work together in changing the lives in South Africa. Whilst working hard enjoy all the planned events during this period of commemoration.

Have to yourselves interesting and challenging times. Let me once again wish you all the best and many more successful years.

I thank you.