



**water & sanitation**

Department:  
Water and Sanitation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**H.E. PRESIDENT JACOB ZUMA'S STATEMENT TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS DURING THE SECOND MEETING OF THE HIGH-  
LEVEL PANEL ON WATER (HLPW) DURING THE 71<sup>ST</sup> SESSION OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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**New York, 21 September 2016**

Mr Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the United Nations,

Jim Yong Kim, President of the World Bank,

Co-chairs of the High-Level panel on Water,

Excellencies,

Panel Members of the High-Level Panel on Water,

Sherpas and Advisors present, and

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Benjamin Franklin once said "When the well is dry, we learn the worth of water." South Africa is the 30th driest country in the world and we are currently experiencing one of the toughest droughts in our history. However water remains undeniably a critical element to sustainable socio-economic development and the

eradication of poverty. **Water and sanitation** problems have reached a boiling point globally.

We are here today to reconfirm our collective political resolve, at the highest level, to achieve the SDGs, which will go a long way in saving lives and restoring the dignity of the global citizens. It is therefore our submission that we have but this one single opportunity to change the narrative of water into one that pursues a positive economic and social developmental path in a sustainable and equitable manner for all of the humanity and the world. This opportunity is presented by the Agenda 2030.

The recent launch of the decade “Water for Sustainable Development” in Dushanbe that culminated in a Call for Action to “Ensure that No One is left behind in Access to Water and Sanitation” was an important achievement to continue the world community’s efforts in addressing water related issues and towards the implementation of the 2030 Development Agenda as well as the integration thereof with the 2063 African Union Agenda. South Africa will benefit from participation by developing our own roadmap for achieving the targets.

Chairperson, South Africa thus aligns it with the interventions and the vision set out by this distinguished High level Panel on Water (HLPW). I can safely say Africa will benefit from interventions of this panel. Africa is a wealthy continent, and in this era of the SDGs it will attract more investments which will offer many opportunities for profitable investment in a range of sectors. It is our hope therefore that it will significantly improve the lives for the majority of Africans.

My country is honoured to be a member of this Panel and fully associates with the Joint Statement released on the occasion of the launch of the Panel on 21 April 2016.

This Panel adopted a Plan of Action that will assist countries to mobilize a broad-based and inclusive action towards the achievement of SDG6 and endeavor to ensure a human rights-based perspective in doing so. This panel will further publicly and politically encourage the accomplishment of this goal. As a country we are happy that our National Development Plan (Vision 2030) aligns with Agenda 2030, which will allow better planning and implementation.

Mr Chairman, Water and Sanitation in South Africa is characterised by both achievements and challenges. South Africa also has a strong water industry with a track record of innovation. However, we still have more work to do on sanitation. Two distinctive features of the South African water sector are the policy of free basic water and the existence of water boards, which are bulk water supply agencies that operate pipelines and sell water from reservoirs to municipalities.

Water is arguably the world's most precious resource, fuelling all life. It is an essential ingredient for growth, businesses, communities, and economies. Increasingly, however governments and companies alike are questioning traditional approaches to solving the tension between development and natural resource protection.

Mr Chairman South Africa would like to applaud the draft action plan for prioritising issues that are core to our success in the water and sanitation sector that include:

- Resilient economies and societies & Disaster risk reduction
- Human settlements.

This will assist us to use some of our proposed models like the Urban Water Alliance to mobilise public and private effort including resources, knowledge, and expertise to assist cities with their smart design plans for resilient water **(re)use** systems for urban areas and bridge the access gap to water and sanitation, particularly in often under-invested second-tier cities and small towns. This will also be a bid contributor to water security.

Greater focus should be on responsible investment, underpinned by principles of transparency and accountability, so that the country can achieve the transformative growth it needs.

My Country stands ready to fully implement our fair share of the work on the road towards realising this global effort.

I thank you for your efforts on behalf of the rainbow nation of South Africa.

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