



**water & sanitation**

Department:  
Water and Sanitation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**PARTICIPATION BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF WATER AND  
SANITATION**

**HON. PAMELA TSHWETE**

**AT THE HIGH-LEVEL EVENT ON SDG 6**

**TOPIC: "WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?" KEY QUESTION 1: HOW DO WE CONSOLIDATE  
GLOBAL SUPPORT FOR SDG6 TARGETS?"**

**Co-Conveners:** Germany, the Netherlands, Singapore, and South Africa

**Date:** 16 July 2018

**Time:** 15:00 – 16:30

**Venue:** Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations, 871 United Nations  
Plaza, New York

Esteemed Moderator

Ministers and Vice Ministers present,

Excellences, Heads of delegations

Fellow Panellists

Ladies and Gentleman

Moderator, at the onset, South Africa would like to convey its sincere appreciation for this partnership that we are part of. This platform is convened to allow engagements on this critical topic of water. As I start, I have to say that the first answer to the question that we seek to address, **“Where do we go from here” requires our honest reflection on where do we come from, and how did we arrive here.**

**I am saying this because, shifting our priorities from economic growth to sustainable development is imperative and cannot happen without political goodwill.** It is my view that we first need to acknowledge that we come from a fragmented way of dealing with water, and that we need to consolidate our efforts, create partnerships and integrate global strategies if we are to see our way through.

Most of the world’s water problems emanate from the growing demand of competing priorities and users. Other key elements relate to the **lack of implementation of the Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM), and the level of water stress** that continue to persist at a global

level. This plays a major role in **threatening the achievement of the 2030 Agenda that** aims to transform our world for a better tomorrow.

This is why we say, leaders need to act NOW to ensure that water becomes an enabler rather than a major barrier to sustainable development and growth. Moderator, President Ramaphosa of South Africa recently said, “We need to move away from being ***“Think Tanks to being Action Tanks”***,”

I am quite convinced that many in this room will agree with that. I can refer to the recommendations that came from many Panels that we all know, including the recent, High Level Panel on Water (HLPW), and make a critical assessment if all the brilliant work that came out of that, was used to take the water sector and the world forward. **Clearly the response might be NO, which will then tell us that we can continue thinking and analysing the water situation, BUT key to all is ACTION, ACTION, ACTION**, by leaders and all.

It is therefore our submission as South Africa, that we must start implementing all the **good findings, recommendations and policies** that are available currently to make societies more resilient, sustainable and inclusive. **Should the current “business as usual” continue with a fragmented approach that persists globally, my answer to the question,**

**where do we go from here, would be, we are surely destined for disaster.**

As a country, we learnt our lessons, through the recent situation in Cape Town that taught us that water crisis is not merely a matter of rainfall but goes beyond that. The understanding of disasters like droughts involves seeing the issue from many different perspectives not only limited to socio economic issues but also **politics. This is further made worse by profound social inequalities**, reflected in the stark contrasts on how poor and wealthy people access water daily and the disconnects that stem from these fragmented realities.

Population growth and a record drought, made by climate change, sparked one of the world's most dramatic urban water crisis, in South Africa's second most popular city Cape Town. **Can you imagine a day when the last drop of water is used?**

The South African government announced "Day Zero" – when dam levels threatened drying up, which would have left us with no option but turn off the taps and make use of communal water collection points, a situation never thought of in this era. This notion prompted water-stockpiling, panic, and caused a drop in tourism bookings. The situation nearly raised the spectre of civil unrest. Farmers in the drought stricken

areas had to abandon as much as a quarter of their crops, and tens of thousands of agricultural jobs were to be lost in the fray.

Fortunately, for South Africa good winter rainfalls were received for the first time in months, resulting in Western Cape dam levels reaching 45%, which is 30% better than last year at the same time.

For the first time in South Africa and more importantly at a local scale, water emerged as a lens through which to view the complex dynamics of politics, governance, and access to basic services in most unequal societies.

Moderator, it is concerning to note from the report that, the world is not on track to achieve Agenda 2030's water-related goals and targets. If we, at the global level would like to honour our commitment to the 2030 Agenda, we need to considerably increase our combined efforts to achieve these goals on an international scale and make use of mechanisms that can guide and motivate all Member States.

As we are all aware, to provide Member States with the global status on the progress on SDG 6, UN-Water has produced the SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2018 on Water and Sanitation. The report might not cover all of us satisfactorily, but the findings are worth considering.

The report provides the inter-linkages between SDG 6 and the other targets and indicators and the key elements to consider towards consolidation of the global water agenda. One of those is that targets

must be localized and adapted to the national context. Furthermore effective water management needs to be embedded on more and better data. Good governance and collective participation in decision-making is essential to unlocking finance for water. Inequalities must be eliminated, and water and sanitation requires new water management strategy to be explored. These are some of the true reflections on the global picture on water.

Moderator, my key submission to this session is that must go back, reflect on what we have at hand, and start implementing some of the good work and recommendations thereof. Lastly, it is our submission that the water issue remains high on the global agenda, as we cannot afford not to achieve this goal in particular, or leave anyone behind.

I thank you.