

**Opening Address by David Mahlobo MP,
Deputy Minister of Water and Sanitation of Republic of South Africa
THE 6TH FORUM OF THE PARTIES OF THE ORANGE SENQU RIVER
COMMISSION MINISTERIAL
SAFARI COURT HOTEL, WINDHOEK
5 DECEMBER 2019**

Programme Director – Cde. Joseph Haita

HE Cde. Alpheus G. !Naruseb MP-Minister of Agriculture, Water and Forestry
of the Republic of Namibia;

HE Kefentse Mzwinila MP- Minister of Land Management, Water and
Sanitation Services of the Republic of Botswana,;

HE Samonyane Ntsekele MP- Minister of Water of the Kingdom of Lesotho,

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioner - Cde. Whitehead;

Representative of the SADC Water Division;

UNDP – Dr. Odusola

CRIDF – Dr. Reeve

Senior Officials present;

ORASECOM Commissioners;

ORASECOM Executive Secretary, Mr Lenka Thamae;

Strategic International Cooperating Partners;

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Receive our warm and revolutionary greetings on behalf of HE President Cyril Ramaphosa, our Government and the people of South Africa. I would like to take this opportunity to convey our gratitude and thank the opportunity afforded to us as Government, representing the people our country to interact with you.
2. Allow me to express our profound appreciation for the gracious hospitality accorded to my delegation by the Republic of Namibia since arrival.
3. Once again let me reiterate HE President Ramaphosa congratulations to the people of Namibia and Botswana for their respective fair, peaceful and democratic elections held recently. In the same breath, let me also congratulate President Dr. Geingob and Dr. Masisi on their new mandate and confidence bestowed by their electorates respectively. Coupling this with the recent electoral activities of Mozambique and South Africa, it's a clear demonstration that SADC is a model of democracy.
4. The Southern African Development Community's (SADC) water and energy sectors are under increasing pressure due to population growth, urbanization and economic development. In addition, climate change is negatively

impacting on water resources and energy generation. With a significant proportion of SADC's population still living in poverty, regional development and integration are underpinned on water and energy security.

5. The global importance of water cannot be overstated; it is crucial for all life and important for human socio-economic wellbeing; hence its value is seen from the context as an environmental, social and economic good. The well-being of human society through the ages has been dependent on secure sources of water; conversely, its absence has seen the demise of often well-established societies.
6. Equally, where different societies depended on water from a common source, this would result in competition when water was limited or in times of scarcity, which could escalate into conflicts among the competing parties. However, there are also many recorded instances of cooperation between competing societies for common water resources with little evidence of armed conflict for water itself, including in our continent-Africa.
7. The World Economic Forum has tabled the global risk of water as a generally limiting resource in terms of its availability for social and economic well-being, a situation that continues to deteriorate because of the ever-increasing demands of modern society (population growth, urbanization and technology changes), further exacerbated by climate changes.

The concomitant potential for conflict for water where its availability is limited therefore cannot be understated nor underestimated.

8. We are meeting at a time when a recurring drought, most likely as a result of Climate Change, is stressing large sections of Southern Africa. The fact that SADC countries share similar climate, hydrological and water resources governance provides a strong case to create a water platform to support regional planning. This provides us with an opportunity to share ideas on how we can collectively manage the situation for the benefit of our people in the entire Orange River Basin. Our slogan of the Orange Senqu is “One River and Four Nations”. As four nations, we are meeting on the eve of the 20th anniversary of our existence as a Commission. A milestone worth celebrating. We have to speedily implement the following:

- Climate mitigation measures,
- Technology – 4th Industrial Revolution,
- Water conservation and water demand management,
- Involvement of communities,
- Water re-use,
- Desalination and
- Water quality management

9. “One River Four Nations”, our ONE AND ONLY COMMON RIVER, the Orange Senqu River is a finite resource. In this

regard, if not well developed, managed sustainably, we will deprive the future generations of a precious source of life for the four nations. Our collective management of the common water resources will avert a detrimental situation of depleting this finite resource. Let us re-energize ourselves as we continue to jointly develop and manage the resource and continue to jealously guard our status as one of the best river basin in the world.

10. The financial state of the organisation remains a key for the implementation of the Strategic Action Programme of the basin. In this regard, as a country we remain committed in supporting this Programme of the Orange Senqu as it is key to judicious management of the system, which is critical for our water resilience.
11. Congratulations to ORASECOM for the launch of the Strategic Action Plan funded by the Global Environmental Facility, launched by Minister !Naruseb.
12. In order to stimulate economic growth, alleviate poverty and reduce high unemployment rates, the water–energy -food nexus needs to be championed by all SADC member states at technical and policy levels. The shared nature of water and energy resources requires for more trans boundary water–energy -food nexus studies to be done. These would be more beneficial to regional efforts on integration and policy formulation.

13. We further believe that this gathering will also help greatly in improving our cooperation and further intensify relations of countries in the SADC region.
14. Our cooperation of nearly twenty years is a living proof of the benefits of cooperation between nations for common water resources with little evidence of armed conflict for water itself, including in our continent-Africa. And the Orange Senqu River Commission is a prime example of such cooperation.
15. Honorable Ministers and Delegate today marks 6 years since our beloved struggle icon and first President of a democratic South Africa, HE President Nelson Mandela ceased to breathe on the 5th December 2013. His words are relevant for our engagement today and remain timeless when he said *“I dream of the realization of the unity of Africa, whereby its leaders combine in their efforts to solve problems of this continent. I dream of vast deserts of our forests, of our entire great wilderness.”* He further said *“I dream of an Africa which is at peace with itself.”*
16. It is indeed in our hands to ensure that the dreams of our forebears are realized for the sake of the children of our region and beautiful continent.
17. God bless Africa her sons and daughters.
18. I thank you. *Puuuulaaaa!*