



**water & sanitation**

Department:  
Water and Sanitation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF  
WATER AND SANITATION**

**HON. M. D. MAHLOBO, M.P.**

**ON OCCASION OF THE INAUGURAL NATIONAL  
MUNICIPAL WATER SERVICES SCIENTIFIC FORUM**

**ATHLONE, CAPE TOWN**

**19 SEPTEMBER 2019**

***“INSPIRING SERVICE DELIVERY THROUGH SCIENTIFIC  
THOUGHT LEADERSHIP”***

Program Director,

MMC, Alderman Limberg

All Councillors present

South African Local Government Association

CEO of Water Research Commission, Mr Dhesigen Naidoo

Fellow Speakers, Scientists, Professors and Doctors

Representatives of Higher Learning and Research Institutions

Municipal officials

Members of the Media

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Afternoon

1. I wish to start by congratulating the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) in collaboration with the City of Cape Town for facilitating the inaugural National Municipal Water Services Scientific Forum.
2. It is occasions such as this, which champion and pioneer the infusion of scientific studies in water resource management that inspire and give indication that indeed we are headed towards the right direction as far as the water sector is concerned.
3. Last Thursday I had the pleasure of being invited to the 4<sup>th</sup> Biennial Symposium hosted by the Water Research Commission. The symposium brought together

brilliant young minds under one roof with innovative ideas that offer water and sanitation solutions through the use of science and technology.

4. It is very encouraging to see all these great minds gathered here in this forum to provide strategic direction and leadership to the country's municipal scientific community in order to develop intuitive scientific leaders.
5. I am looking forward to the role of this forum in serving as a catalytic platform for knowledge sharing of scientific challenges, cutting edge research and development and best practices in the management of water and effluent quality amongst others.
6. We wish to encourage SALGA to continue with collaborating with the rest of the Municipalities so that we can address the water resource challenges in all corners of South Africa.
7. Our municipalities need to work together with the Department of Water and Sanitation together with the Water Entities to ensure efficient government supply systems. The Water Entities have made significant contribution in the bulk infrastructure development and water treatment. We are proud of their contribution and the institutional capability built over the years. The Department has a responsibility to collaborate with and support all these local agencies.
8. We are astute to the challenges that remain. Making sure that water is available at the right quantity, in the right quality, at the right place and at the right time remains essential to our health and economic growth. As populations grow so will the demand for water, not only for our people but also for our agriculture and our industries. Existing infrastructure needs to be maintained, expanded, and diversified. At the same time, climate change is impacting on our available resources as we have already seen in South Africa with recent, severe droughts affecting several parts of the country. In this environment new and innovative solutions are required.

9. Research, development and innovation have a significant role to play in improving the management of our water resources.
10. Just as I mentioned at the WRC Symposium, this event has served as an acknowledgement of the collaboration and cooperation that is required between all actors in the water value chain towards collective impact. South Africa is privileged to have a highly productive, albeit small, water science community.
11. In fact, South Africa is a top 20 producer of new knowledge in the water domain globally. We are inspired by the fact that the country has produced several new solutions, inventions and technologies that have the potential to not only solve South Africa's problems but may also have further applicability globally.
12. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of July, during the budget and policy statement in the National Assembly, I mentioned that the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4thIR) is already part of the water business and that our planning already uses complex hydrological models, with the ability to predict whether our systems will have enough water as far as six years into the future.
13. I mentioned that the information technological revolution can do much more for water management and we have to monitor water use and water pollution more intensively. But there is a limit to what can be achieved by inspectors on the ground. We must be innovative.
14. The Department has already used satellite images to plot agricultural water use, for licencing purposes. We can do much more with this technology to monitor and manage water quality in our rivers, wetlands and dams.
15. On the very same day, the Minister of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation committed that the Department would embark on an intensive campaign to digitise all its stock holdings, data and documentation. For Water and Sanitation this means all dams, reticulation networks, treatment and recycling plants and water licences.
16. This commitment also means that the Department will be ready with their database to join the designs of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the use of

Blockchain technology. Digitised data and its manipulation are base loads for the development of that revolution.

17. We will work closely with the Municipal Infrastructure Support Agent (MISA) and the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) on all the Municipal Water Grants related projects. In our infrastructure designs we shall ensure fit for purpose whilst ensuring maximum use of locally produced components and equipment. Water Infrastructure grants cannot and should not be diverted!

18. It is encouraging to witness the new era that is being ushered in by communities that no longer are passive recipients of scientific research, but active participants in the research process.

19. I am happy to inform that last week I met with the newly formed Anti-Pollution Task Team that will conduct a nation-wide assessment of the status of water quality. The architecture of an accessible real-time information system to monitor water quality, including the re-launch of the Green and Blue Drop reports. The development of a 5-year National Water Quality Strategy using the best scientific knowledge, innovation and capacity building mechanisms as well as revisit of the governance arrangements for water quality will follow.

20. It is my hope that the activities of this forum will contribute significantly to building a more sustainable water future, and influence the whole local government to become part of this vision.

I thank you.