



**MINISTER
WATER AND SANITATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF WATER AND SANITATION
MRS DIKELEDI MAGADZI AT THE OCCASION OF 7TH ANNUAL
WATER STEWARDSHIP ORGANIZED BY THE STRATEGIC WATER
PARTNERS NETWORK (SWPN)**

Date: TUESDAY, 23 November 2021

Your Excellency, Mr Tobias Elling Rehfeld, Ambassador of Denmark to South Africa

Dr Faith Lawrence, Country Coordinator of Natures South Africa

Ms Connie Motau from Nestle and Co-Chair of the SWPN

Mr Nick Tandi , from the World Bank and the 2030 Water Resource Group

Ms Thembisile Mkhize, Programme Manager of the SWPN

Representatives of the Private sector Partners

Representatives of the Civil Society organizations

Representatives of the Public Sector Organizations

Management committee of the SWPN

Officials from the Department of Water and Sanitation

Ladies and Gentlemen

All protocols observed

Your Excellency, Ambassador Tobias Elling Rehfeld, today is an important day for the water and sanitation sector. We have proven beyond reasonable doubt that as a

family, not even COVID-19 could stop us from convening the 7th Annual water stewardship event. COVID-19 has not only posed a challenge to us as government to re-look at our ways of conducting the business of providing services to our citizens, but it has also taught us to be creative and think beyond our fancy offices, boardrooms and conference centres. That is why the Water Stewardship is held virtually for the 2nd (second) year in a row without the luxuries of physical conference facilities.

The theme of the 7th Annual Water Stewardship event, “**Water Stewardship in Action: A journey to economic recovery**”, could not have come at a better time than today. COVID-19 caught us off guard which resulted in low response to the COVID-19 pandemic, weak institutional preparedness, less innovation and technological capacity, poor water system governance and poor resilience.

The pandemic has also **exposed inequalities and the level of poverty** affecting most South Africans. Access to running water is still a pipe dream to most of our rural communities who still share water with animals. This pandemic has taught all of us the importance of access to safe and reliable water, and the responsibility we have as private, public and civil society organizations, to learn from our experience over the past nineteen (19) months to innovate and build stronger systems to ensure access to water for all our people.

I am glad to be part of this unique partnership platform which brings together private, public and civil society organisation to support the promotion of water stewardship best practice, promote partnerships that addresses shared risks associated with the water value chain and support the Department of Water and Sanitation with the integration of water stewardship principles in its policy and planning processes. This collaboration will never go unnoticed both domestically and internationally.

Collaboration and partnerships between private, public and civil society organisations is key towards bringing local and international investors to come and invest in our water infrastructure as part of the water sector economic recovery. Such investments will support small, medium and micro enterprise, enable economic growth, reduce inequalities and create employment.

The Water Stewardship approach fits well into the Government's integrated governance to be implemented through the District Development Model. Through the District Development Model, all three spheres of government coordinate and integrate development plans and budgets and mobilize the capacity and resources of government and civil society, including business, labour and community, in pursuit of inclusive growth and job creation. The District Development Model also aims to improve the coherence and impact of government service delivery with focus on 44 (Forty four) Districts and eight (8) Metros around the country as development spaces that can be used as centres of service delivery and economic development, including job creation. Water stewardship will therefore remain a key factor to the implementation of the District Development Model.

Ladies and Gentlemen, bringing local and international investments alone will not solve all the water and sanitation challenges we have as a country. We require strong water governance that could stand the test of time. We require strong systems and institutions to drive effective water resources management and expand access to water and sanitation services. We require good water governance that would allow sustainable good quality water supply that, in turn, would give us an upper hand in case of any future pandemic. In the application of good governance, we must be

accountable, transparent, efficient, effective, responsive and fairly apply all legal prescripts related to water and sanitation.

As part of improving Water Governance, we must support integrated water resources management (IWRM) and create an enabling environment so that water resources can be used sustainably and equitably. We must also ensure that our water services infrastructure is climate-proof to cope with storms, floods and droughts. Water governance will be effective if all the stakeholders are involved in decision making. The sectors causing the most impact and the people most impacted must be part of the decision-making process. We must also strengthen research, learning and innovation to improve water governance.

Ladies and gentlemen, we appreciate the role that is played by our farmers and the agricultural sector in ensuring food security for our country and the region. We are all aware that the agricultural sector uses the largest portion of both our underground and surface water, hence the greater need for water stewardship. Water stewardship in the agricultural sector must ensure the protection of farming operations from water related risks and demonstrate social responsibility by minimizing negative impacts of farming operations on other water users and the natural environment. In simple terms, we expect responsible use of farming inputs, including fertilizer, herbicides, and pesticides, so that they are maximally effective, with few negative side effects to other water users.

Ladies and Gentlemen, you may be aware that at the United Nations (UN) level, the CEO Water Mandate was established to mobilize a critical mass of business leaders to address global water challenges through corporate water stewardship in partnership with the United Nations, governments, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders. To date, over 200 (two hundred) corporates are members of the CEO

Water Mandate and that some of the corporates we have in South Africa are members of this important global platform.

Water Stewardship is everyone's business. I therefore call upon all corporates that are still not members of the Strategic Water Partners Network to sign up and play their part on the sustainable and responsible use of our precious resource. To those that are members of the platform, let us do more for the SWPN by pledging more financial, human and technical support to keep the fire burning. I also appeal to civil society organizations, different communities and other stakeholders to play their part in understanding the economic and social value of water, including linkages with sustainability and economic security. Through the promotion of community led good governance practice, our communities can be well equipped and informed on how to both engage with government and private sector stakeholders as well as hold them to account for specific actions linked to water conservation and demand management.

Let us continue to work together and play our role in ensuring sustainable management of our water resource for the current and future generations. In our two days of engagement, let us be honest and build on our strength, improve on our weaknesses and grab the available opportunities towards economic recovery of the sector. Having said that Your Excellency, I hereby declare the 7th Water Stewardship Event Officially Open.

Thank you