



KEYNOTE ADDRESS FROM DEPUTY MINISTER DIKELEDI MAGADZI, On the Occasion of World River Day Symposium Held on 27 September in Western Cape

Programme Director

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Western Cape senior officials

Members of media

Ladies and gentlemen

My greetings on this momentous occasion. It is my honor to address such a diverse audience consisting of political leaders, academics who are experts in water, managers, colleagues, and media, you are all attracted by the love of rivers water and over above the love for your country.

We are all here today to confirm that a river is not a source of conflict, but a symbol of partnership, unity, and hope.

I would like to start my keynote delivery by posing this question to all of you **What legacy are we going to leave to our generations to come if we neglect the environment?**

There is a saying that goes “**While the sands of time are running out, it is not too late to save our planet**” This is exactly the mindset which we need to plough on our minds as we observe this special day.

About the World Rivers Day

Program director a well Internationally renowned river activist, Mark Angelo addressed the United Nations in 2005 during its Water for Life campaign, the event was aimed to raise awareness about vulnerable water supplies throughout the world. In response to

Angelo's proposal, the UN established World Rivers Day, to be annually celebrated on the 4th Sunday of every September.

The theme for 2022 world river day is "The importance of Rivers to Biodiversity."

The absolute need for rivers to keep any civilization going is the focus of this year's theme. Not only human, but rivers keep a wide range of animals and plant a living breathing part of our ecosystem.

World Rivers Day is a celebration of the world's waterways. It highlights the many values of our rivers, strives to increase public awareness, and encourages the improved stewardship of all rivers around the world. Rivers in virtually every country face an array of threats, and only through community active involvement we can ensure their health in the years ahead.

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICIES IMPERATIVES

There are various policies and legislations that support our program, and they include:

Constitution of the Republic

Section 24 of the Constitution provides that everyone has the right to a healthy environment, and the right to have the environment protected from pollution and ecological degradation, which promotes conservation and secures ecologically sustainable development.

2030 Agenda for sustainable development

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Target 6.6 seeks to halt the degradation and destruction of these ecosystems, and to assist the recovery of those already degraded. The target includes water-related ecosystems such as vegetated wetlands, rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and groundwater, as well as those occurring in mountains and forests, which play a special role in storing freshwater and maintaining water quality. Ultimately, it is water-related ecosystems that provide water services to society.

Target 6.B calls for support and strengthening the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management.

National Water Act, 1998

One of the main objects of this Act is:

- To provide right of access to basic water supply and the right to basic sanitation necessary to secure sufficient water and an environment not harmful to human health or well-being.

National Development Plan 2030

- According to NDP 2030 effective management of water and the services derived from it will support strong economy and healthy environment.
- Natural water resources will be protected to prevent excessive extraction and pollution.

TRANSFORMATION

Program director one of the tasks that the minister has given to me is to overlook issues of transformation in the department. I have learned that amongst us we have the following organisations, Mosselbank River Conservation Team and Regenerative Neighbourhood Development Agency who are involved in the conservation and river management of the Mosselbank River passing through Fisantekraal and Klipheuwel Informal Settlements. It is important program that director that we need to provide the necessary support to institution so that they able to play a meaningful role within the sector. I have noticed that these organisations are experiencing many challenges that include financial support.

Sadly, program director, we are observing this day when the health of our rivers is threatened by excessive use of water and pollution. Remember when we pollute the river in one place. we affect the condition of the river for a long distance downstream. A river performs functions such as the ability to clean itself best when it is healthy.

BENEFIT OF RIVER PROTECTION

It goes without saying program director that clean water is essential for humans and nature to survive. Rivers are precious sources of fresh drinking water for people across the world and when rivers are so badly polluted by industry or unevenly distributed by poor water management practices, it can be a case of life-or-death. This unfortunately happens across the world.

Protecting our rivers against pollution program director will provide communities with a host of benefits including clean water, quality of life, and stronger local economies. River recreation connects people with their local rivers and inspires people to further protect their hometown rivers.

Healthy rivers are economic drivers that benefit communities, businesses, and quality of life.

RIVERS PROTECT NATURE AND COMMUNITIES

Rivers are home to countless species of fish, birds and other animals that live in and along rivers and depend on them for their food. Rivers also connect ecosystems to one other and affect landscapes far beyond the apparent surface of the water. For example, wetlands provide breeding areas for many migratory birds, and rivers provide corridors for wildlife to move within and migrate.

Protected rivers are also critical infrastructure for human communities. They are important sources of drinking water and make riverside communities more resilient to flood risks. Protected watersheds and riverside lands provide clean, dependable water to local communities by filtering nutrients and sediments, moderating water temperatures, and reducing flood risks. In the process, riparian lands significantly reduce the need for costly municipal water supply filtration and treatment facilities.

RIVERS PROMOTE HEALTHY LIVING

Time spent outside recreating in open spaces and along rivers are an important factor in a healthy life. Unfortunately, many communities do not have recreation areas available close to their homes. Communities across the country face serious health and social issues including obesity, diabetes, and depression, among others, and a sedentary lifestyle is seen as a major contributor towards the many different health and social issues we face. Improving access to outdoor recreation in and along rivers is a great opportunity to improve healthy choices and connect communities with local treasures. Protected rivers improve water quality, providing a safe place to recreation, and clean sources of drinking water.

By improving safe access to local rivers, communities can experience the benefits of recreation in their own backyard.

RIVERS IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE

Program Director Communities that have clean river can promote diverse amenities attract visitors and can become river town destinations, improving culture, and promoting local economies. River recreation helps people discover their rivers and improve quality of life for communities. Recreation connects rural and urban communities to important places like parks and forests. As people spend more time exploring their rivers and riverside parks and lands, support for protecting these special places increases, creating a legacy that honours the past, enriches the present, and provides a precious gift to future generations.

Rivers have the power to connect us to our history by preserving important places and providing access to them. Rivers can enhance a sense of community identity and pride.

RIVERS ENHANCE LOCAL ECONOMIES

Program Director keeping our rivers clean can provides real opportunities for economic renewal and growth. Increased tourism, and recreation-related spending on items such as equipment, boats, and bicycles are just a few of the ways that river recreation and protected riverside land positively impact economies.

Therefore, active, and responsible citizenry is encouraged across spectrum where people from all walks of life become participants in promoting healthy rivers. The relationship between communities and healthy rivers can never be overstated, as it is

community members who must take care of our rivers to ensure that they are not filtered with filthy litter.

INTERVENTION OF DWS

Therefore, active, and responsible citizenry is encouraged across spectrum where people from all walks of life become participants in promoting healthy rivers. The relationship between communities and healthy rivers can never be overstated, as it is community members who must take care of our rivers to ensure that they are not filtered with filthy litter.

Our department has set aside key interventions to ensure healthy river eco-systems, and this include:

1. The department has formally established an Anti-Pollution Task Team (APTT) on 15 November 2019 and has 22 members from various sections within Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) (Water Quality Management (WQM) role players) and Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Environment (DFFE).
2. A compliance and enforcement monitoring programme are in place to bring to justice those who commit environmental crimes. We cannot avoid imposing huge fines on polluters despite our dislike of profiting from environmental crimes. Blue Scorpions an inspectorate wing of our department working with Green Scorpions from Environmental Affairs have shown zero tolerance for such crimes, despite their capacity.
3. Our monitoring and rehabilitation of river systems across the country is also heavily based on science and we will continue to use research and innovation to improve river health.
4. While science and enforcement are key mitigation measures to protect our rivers. The importance of social compact with our communities cannot be overstated. We envision communities that place an emphasis on taking care of the environment on a voluntary basis. It is the right thing to do, not because the community fears prosecution.

As I am about to conclude my speech, I wish to leave you with **three (3) messages**

- Pollution of rivers must come to stop without a delay
- Rehabilitation of the rivers is key to improve river health
- Unlawful activities including waste dumping and diversion of rivers must be reported to law enforcement agencies.

Lastly, I wish to congratulate all of you today for making efforts in preserving environment. This is a step to right direction. The challenges that have been outlined calls for a greater need for the different sectors to work together.

We all need to undertake a collaborative effort and actively engage communities as well as promoting and creating on-going awareness and education on protecting our water resources.

Let's Unite and defend the integrity of our rivers, and I can count on all of you to do just that.

“Water is Life, Sanitation is Dignity

I thank you