



KEYNOTE ADDRESS FOR THE MINISTER OF WATER AND SANITATION, MR SENZO MCHUNU ON THE LAUNCH OF CMAs AT THE WATER INSTITUTE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA CONFERENCE AT THE DURBAN ICC, ON 12 JUNE 2024

Chairpersons of CMAs,
Water Sector Boards and Executives,
Representatives of Blue Deal Partners,
Leaders and members of Water User Associations and Irrigation Boards,
Esteemed delegates,
Members of the Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good morning to you all.

1. I am indeed honoured to stand before you today, to announce a milestone in our journey towards sustainable water resource management—the establishment of four Catchment Management Agencies (CMAs), namely: Limpopo-Olifants, Vaal-Orange, Pongola-Umzimkulu, Mzimvubu-Tsitsikamma, Breede-Olifants and Inkomati-Usuthu. These agencies are crucial in ensuring the protection and sustainable management of our water resources, facilitating participative management, good water governance, and integrated planning at the local level.
2. In terms of the legislative architecture, the National Water Act provides for the establishment of Catchment Management Agencies to enable local stakeholder involvement in local water resources management at the catchment level. In this context, the role of the Catchment Management Agencies is to ensure that water resources in water management areas are protected, used, developed, conserved, managed, and controlled in a sustainable and equitable manner for the benefit of all citizens.
3. The current state of water and sanitation services in the country, including Metros and rural areas is a direct challenge to government, particularly the Department of Water and Sanitation; it requires a new dispensation altogether. The error was to accept low standards right from the beginning.



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4. To a certain extent, water resource management has not received the attention it deserves. The reality is visible with the deterioration of the water quality of our rivers. This is mainly due to pollution emanating from mining activities, industry, agriculture and to a greater extent, from dysfunctional municipal wastewater systems. A point in case is the prolific growth of alien vegetation, the hyacinth in the Hartbeespoort dam and lettuce in the Vaal Barrage. In our attempt to address this problem, we have established a national anti-pollution structure that will work with the CMA's to curb pollution of our rivers and dams.
5. The Department is committed in strengthening its implementation, regulation and oversight through various institutional mechanism in the water sector. As we are all aware that South Africa faces many challenges including climate change and water scarcity, the Department of Water and Sanitation is an important contributor to building a climate-resilient future for the citizenry through continuous strategising and effective provision of water and sanitation services. CMAs at local level will bring together stakeholders to build capacity around creating a climate resilient environment.
6. We are confident that the rationalisation will still achieve the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) principle of decentralisation of water resource management to local level and contribute to the transformation of the water sector. The Boards of the Pongola-Umzimkhulu and Vaal-Orange CMAs have already been appointed, effective from 1 December 2023. The Mzimvubu-Tsitsikamma Board has also been finalised, and we await Cabinet concurrence. Additionally, the Advisory Committee for the Limpopo-Olifants CMA has concluded its recommendations, with the vetting process for candidates currently underway. These steps mark significant progress in our mission to enhance cooperative governance and improve service delivery across the country.
7. Programme Director, we are pleased with the progress we have made in the establishment of CMAs; it was indeed a lengthy process, but we managed to conclude it within two years because the water sector has seen the importance of these institutions at local level. We are also pleased with the performance of the two CMAs that have been in existence for more than ten years and will ensure that the new CMAs learn from them. Although the establishment of CMAs comes at a time when



Government has introduced cost containment measures driven by fiscal challenges, this calls for cost effective measures in implementing our water resource management.

8. I must indicate that the journey for establishment of CMAs has taken far too long for us to arrive at this day. We reiterate our commitment to deliver exceptional services to our citizens as this is an essential resource for the growth of our economy and the future prosperity of our people. I would like to appreciate our stakeholders for their continued patience as we streamline our institutional mechanisms, establish and build stable institutions with clearly defined roles and responsibilities across the sector and also ensuring that we remain relevant and fit for purpose.
9. The establishment of these CMAs aligns with the objectives of the National Water Act, ensuring equity, accessibility, and our government's commitment to improving service delivery. By decentralising water resource management, we empower local communities, fostering an environment where local knowledge and expertise play a pivotal role in decision-making processes.
10. Water resource management is more than just a technical challenge; it is a societal imperative. Our water resources are the lifeblood of our nation, underpinning our health, our economy, and our environment. Effective management of these resources is essential for the sustainable development and prosperity of South Africa.
11. In conclusion, allow me to congratulate the team in the Department and wish the new Boards well in the operationalisation of CMAs and most importantly correct and proper governance of these institutions. We thank our Blue Deal Partners who are already working with the CMAs on various projects and we hope this partnership will continue as the future of our water resources is in our hands. It is indeed true that together we can effectively manage South Africa's water resources at a local level to ensure efficient water service delivery.

Thank you.