

SPEECH BY MR RONNIE KASRILS, MP, MINISTER OF WATER AFFAIRS AND
FORESTRY,
AT THE HANDOVER OF THE COMPLETED EUROPEAN UNION COMMUNITY
PROGRAMME OF SUPPORT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF WATER AFFAIRS AND
FORESTRY IN THE EASTERN CAPE AND THE OPENING OF THE
ZINGQUTHU WATER SUPPLY SCHEME
ON 20 MAY 2000 AT THE ZINGQUTHU VILLAGE

Honoured Guests, friends, comrades, it is certainly a great pleasure being here with you today. Certainly a time to share with you and to celebrate another milestone in the delivery programme of our Government. I am proud to share this day with you as we make a further entry into the history book of the Eastern Cape.

Ambassador Laidler, it is indeed an honour for me to accept on behalf of my Government and the beneficiary communities, the delivery of the completed product of the European Community funded Programme of support to the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry in the Eastern Cape. The European Community have not only made significant contributions to the Eastern Cape Water Services Programme, but have also contributed very significantly in the Northern Province in terms of the targeted budget support programme. I certainly hope that the success that we have achieved in both of these programmes will be sufficiently strong motivation for our organisation to continue working together.

May I at the outset, congratulate all of those who have played a part in bringing this European Programme of Support and in particular this project to the point where it can be delivered and handed over to the receiving communities and institutions. You now become the custodians of this project.

In congratulating you, I must in the first instance, recognise the very significant support given to my Department by the European Union in funding this very significant programme which consists of 22 individual projects spread throughout the Eastern Cape. This programme was introduced to support and improve the Department's Service Delivery programme. I must also congratulate the local government institutions for the role that they have played to date.

Yes, Government with the support of major foreign donor funding agents, is living up to its commitment to provide basic services not only to the Zingquthu Communities, but to all citizens of our beloved country in terms of the Reconstruction and Development Programme.

Many may say that the easy part of the programme/contract, that of providing the physical infrastructure, has been concluded and that we now enter the difficult phase, that of ensuring that all 22 projects remain sustainable for the generations that follow us. This is of course very true!

You have already adopted the spirit of Masakhane by allowing your creative developmental spirit to germinate and blossom with this EU Programme. You are playing the very vital role of normalising Governance in the provision of basic services at a local level. This has been demonstrated in a very practical way. Firstly, by the establishment of the Project Steering Committees for every project, where the communities were empowered through the development of the individual schemes. You were given the opportunity of not only understanding the concepts of ownership of your particular project but also receiving training in technical and social decision making. A substantial number of you have also obtained various skills through “on the job training”.

Secondly, you have through this project, made the notion of Co-operative Governance a reality with the involvement of my Department, the local government institutions of the various TLCs and TRCs and the district councils. Through your creative developmental spirit, you are strengthening the institutional relationships between local government and communities by collectively accepting responsibility for the projects.

The successes in this regard are very significant, particularly given the fact that prior to November 1995 there were very few effective local government institutions in the Eastern Cape. In fact, there were no institutions in the rural areas and villages were poorly serviced. The homeland leaders of the day did not have any meaningful programmes of development for the rural areas.

For the Progress you have made, I salute you!

The construction/development “honeymoon” is now over and we enter the difficult “marriage” period where we have to ensure that the Project is operated and maintained on a sustainable basis. This can only be achieved if every member of the receiving communities continues to contribute towards the costs providing the services and takes responsibility to ensure that the infrastructure is not vandalised.

The sustainability of the Project must, of necessity, also include the protection of the precious resource, Water! Water must not be seen as a commodity only for cleaning and for cooking food, it is absolutely essential for the quality of life. You must therefore conserve and not waste water and also protect water from environmental degradation. While water may be your right, saving water is your responsibility.

The provision of services costs money and water is no exception. The payment for the provision of water services, is therefore an essential ingredient for the success of your projects and in fact for every water project that is developed. A range of water services institutions will be involved in your projects:

- The Water Board, Amatola Water, will on some projects take responsibility for the bulk water supply – the wholesalers.
- The various district councils will take responsibility as Water Services Providers and Water Services Authorities in their particular areas of jurisdiction – the retailer.
- The rural communities, together with the TRC and the Amatola District Council will take responsibility for the rural infrastructure – also a retailer.
- The Department, together with both public sector institutions and private sector organisations, will be responsible for mentorship assistance on aspects relating to operation and maintenance for at least one year after completion of the projects – the facilitator.

All of these institutions will have to enter into service provision contracts with the various user groups. In terms of these service contracts, users will have to pay for water consumed. It is at this point that Central Government transfers responsibility to Water Services institutions. In terms of the approved business plans for each project, the various user groups did after all accept responsibility for all post construction activities before the development of the Scheme commenced. It is important to understand therefore, that if you do not pay, and the water stops flowing, you should not blame Government. This is your responsibility!

There are of course some people (few) in our communities who would wish to see Government fail in its delivery objectives. These people who undermine Government will attempt to encourage consumers not to pay and will vandalise and destroy infrastructure. It is your responsibility to assist and support your local authority to ensure that the Scheme is protected and not vandalised. There is no place in our communities for people who break down what Government is building. There is no place for people who can be so selfish as to deny services to our people who have fought so hard during the days of apartheid. There is no room for people who rob others of their rightful share.

So what do we do with such people? We educate them to:

- Ensure that they also understand and accept the benefits of the services that are being provided; and
- understand that to repair vandalised infrastructure is a waste of resources.

Many of you have been empowered through the provision of this project. Use this knowledge and the skills you have gained to educate and train others on the benefits of the services provided. In conclusion, I must thank everybody who has been involved in bringing this first stage of the programme to a conclusion.

I must also encourage Ambassador Laidler, to do all he can to secure additional funds from the European Union to supplement the Department's budget for the provision of water and sanitation services to communities in the Eastern Cape.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity of celebrating with you and making a further entry into the history book of the Eastern Cape.

Viva Water Pure and Clean Viva

Viva Forests Rich and Green Viva

I thank you