20 March 2001, Tuesday

8.45 - 9.00am: Umgeni Water:

(approximately an audience of 100 people including dignitaries, industry, education specialists, teachers and learners)

Address by Minister Kasrils: Opening of Water Activity Classroom

Honoured Guests, Members of the Community and Learners

By way of greeting you all – let us recall the NWW 2001 slogan:

Amanzi ayimpilo – water is life. Viva water pure and clean!

The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry and Umgeni Water External Education Services have collaborated closely together over the past few years. This partnership has been particularly informative for the 2020 Vision for Water Project, my Department's water literacy project.

Thus, it is an honour to have been asked to do the official launch of the Water Activity Classroom and Display, innovative educational resources that have already serviced more than 1500 pupils since March 2000. This Water Activity Room is the result of another partnership, this time between Umgeni Water and the Natal Museum.

Besides the obvious water-related activities for which the Activity Room is used, it is also used as a conventional classroom for other environmental education lessons. The main aim of these resources is to teach senior primary school learners how to conserve water and to treat it as a rare, precious resource. The display specifically aims to highlight the following points:

- How animals have adapted to water availability
- The need for a clean water system and diversity of water-life in river systems
- The damage that pollution causes in catchment areas and the the need for good catchment management practices
- The need to change poor farming practices and reduce industrial pollution

- The urgent need to promote positive values to ensure clean water for communities.

All of these points contribute to an integrated approach to water resource management, which is very much needed to eradicate the current cholera outbreak. More importantly, education and information-sharing is vital to ensuring that our young people understand the nature of water-borne diseases such as cholera and what means we can employ to lesson the risks and spread of infection. Yesterday and today, I am once again struck by the fact that education remains a key tool in combating the years of marginalisation and lack of services which many of our black communities have to deal with. It is not only the provision of services which will ensure a healthier life for all, but also an understanding of our natural resources, instilled from early ages, which will guarantee a sustainable future for us all.

I now pronounce the Water Activity Classroom and Display officially open, and thank you all for your participation in NWW 2001.

9.30 – 9.45am: Launch of River Health Programme

Speech for launch of State of the Rivers Report: Crocodile, Sabie-Sand & Olifants River Systems

Ladies and gentlemen, our rivers are the arteries of South Africa. They carry the water that is needed for all life across the face of our wide and diverse landscape. They may not be as big as the Zambesi, or the Mississippi, but no matter how big or small, they are precious.

The Department of Water Affairs & Forestry initiated the design of the South African River Health Programme (RHP) in 1994. But the RHP is a collaborative venture, and the partnerships that have been established are critical to both the design and implementation phases. While the DWAF has always played the lead role, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) and the Water Research Commission (WRC) are actively involved and support the programme as national partners. There are also other partners, such as Umgeni Water, involved in various capacities.

The primary purpose of the RHP initiative was to develop the capacity and information base to enable us to report on the ecological state of our river systems in an objective and scientifically sound manner. At the same time, this programme was intended to fulfil an important auditing function of management strategies and actions related to water resources. The information generated by the RHP will assist in identifying those areas where utilisation of river systems is sustainable as well as those areas where unacceptable ecological deterioration is taking place.

Local expertise as well as international benchmarking was used to decide on the technical specifications for the programme. The programme was essentially based on assessing the condition of biological communities of rivers (such as fish, aquatic invertebrates and riparian vegetation) as well as river habitats to provide an integrated measure of the integrity or health of river systems.

Our partners are responsible for developing the tools and methods for enabling implementation of the programme. Such tools and methods include protocols for selecting monitoring sites, biological and habitat indices for measuring river health, and a national database for storage of river health data. They are also responsible for seeing that appropriate quality control takes place and that a minimum level of standardisation is adhered to. However, actual implementation takes place at more local levels.

Each province has a Provincial Champion and an implementation team. The composition of the implementation teams reflects the diversity of institutional capacities across South Africa, and a mixture of DWAF regional offices, Provincial government departments, universities, Parks Boards and private sector organisations take part in implementation initiatives.

The RHP played an important role in the development of the water policy, which eventually led to the drafting of the National Water Act. Through the work done on measuring indicators of impacts on aquatic ecosystems, we were able to confidently state that sustainability can be measured in terms of the environment. Methods for determining the requirements of the Reserve arose from developmental work done within the RHP, which had been tested and improved in the years prior to law reform process. We were also fortunate to be able to write these concepts into law - and the NWA is consequently one of the few pieces of legislation that require utilisation of water resources at sustainable levels.

Through the RHP, assessments can be made regarding the ecological state of an aquatic ecosystem in terms of:

- The present ecological state (where are we now);
- Ecological reference conditions (where could we potentially be);
- Setting of ecologically sound and feasible management objectives (where we aim to be).

The RHP and State of Environment reporting

State of the Environment (SOE) reporting was promoted at the United Nations Conference on Environment & Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, in response to a call for improved environmental information for decision-making. As an outcome of that meeting, programmes that measure indicators of sustainability have become a key objective of the UN Commission for Sustainable Development (UNCSD). As a participating nation, South Africa can demonstrate a commitment to establishing methods and systems that measure sustainable utilisation of water resources, which include among others the RHP. Through our inputs to DEAT, we regularly report on the RHP as part of our annual country report to the UNCSD. Given the impending UNCSD Rio + 10 Summit in 2002, the RHP will be a valuable mechanism to showcase our efforts in determining river health as an indicator of sustainable development.

In South Africa, the national Department of Environmental Affairs & Tourism initiated a programme of State of the Environment reporting by producing the first national report, on the Internet, and city reports for Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg and Pretoria.

Agenda 21

Agenda 21 is a blueprint for sustainable development, and outlines a plan of action that addresses a broad range of economic, social and environmental issues. The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry is responsible for water resources – which in the context of Agenda 21 incorporates the economic, social and environmental issues pertaining to water resources management and development. Clearly, as we report on the RHP findings, we are also reporting on our success in giving effect to Agenda 21 in terms of water resources utilisation and protection.

State of Rivers (SoR) reporting

A key objective of the RHP is to “package” and disseminate information on river health in such a way as to (a) serve ecologically sound management of

rivers in South Africa, and (b) inform and educate the people of South Africa regarding the health of our rivers.

During the past year, and in collaboration with DEAT, WRC and the CSIR's Environmentek, a new and sophisticated template has been developed for river health reporting. This template was designed to complement the protection measures under the National Water Act as well as the specifications for national state-of-the-environment reporting. Specific objectives of this reporting format are to:

- Provide information to Government and agencies for improved decision-making in river management;
- Compare environmental performances of different areas;
- Increase public awareness of environment and development issues;
- Empower people and organisations to improve their environment and quality of life for themselves and future generations.

The reporting template essentially makes use of a "Pressure-State-Response" framework. For each ecological region of the mentioned rivers, the pressures on the rivers, the present state and trends in river conditions, and the policies and management actions in place to manage the rivers, are described.

Context of the first SoR report

Between 1996 and 1999, the River Health Programme (RHP) conducted surveys on the three major river systems of Mpumalanga, the Crocodile, Sabie-Sand and Olifants Rivers, including some of their tributaries. The RHP collected and assessed a substantial body of data on the ecological health of these rivers during the surveys.

The information generated through the Crocodile, Sabie-Sand and Olifants River surveys was used to populate the river-health reporting template. In so doing, the first of a series of "State of River" (SoR) reports has been produced for South Africa.

True to the style of most RHP activities, the compilation of this report was a collaborative effort with the main participants being DWAF, DEAT, WRC, CSIR Environmentek, Mpumalanga Parks Board, Kruger National Park, and the Working for Water Programme (Mpumalanga Region).

State-Of-Rivers Series ics have been destroyed (for example where biota can no longer breed) species present are diseased etc.

The information generated through the pilot project was used for this prototype State-of-Rivers Report. It is intended that a further two reports will be published this year, and it is also hoped that these reports will make a positive contribution during the Earth Summit (Rio + 10) to be held in 2002.

The River Health Programme intends to initiate studies on key rivers in every Province – with a view to publishing a State-of-Rivers report for these rivers within the next few years. This will also build upon the good relations already established with all Provincial administrations, and create the opportunity for further capacity building at local level. Ideally, participation in the RHP will become increasingly taken up at Provincial level as it provides a valuable tool to guide management decisions in a practical and specific manner. It can also be used to demonstrate successes and challenges in optimal water resource utilisation.

It is foreseen that this work will continue and eventually cover all major river systems of South Africa.

On this note I would like to thank one of our primary partners and to hand over a copy of the report to Minister Moosa of the DEAT. All our provincial partners will receive a copy, and I would like to conclude this launch with an invitation to all our partners to nominate rivers as subject material for future State-of-Rivers Reports.

Thank you, ladies and gentleman.

10.30 – 10.45: Address about Vulindlela Water Project

(waiting for more info from Umgeni)

13.45 – 14.00: Official Opening of Durban Metro WasteWater Classroom

Honoured guests, Ladies, Gentleman and Learners

It is with great pleasure that I participate in this innovative and essential educational resource venture.

This is particularly important because the communities and townships around Durban, as well as the informal settlements, have been severely neglected by previous service providers as far as water and sanitation services are concerned. In the past it was not unusual to see sewage overflowing in the streets and into the rivers. As a result of this neglect, little value was placed on the use and maintenance of sewerage systems by the local community.

The Sewage Disposal Education Programme arose out of the need to stop the high level of sewage pollution in our rivers and to reduce maintenance costs incurred through the abuse of sewerage systems in the Metro area.

The main objective of the education programme is to create a better understanding of the working of the sewerage system mainly among first time users of this service. This will be done through a number of innovative educational interventions which encourage interactive and participative learning,

The wastewater classroom which supports the ongoing education programme to school children allows a flexible approach to learning about the role that the Treatment Works plays in health and environmental protection, from first hand practical experience. These programmes are designed to stimulate pupils to investigate issues such as:

*Water supply

*Water conservation
*Water and wastewater treatment
*Water Quality.

This theme fits in very well with what we, as partners in National Water Week are attempting to achieve – greater awareness and knowledge about water and its management. Particularly, as we are continually challenged by the cholera outbreak, the need for greater access to information and resources will grow.

The honour of officially opening the Durban Metro WasteWater Classroom is, of course, increased by the fact that this very same project received the IMPUMELELO AWARD IN 2000, TO THE VALUE OF R 60 000.

2.**The Legal Framework to Pollution Management Document**

The Minister will officially hand over the document to the Chairperson of the Durban Chamber of Commerce.

Background Information

The Durban Metro Sewage Disposal Bylaws was promulgated in 1999. Previously, education about the environment done in the industrial sector mostly centered around shop floor level. It was felt that with the new bylaws, and the continuously changing environmental legislation and the global trend towards sustainable development, there was a need in industry for environmental education to reach up to management level.

The Legal Framework document was thus developed as a Public Private partnership between Durban Metro Water Services and Deloitte and Touche. It covers the whole spectrum of Pollution Management and includes :

1)Common patterns and objectives of recent environmental legislation where the law is aiming to give effect to the overarching environmental management principle of sustainable development and the principles associated therewith.

2) Details of provisions of Water Pollution Laws applicable in the Durban Metro Council including powers of the authorities and offences and penalties which companies face for violations.

3)A list of all laws, ordinances, licences, bylaws etc applicable to industry in the Durban Metro Council area.

4) A complete copy of the Durban Metro Sewage Disposal Bylaws.

This document has been adopted by the Water Research Commission which has commissioned Deloitte and Touche to convert it into a more generic format for national distibution.