

The Presidency: Republic of South Africa

EMBARGOED UNTIL 12H30

**Address by the Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr. Jacob Zuma, at the Official Opening Ceremony of the Maguga Dam, Swaziland
Friday, 05 April 2002**

Your Majesty, Members of the Royal Family, Your Excellencies the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, The Minister of Natural Resources and Energy of Swaziland, The Minister of Public Works of Mozambique, The Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry of South Africa, Members of the Cabinet of Swaziland, Members of the Swazi National Council, The Honourable Regional Administrator of the Hhohho Region, Traditional leaders, The communities of the Maguga Area, Piggs Peak and surrounding villages, Members of the Joint Water Commission of Swaziland and South Africa, Members of the Board of the Komati Basin Water Authority, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and gentlemen,

I am deeply honoured to be part of this proud moment, the celebration of a milestone that will bring great benefits to the people of our two countries.

I always look forward to coming to the Kingdom of Swaziland as I, together with many South Africans, regard this country as our second home as we took refuge here during the struggle for the liberation of our country and people.

Your Majesty, I am also very happy to return to this beautiful country since my last visit in February 2001, when we agreed to strengthen co-operation between our two countries even further.

Let me begin by saying that it is always an immensely satisfying occasion when we gather to celebrate the fruits of our collective efforts, of working together in building a better life for all. Joint efforts such as the Komati River Development Project, puts us on a solid footing to be better able to realise this promise of a better life.

In July 1998 we celebrated the opening of the Driekoppies Dam in South Africa, as the first step in this joint project between our two countries. You will recall, ladies and gentlemen, that less than four years ago, His Majesty and former President Mandela turned the soil for the first time to mark the beginning of the building of this dam.

Today, we are opening the Dam to complete the construction phase of this project.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are working together on this project because we know that the common destiny of our people, in these two countries, is intertwined, inter-related and interdependent.

This interdependence between African countries transcends boundaries, and informs the thinking behind the New Partnership for Africa's Development, (NEPAD), which commits African leaders to working tirelessly to eradicate poverty and to place our countries on a path of sustainable development.

The opening of the Maguga Dam is a significant milestone in exemplifying African co-operation, as envisaged in NEPAD, SADC and the forthcoming African Union. It clearly illustrates the meaningful progress we are making, as partners and neighbours, and urges us to deepen our efforts to create the necessary conditions for investments and sustainable development in our region.

The eagerly awaited World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in August 2002 will give us the opportunity to put NEPAD on top of the Agenda of the United Nations.

The Summit will provide an ideal opportunity to demonstrate what can be achieved in the water sector. I therefore trust that our two governments will work together to communicate the details of this project to participants in the Johannesburg Summit.

Ladies and gentlemen, we feel strongly about the need to use the Summit to put the agenda of the developing world on the forefront of the debates. This is because we believe that the Summit should focus on issues that affect both the poor and rich, and that it should be sensitive to the suffering of the poor.

We are of the view that the deliberations of the Summit will be meaningless for the millions in the continent, if it focuses only on classical environmental or green issues, and fails to address the question of alleviating poverty, and access to basic services and needs such as water, electricity, education and health.

Many developing countries are facing a dilemma of balancing the issues of preserving our beautiful ecosystems, with the demands made by our people who live in abject poverty. These are some of the issues the Summit will have to grapple with.

Distinguished guests, a key departure point for NEPAD is that Africans will determine their own destiny. This is exactly in line with our achievements on the Komati River Development Project, given that this bi-national project is intended to better utilise a shared resource, based on the spirit of co-operation, good neighbourliness and mutual respect between our two countries.

The dam is part of the Inkomati River System, which also includes the Driekoppies Dam on the border of our two countries.

It is by the joint operation of this river system that the benefits of the two dams can be optimised for the benefits of the irrigators in both countries.

This development will also allow for seven thousand two hundred hectare of new irrigation to be developed in the Nkomazi region of South Africa.

The small farmers in this region will now be able to use their rightful share of the water of the Inkomati and Lomati rivers while commercial farmers who developed their irrigation long ago, would share the benefits of a stabilised assurance of supply.

Most importantly, ladies and gentlemen, the project has established infrastructure that could and should be used to unlock the high tourism potential of this part of Swaziland and South Africa.

Another notable feature of this project, Your Majesty, is that the project adopted a policy that people affected by the construction of the dam and related infrastructure, must be the first to benefit from the project and must be "better off than before".

On a global scale, Your Majesty, I believe that we in Southern Africa can make an important contribution to global debates on water management and the sharing of water resources between countries, given our experience in this regard.

The Inkomati River, as we call it in South Africa and Swaziland, is part of the bigger Inkomati River System shared by Mozambique, Swaziland and South Africa.

Our three countries are currently working on an Interim Water Sharing Agreement for the Inkomati and Maputo River Systems.

We know that the signing of this agreement is a priority for Swaziland so that you can continue with the development of the Lower Usuthu River, which is part of the Maputo River.

This proposed development is not only important to Swaziland, but is equally important to the other two countries because we will all benefit from economic development in the region.

I would therefore like to assure our colleagues here and in the other two countries of the full support of our government for the negotiation process.

Distinguished guests, the Komati River Development Project is a great deal more than simply providing a much needed water resource for irrigation

purposes in our two countries. As I stated at the beginning of my address, it is an excellent example of the objectives of NEPAD.

Your Majesty, I want to end off by challenging the people in both countries in the wider project area to seize this opportunity of a lifetime to improve their standard of living.

There are a lot of that can be generated by this project. It could lead to more tourists visiting the area, benefiting the local communities. In addition, the infrastructure developed as part of the project such as roads, water supply and sanitation facilities would be utilised by the communities.

Distinguished guests, the Komati River Development Project is not yet complete. The completion of the two dams only prompts us to focus on the next phase - which is to manage the project further to reap the full benefits and to ensure sustainability.

Your Majesty, allow me to congratulate all the key role players in this project for a job well done. Let me single out for praise, our two Ministers, the Minister of Natural Resources and Energy of Swaziland and the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry of South Africa.

They have dedicated themselves to making this project a success. I hope and trust that they will continue to meet, discuss and co-operate well into the future.

Once again, let me voice my appreciation for this opportunity to interact with you today.

I thank you.