

**SPEECH BY MR RONNIE KASRILS, MP, MINISTER OF WATER AFFAIRS  
AND FORESTRY AT THE OPENING OF THE QADI WATER PROJECT ON  
FRIDAY, 1 AUGUST 2003**

Mr J P Khoza, Mayor of Sisonke District Municipality, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen

It is indeed a great honour to be present here today with my distinguished guest, Minister Karua the Kenyan Minister of Water Resources, to celebrate with you the opening of the Qadi Water Project that brings clean water to 5 400 people.

Let me begin by extending my congratulations to you, the people of Qadi; the Sisonke District Municipality, their agents Umgeni Water, and my Department's Regional Office in Durban for having worked together to ensure that the people of this area have access to water – a fundamental basis of life and development.

Nationally, our Government is determined to eradicate poverty and underdevelopment, and the building of a society based on justice and human rights. Our Constitution shows clearly the nature of the society we are trying to build. However, the legacy of apartheid means that, despite our best efforts since 1994, we still have a long way to go in this regard.

Millions of South Africans are still exposed to the possibility of ill health arising from the lack of clean water and inadequate sanitation. Men, women and children are still carrying polluted water in buckets, drums and plastic bottles to their houses. Many of you suffered from the recent cholera epidemic here in KwaZulu-Natal and live in fear of the disease returning to your families.

Cholera is a disease of poverty. Lack of clean water, lack of sanitation, and poor hygiene all contribute to the spread of this deadly disease. The situation is made worse by poor nutrition and already vulnerable communities.

The Qadi Water Project is an example of how we are collectively wiping out the legacy of apartheid, and the poverty it created. I am pleased that at last all the families in the Scheme will be able to improve their lives and no longer wait in queues for water from nearby rivers.

I am pleased because with access to clean, potable water 5 400 people living in this area have a better chance to fight the evil of cholera and poverty. It means that men, women and children that all their lives have struggled to find good, clean water, now have water. It means that parents can spend more time with their families, children more time with their parents. It means that people who were at risk of ill-health because of lack of clean water, now have potable water for cooking, washing and personal hygiene. It means that the risk of waterborne diseases that were robbing

those people and their children of their health and their lives has now gone away. It means that the lives of those people, and especially the lives of the women, have been enhanced by this access to water.

Since 1994 over two and a half thousand projects worth over R8 billion have been initiated by my Department across the country. More than 550 of these projects are in this province.

Government is also moving ahead in addressing the issue of sanitation. We have adopted a national implementation strategy to deal with the backlog in sanitation by 2010. This means that, by 2010, we want every citizen of this country to have access to proper sanitation facilities. We are committed to increasing our spending in providing sanitation over the next few years.

I am aware that these commitments are beginning to bear fruits with improved sanitation provided to an estimated 2 260 000 people last year by Government as a whole.

To make water and sanitation accessible to the people of this Qadi area, the Government has invested R10 million in the project laying water pipes to 126 public taps. This has been a challenging task in the difficult topography often found in this province.

The provision of water has been considered by Government as inextricably linked with the development of human potential and therefore throughout the implementation of this project, the positive impact on the people of this area has been high on the agenda. Optimal empowerment of the local community has at all times been a priority that has been achieved through involvement in each stage of the planning and implementation of the project, digging of trenches and creation of the infrastructure brought to provide this opportunity to change the destiny of this community.

Through the Qadi Project labour intensive approaches have generated employment for at least 90 people over a year, transferring skills to community members, creating jobs and putting money into the community.

Development of the small businesses and transfer of skills and experience are an investment in our people – an investment that puts you in a better position to ensure a better future.

Today we celebrate the success of bringing water to this community. In this celebration we must remember the remaining challenge! The challenge to ensure that this system of purification works, pumps, pipes, and taps that brings water to you continues to work without interruption to guarantee the investment made here produces clean water for to you, for your children and your childrens' children.

Government has recently finalised that your District Municipality, the Sisonke District Municipality, headed by the Honorable Mayor Khoza and his EXCO, will be responsible for ensuring that this great challenge is achieved. They can only do this with continued co-operation that has been demonstrated through the development phase of this scheme. The Sisonke District Municipality as the Water Service Authority will be working closely with you and the Local Municipality to ensure long-term water provision arrangements are in place so that affordable water services are available for you and the children of Qadi.

This occasion is the fruit of a long labour, co-operation and coordination. Co-operation and co-ordination between the stakeholders over a number of years. The Sisonke District Municipality, Umgeni Water and my Department have worked together to make this project a reality. The challenge is now for you, the community to work together with your Local and District Municipalities to ensure each household continues to receive clean water.

In conclusion, Government has made much progress across all fronts, but clearly there are many challenges and much remains to be done. This scheme is a clear example of our Government working to build a better life for all, a clear example of cooperative government. It is an excellent example of what can be achieved when different Government departments at national and local level work together, and work together with the people whom they serve.

**Amanzi ayimpilo! Water is life!**