



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF WATER AND SANITATION, DR SEAN PHILLIPS,  
AT THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE NATIONAL WATER  
RESOURCES STRATEGY THIRD EDITION ON THE STRATEGIC  
DIRECTION ON THE ISSUES OF THE WATER SECURITY  
CSIR CONFERENCE CENTRE, PRETORIA  
TBC 2022**

Programme Director

DG's, DDG's and CEO's of different Institutions, Waterboards, Water User Associations and Catchment Management Agencies,

Water Sector Partners and Stakeholders,

Senior Government Officials,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this important event for public consultation and engagement on the third edition of the National Water Resource Strategy.

Let me start by firstly asking for all of us to acknowledge that things are no longer as they used to be. Drought and floods were often referred to as natural disasters since these events had from time immemorial been experienced as such. However, the latest assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is unequivocal in attributing the increased frequency and intensity of extreme events such as heatwaves, drought, and floods to human-induced climate change. Our

forebears used to know when it was likely to rain and when it would be time to plough. Lately, rainfall patterns in time and space are more unpredictable while temperatures continue to rise unabated. Farmers need weather forecasts and various tools to be informed of when the best time to plant is, while communities who settled in flood prone areas require early-warning tools to enable timely relocation to safer areas.

It is necessary and essential for the water infrastructure systems to withstand various water-related shocks regardless of whether those emanate from extreme events or from degradation of water quality. Aging and dysfunctional water systems should give way to designs that are resilient to climate change and extreme events such as floods.

The need to address this challenge is exemplified by the recent heavy rainfall that led to KwaZulu-Natal floods that were also exacerbated by land surface developments that inhibited water infiltration as well as the stormwater infrastructure that is not designed to handle big floods. Hence, mainstreaming of climate change considerations in town planning as well as water planning and management is very important.

All of us as Government and stakeholders should also deal with the non-climatic factors such as unsustainable water use, water pollution and alien invasive vegetation that impact on water security.

All these challenges happen against the backdrop of water scarcity in this country. Hence, it is self-evident that climate change exacerbates an already vulnerable situation. The resource poor will be the most adversely affected.

The National Water Resource Strategy provides an appropriate framework for the protection, use, development, conservation, management, and control of water resources, taking these challenges into account.

The Water Sector Partners and various Stakeholders supported the implementation of the second edition of the National Water Resources Strategy that was published in August 2013. This enabled the water sector to attain some targets and milestones through our collaborative efforts. For instance, it was through collaborative efforts among Government, NGOs, private sector, and water users in Cape Town that the Day Zero was avoided there in 2018. Improved water use efficiency by users coupled with allocation curtailments by Government undoubtedly saved the day.

We once again have invited you, the water sector partners and stakeholders to actively participate in this process of finalising the draft NWRS-3 today. The Strategy aims to guide and facilitate sustainable water management at all levels (i.e. local, catchment and national) and to strengthen the regulation of the water and sanitation for enhanced water security. Some of the key management aspects that should receive due attention include appropriate operation and maintenance of the infrastructure, well-coordinated institutions, and good governance.

The National Integrated Water Information System (NIWIS) on the Department's website indicates that the number of households with access to piped water has increased since 2021. NIWIS shows that 17 million households had access to piped water in 2021 compared to 13.8 million in 2018. However, our key problem is now reliability of supply.

Increased water demand due to various developments such as extended agricultural farming, increased population, and biofuel production also need to be considered when addressing water security in South Africa.

As a developing country, South Africa requires additional water resources to support the growing economy. With 98% of the country's available water resources already allocated, opportunities to supplement future water supply are limited. Additional capacity is required in terms of irrigated agriculture, mining sector and the energy sector as the country moves towards cleaner energy and renewable energy sources.

The measures proposed in the NWRS-3 include expanding groundwater development, rainwater harvesting, water reuse, acid mine drainage, desalination of saline water and effective implementation of water conservation and water demand management. Although currently oversubscribed, the surface water sources will also continue to be developed.

Our resolve is to ensure enhanced implementation of innovative technologies for improved water security. A good example is the on-site sanitation technology developed by the Bill Gates Foundation in partnership with the WRC and UKZN.

In the National Water and Sanitation Master Plan, several water-related challenges were identified such as non-revenue water, pollution of rivers because of illegal dumping of solid waste and discharge of sewage effluent from non-functional wastewater treatments plants. The master plan, that also serves as a tool for rolling

out the Strategy, outlined various measures to address this. We have since taken this further with the development of a Water Services Improvement Programme, which will be a major focus of DWS and its regional offices for the foreseeable future.

It is envisaged that the NWRS-3 will set stricter minimum requirements for Wastewater Treatment Works effluent discharges. Other measures include support for technological advances in real time data acquisition for Water Resources Management, as well as improved auditing of self-regulating water and sanitation institutions for compliance with water use licensing conditions.

The challenges faced by the sector cannot be the sole responsibility of Government. The entire water sector has a role to play with specific action plans as stipulated in the National Water and Sanitation Master Plan. This does not imply that Government is not accountable but rather that we have a shared responsibility to ensure attainment of our commonly shared vision of ensuring water security for South Africa.

Funding must be sourced from the fiscus as well as through Public Private Partnerships with finance and skills sourced from government as well as the private sector.

The sector needs to be transformed in various ways, including through providing financial and technical support to the resource poor and the Historically Disadvantaged Individuals; through reduction of the administrative burden regarding water use authorisations; and Water Allocation Reform linked to other government initiatives such as the Land Reform Project.

The third edition of the National Water Resource Strategy also takes the National Government Priority Outcomes as announced by the President into account. This includes fast-tracking the establishment of Water Management Institutions, including the NWRIA and catchment management agencies.

The NWRS-3 also takes cognisance of SDG 6 and related goals and ensures alignment to achieve the 2030 targets of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all of you for participating in this launch of the consultative process for the Strategy, and for agreeing to provide us with your inputs on the draft Strategy.

I thank you.