



MEDIA STATEMENT

JOINT STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF WATER AND SANITATION, MINISTER SENZO MCHUNU AND CITY OF JOHANNESBURG EXECUTIVE MAYOR KABELO GWAMANDA ON EFFORTS TO ADDRESS WATER SUPPLY CHALLENGES IN THE METRO

19 March 2024

The Minister of Water and Sanitation, Senzo Mchunu, together with Deputy Ministers, David Mahlobo and Judith Tshabalala yesterday evening, 18 March 2024, met with the leadership of the City of Johannesburg led by the Executive Mayor, Cllr Kabelo Gwamanda to receive update on the plans to deal with the current water challenges and future water supply sustainability plans for the metro.

This was a follow-up to a meeting convened by the Minister on 5 March 2024, where the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) presented a comprehensive assessment report on the state of water provision in the City, amid regular water supply interruptions being experienced by the residents and affecting business and public services. The Metro was requested to come back with an action plan to address all the issues raised in the report including how the City will deal with the infrastructure challenges and non-revenue water which is contributing to the situation.

During the meeting yesterday, the City presented a wide-ranging plan on immediate, medium to long-term measures to ensure sustainability of supply. This includes infrastructure projects to refurbish, upgrade and construct new storage reservoirs, and pumps stations as well as associated infrastructure to augment storage capacity; and addressing non-revenue water through implementation of water conservation and demand management technical interventions in order to reduce demand.

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These technical interventions consist of among others, repairs of leaking reservoirs and tower infrastructure; replacement of water pipes; replacement of domestic and large consumer meters; retrofitting and removal of wasteful devices; and enforcement of By-law enforcement including removals of illegal connections and customer bypass connections. These projects are in different stages of implementation while others still require funding.

The City infrastructure backlog is estimated at around R27 billion but the meeting agreed that the focus was on what could be done with the current budget as well as the new budget coming in July, further agreeing that attention was now being turned to possible private sector funding.

Minister Mchunu acknowledged efforts being made by the City's water entity, Johannesburg Water, to deal with infrastructure backlogs and the various interventions they are implementing to deal with the current recurring water outages including the participation in the daily WaterRoom meetings together with Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), Rand Water and the other two metros to regularly assess the systems performance in order to activate response and troubleshooting in areas that are experiencing challenges. The recent water outages were as a result of lightning struck at the City Power's station supplying the Eikenhof System.

"We are pleased that the system has started to pick up, but still generally low. It is evident that there is hard work happening on the ground, focusing on areas that are hard hit. There are areas that have been severely affected and others for several days, but given the pace there is going to be stability. We sympathise with residents as the intermittent water supply continues, but we want to assure them that the City has committed to attend to various hotspots that are characterised by water shortages for number of days", said Minister Mchunu.

He urged the City to work on its turnaround time in responding to pipe bursts and leaks in their distribution network as this is what is contributing to the high physical water losses. The Minister said it was clear that the City requires serious interventions and funding to deal with its water infrastructure renewal programme, and that DWS will work with Joburg Water in

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packaging some of their key infrastructure projects that require blended finance including from private sector.

The collective agreed that over and above the technical interventions to address non-revenue water, there was a serious need for a compressive public awareness campaign to conscientise residents on the importance of water conservation and water use efficiency as part of the Water Conservation and Water Demand Management Strategy. The Metro's non-revenue water sits at 46.1% while consumption rate is at 280 litres per capita per day.

The Executive Mayor, Cllr Gwamanda welcomed the support from the Ministry of Water and Sanitation and further indicated that the City was looking at various options to mitigate water supply interruptions and has set aside about R100 million for its electricity supply entity, City Power, to put alternative power supply infrastructure to key infrastructure that contribute to the water supply network.

This morning, Cllr Gwamanda issued a statement providing residents with an update on water supply to areas supplied by the Eikenhof Pumpstation, following a lightning strike of the Eldorado Substation which feeds Eikenhof. Rand Water has advised that pumping is underway, however, such is at a slow pace. In reacting to this, Minister Mchunu said the following: *"We are aware of the power outage that occurred last night, but we are also aware of the City's efforts to restore such power to enable Rand Water to pump water to reservoirs. As a Ministry and Department, we pledge our support to the Mayor and his team in their efforts to restore water to residents"*.

The Ministry and the Executive Mayor will hold a joint media briefing in the coming weeks to provide a comprehensive update on the interventions being implemented in the City to address water provision challenges.

END

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