



MEDIA STATEMENT

Deputy Minister Mahlobo urges innovation and collaboration to tackle global water challenges

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Deputy Minister of Water and Sanitation, David Mahlobo, has called for bold innovation, cross-border collaboration and sustainable practices to confront the escalating global water crisis.

Speaking at the 3rd International Conference on Earth and Environmental Sciences (ICEES 2025), hosted at the Durban International Convention Centre on Tuesday, 19 August 2025 at the Durban International Convention Centre, Deputy Mahlobo warned that South Africa's water scarcity demands urgent action and cannot be treated as "business as usual."

The three-day conference, organised by the University of Zululand in partnership with Chang'an University in China, convened leading researchers and experts to confront pressing challenges such as climate change adaptation, groundwater management, pollution control, and sustainable development.

Deputy Minister Mahlobo was joined in a high-level panel on Water Security and Sustainable Development Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) by the Department's Deputy Director-General, Dr. Risimati Mathye, and uMngeni-uThukela Water Chief Executive, Sandile Mkhize.

"There is ample evidence showing how semi-arid our country is, and that it cannot be business as usual. That is why the Department and government published the National Water Resource Strategy Number 3," he said. "This aims to reassess the water deficit and to investigate new technologies such as water desalination, as well as partnerships with higher education for research to improve existing water sources, including groundwater, effluent reuse, and assessing the cost-effectiveness and feasibility of these options."

He highlighted the importance of integrating indigenous research and practices into solutions, highlighting that Indigenous Knowledge Systems are a form of science that modern technology can build upon.

"Communities are not passive beneficiaries; they are stakeholders. Their lived experiences of droughts and floods, and their land management practices, hold vital lessons for building lasting resilience," Deputy Minister Mahlobo added.

Mahlobo further challenged the scientific community to ensure that their research informs governance and decision-making, rather than remaining in academic silos.

SOUTH AFRICA IS A WATER-SCARCE COUNTRY





“Being a scientist or engineer does not mean stepping away from governance. Choose to be part of the main table where critical decisions are made, or risk being sidelined while the future of shared prosperity is shaped without your input,” he concluded.

The International Conference on Earth and Environmental Sciences (ICEES) is a global platform bringing together scientists, researchers and policymakers to share knowledge and develop solutions to pressing environmental challenges. The 2025 edition, hosted in Durban, South Africa, focuses on climate change, sustainable water management, pollution control, and interdisciplinary approaches to global sustainability.

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