



INTERNET ARTICLE

DWS to make sustainable Development Goals 6 a reality

25 July 2019

The implementation of Goal 6 of United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals was on the spotlight during a two-day conference to review progress made to date towards 2030.

The conference was hosted by the Department of Water and Sanitation in partnership with the Department of Science and Technology and scientific research institutions, Academy of Science of South Africa (Assaf) and the InterAcademy partnership (IAP).

The workshop aimed to achieve the following:

- Highlight the co-ordination and collaboration in the water sector towards achieving its targets of SDG 6
- Evaluate the gaps and challenges in this co-ordination
- Assist in furthering the efforts towards progress by assisting collaboration within SDG 6
- And to explore opportunities for strengthening the South African SDG targets and indicators related to water and sanitation

Countries are expected to achieve SDG 6 by 2030 and they are expected to set their own national baselines, targets and priorities in the general SDG's process, and focus on the ones that can be realistically achieved. In South Africa, much has been done over the last three years regarding the SDG on Water and Sanitation (SDG 6).

According to Mark Bannister, Chief Engineer for Water Services and Local Water Management at the Department of Water and Sanitation, the Department is mandated to guarantee the implementation of SDG 6, which is to ensure access to water and sanitation for all. He further outlined eight targets, defined by the United Nations, which specify the goals and indicators in order to determine whether the targets are reached or not.

In dealing with SDG 6, Bannister said DWS has developed eight task teams that consist of experts in the area to which the target relates to. He further explained that the Department of Water and Sanitation supports 16 other SDGs carried by various government departments.

"We have a responsibility to deliver reports to the United Nations about the progress to the SDG 6 by 2030. As the Department of Water and Sanitation, we have also geared ourselves up to ensure that we support 16 other SDG's. We support other government departments with their water and sanitation issues", he said.

With regard to the progress into the eight targets, Bannister has conceded that the DWS has been progressive although there is still much to do to guarantee that the SDG 6 is achieved by 2030. For instance, a target on environmental issues (SDG 6.6) has not been established due to a lack of collaboration with other government departments. "We need to involve other departments like the Department of Environmental Affairs to deliberate and unpack common issues that we deal with.

However, there are notable achievements in terms of water quality (SDG 6.3). 52% of effluent is discharged safely through the Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTW) and 59% of surface





water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



water bodies have good quality water. There is also a comprehensive water quality management strategy, and draft water quality management policy has been developed.

In terms of drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (SDG 6.1 & 6.2), South Africa is up to measure and so is the case with water access. 93% of the population has access to clean water supply services. However, a challenge is still with 47% of South African rivers which have good water quality whereas the rest of the rivers range from moderate to poor.

Bannister also lamented the fact that despite policies guiding institutions in water and sanitation, community involvement (SDG 6b), seems to lack. He said communities do not form part of decision making processes within the water and sanitation sector.

Mark Bannister said South Africa is performing well on an international platform, in terms of SDG 6 but there is still a lot to be done. He said it is important to get a right strategy and implement a simple and logical approach when dealing with SDG 6. He further said it is crucial to develop a team approach and align existing initiatives and plans, and also engage with other stakeholders and SDG leaders.

This was also validated by Jackie Olang-Kado from the Network of African Science Academy. She said there is a need for political commitment to implement recommendations in water and sanitation issues in order for the SDG 6 targets to be achieved. She also said that the water sector should not work in silos but should involve innovation researchers and career scientists in order to deliver on the promises of SDG 6.

Sanku Tsunke

