



## INTERNET ARTICLE

### **DWS signs MOU to improve performance of wastewater treatment plants to combat the pollution of the Crocodile River**

**09 June 2022**

The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) signed the Blue Deal Memorandum of Understanding with the Dutch Water Authorities, Inkomati-Usuthu Catchment Management Agency, Mpumalanga Provincial Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, City of Mbombela Local Municipality, Emakhazeni Local Municipality, Nkomazi Local Municipality, South African Local Government Association, Municipal Infrastructure Support Agency, and Mpumalanga Treasury to improve the performance of wastewater treatment plants to combat the pollution of the Crocodile River on 08 June 2022 in Mbombela.

The Parties, through this regional Memorandum of Understanding, wish to formalise the relationship between the regional Parties. This regional MoU sets out how the regional local and provincial Parties will co-operate with one another for the successful implementation of the Combating of Pollution in the Crocodile River in the Inkomati-Usuthu Water Management Area (referred to as the Crocodile River Project). Nothing in this regional MoU shall have the effect of or be interpreted as (a) affecting any Constitutional or statutory mandate of any regional Party; and (b) requiring any regional Party to do anything that would be in conflict with the legal mandate of that Party. This regional MoU commences on the effective date and shall terminate when the project is successfully implemented, unless extended by mutual agreement between the Parties in writing and ratified by the national PMU.

In his address, Deputy Minister Mahlobo stated that he did not come just to oversee the signing of the MOU but expects the parties to compile an action plan and implement it. "We do not have a national water crisis at present. People in South Africa will not run out of water, the problem is that water will not be usable because of pollution. Too much water in South Africa is polluted and polluters must pay. As a department, we have relaunched the Blue Drop / Green Drop certification to monitor water quality. To the municipalities, if your water is not good, it has an impact on health. It can lead to waterborne diseases. If your water is of poor quality, it influences the environment and the economy. If you pollute water, government must act. To the IUCMA, stop the pollution but don't target municipalities alone, also look at other sectors such as agriculture, industries, and mining", he said.

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The Deputy Minister also called on the Department and the Dutch partners not to only focus on the Crocodile River alone, but to also look at other rivers in the Mpumalanga Province such as the Olifants, Usuthu and others. He also called for the investment in the skills revolution and institutions as for the Blue Deal to succeed and be sustainable, it will need institutions and people.

The Chairperson of the Dutch Water Authorities, Mr Hans Schepman alluded on the impact of climate change and emphasised the importance of cooperation and working together. "Climate change affects all the people of the world. The unique aspect of the Blue Deal is that it runs for twelve years, and we are now left with eight years. The ultimate goal of the programme is to create a healthy and drinkable Crocodile River. It is about capacity building to address the lack of capacity in wastewater treatment works. The recent Green Drop results show that South Africa has a long way to go and the signing of the MOU is proof of the required cooperation and support.

The Dutch Blue Deal Programme (2018- 2030) supports National and Regional governments worldwide and strengthens Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) by improving knowledge and expertise, enhancing organisational functionality, and increasing cooperation with national and regional key stakeholders. The goal of the Blue Deal internationally, is to assist twenty (20) million people in forty (40) catchment areas around the world to gain access to clean, sufficient, and safe water.

Within the worldwide Dutch Blue Deal Programme, the National Blue Deal South African Partnership was established with a national Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that was signed between the Dutch Water Authorities, the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), the South African Local Governance Association (SALGA), the Municipal Infrastructure Support Agency (MISA), the Ministry of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) and the Water Research Commission (WRC). The Partnership was officially launched at the MinMEC conference of 5th March 2020.

The regional Inkomati-Usuthu Blue Deal project has a central focus on Combating Pollution of the Crocodile River, with an initial focus on mitigating sanitation impacts at Mbombela Local Municipality, Nkomazi Local Municipality and Emakhazeni Local Municipality. The starting point for the Blue Deal Combating Pollution of the Crocodile River has been identified as rehabilitation and performance optimisation of two Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTWs) each in Mbombela Local Municipality, Nkomazi Local Municipality, and Emakhazeni Local Municipality.



## water & sanitation

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The MEC for COGTA in Mpumalanga, Mandla Ndlovu welcomed the initiative and appealed for the inclusion of other rivers and catchments. “We welcome the initiative to empower municipalities and appeal that this initiative must spread to other rivers and catchments. We also request that the Department assist the province with more resources. If you pollute water, you destroy life. Water is life, please take care of it. Clean water starts with you”, he said.

**Themba Khoza**

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