water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

EdTM

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MINISTER OF WATER AND SANITATION

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY: QUESTION 1589 FOR WRITTEN REPLY

A draft reply to the above mentioned question asked by Mr J A Esterhuizen (IFP) is attached for your consideration.

DIRECTOR-GENERAL (Acting)

DATE: 24/09/2014

DRAFT REPLY APPROVED/AMENDED

MRS NP MOKONYANE
MINISTER OF WATER AND SANITATION

DATE: 01-10-14

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FOR WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION NO 1589

DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 19 SEPTEMBER 2014 (INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 17)

1589. Mr J A Esterhuizen (IFP) to ask the Minister of Water and Sanitation:

(1) With reference to mining in Mpumalanga which takes place on 1.1 million hectares of agricultural land, including mining in the Vaal River catchment area, which is a big concern, (a) what steps are being taken to ensure that Rand Water is on track to deal with the impact of acid mine drainage on the water supply and (b) what plans are in place to ensure that Gauteng does not come to a standstill, if Rand Water fails in its mandate to provide clean water thereby impacting the economy;

(2) whether she has found that the mining legislation and legislation on environmental affairs have failed; if so, what steps does she intend to take to change relevant pieces of legislation in the future?

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REPLY:

(1) Acid mine drainage (AMD) within the Western, Central and Eastern mining Basins of the Witwatersrand gold fields, and specifically that with potential to impact on the Vaal River System, is being addressed by my Department through an emergency works AMD mitigation (short-term solution) project. A mainstay of the emergency works project is to manage AMD in the interim so as to ensure *inter alia*, water resources protection. Key project outcomes to date entail the construction of AMD treatment (neutralisation) infrastructure in the Western and Central Basins, both of which are operational. These facilities ensure that AMD is pumped to surface, treated by neutralisation (involving pH correction, precipitation of heavy metals and some sulphate [salt]), and the discharge of neutralised AMD to the environment. The process of neutralisation ensures that the quality of AMD on the receiving water resources is more acceptable. Waste material derived from the neutralisation process is translocated to registered mine waste facilities. The short-term solution for the Eastern Basin is under construction and is projected to be commissioned in December 2015.

A long-term solution for AMD management in the Witwatersrand was identified during a Feasibility Study undertaken by my Department between January 2012 and December 2013. Implementation of the long-term solution is pending finalisation of the institutional arrangements and certain regulatory processes.

Outside of the short- and long-term solutions, regulatory mechanisms contained in the National Water Act, 1998 (Act 36 of 1998) are in place to ensure that the mining sector fulfils certain obligations towards mine water/ AMD management.

(2) The response to this question falls outside the mandate of the Department, requesting Member to refer the question to Department of Minerals and Department of Environmental Affairs.

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