



**MINISTRY  
WATER AND SANITATION  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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## **MINISTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF WATER AND SANITATION**

### **Scene Setting at the 2025 WATER AND SANITATION INDABA GALLAGHER CONVENTION CENTRE , MIDRAND , GAUTENG, 27 -28 MARCH 2025,**

**His Excellency, Mr President of the Republic of South Africa**

**Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers**

**Premiers and Acting Premiers**

**MEC'S**

**Members of the Portfolio Committee on Water & Sanitation**

**SALGA Leadership**

**National House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders**

**Executive Mayors, City Managers and Municipal Managers**

**Chairpersons and CEO's of Water Entities**

**CEO's of State Owned Entities and of Private Companies**

**Representatives of Institutions of Higher Learning**

**Delegates**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

Honourable President, Esteemed fellow Ministers, distinguished guests and colleagues. First let me send my kind and sincere thankfulness, gratitude and

appreciation of everyone who heed this national call on water security from government and decided to join us here at this First Water and Sanitation Indaba.

Water has no substitution. Every drop counts, treat water as Emergency Services.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is one of the historic moments in our Country, where government led by Mr President Ramaphosa, various Ministers, Executive Mayors or various Water Services Authority, Private Sector, Institutions of Higher Learning and Civil Society to come and deliberate on water provision which government has made priority number one. To be precise Ladies and Gentlemen, this month is regarded as **Water Month**, and it coincides with what this Country marked as **Human Rights Month**. It is for this utmost commitment that we converge to take stock of Water Challenges facing us.

As we gather here, let us acknowledge the vital role water plays in our livelihood, our economies, our planet, and we should therefore commit to ensuring its sustainable management at all times is adhered to.

Distinguished guests, we are meeting here this morning under the theme: “**Call for action in ensuring water and sanitation security and provision for all citizens**”. This theme must serve as a reminder to all of us about the Bill of rights that Water is a basic and fundamental right, and the importance with which we should treat the issues of provision of water and sanitation to our people and all water users as part of our constitutional obligations.

## **CURRENT WATER SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY**

Mr President, Distinguished Guests, allow me to remind us all that in the academic and global dialogue on water security. It has been scientifically proven that water is a limited resource, and with the perpetual climate change, the Global Community is facing a great challenge when it comes to water provision, specifically the developing world where South Africa falls under, according to the **2023 World Resources**

**Institute** report on global water situation. It is estimated that almost **50%** of the world's population – around **4 billion people** live under highly water-stressed conditions for at least one month of the year due to huge decline in reliability of services. As we all know, a reduction in water services reliability affect the entire value-chain of the water-energy- and food nexus. As such without better water management, population growth, economic development and climate change will continue to worsen the water stress margins globally. At the moment, our water security is approximately in the balance with local deficits which is caused by droughts and floods

### **WHAT IS CAUSING THE GLOBAL WATER STRESS:**

**Across the world, demand for water is currently exceeding supply or available water and research shows that demand has actually doubled since the 1960s. Amongst other factors that increased demands are lack of investment in water infrastructure, unsustainable water usage and slow policy reforms, lack of operation and maintenance by water services institutions to mention a few.**

As many of you may know, our country water, **75%** availability depends on surface water, the most, **and yet we are faced with a conundrum of low rainfall seasons due to our arid and semi-arid weather conditions. To add to that, we are regarded as part of the top 30 driest countries in the world and have high water usage and water losses above the global averages. We consume 218 litres per capita per day, against the global 173 litres per capita per day and our Non-Revenue Water is 47% compared to the 30% of the World average.** These factors paint a clear picture that the current conditions needs all sectors to join the call of government made by our President by elevating **water to be Country's Priority 1** and should be afforded the commitment it deserves.

### **CURRENT WATER SECURITY IN THE COUNTRY**

**With the above situation of high water losses, slow infrastructure investment, lack of operation and maintenance, climate change and many other contributing**

**factors. It is worth mentioning that while the country's water resources are in a balance, at least 75% of our surface water has been captured and the department of water and sanitation is accelerating programmes on water mix such as ground-water, desalination, water and waste-water reclamation and reuse.**

**In addition, the government has unlocked some of the delayed water resources projects in the country such as uMkomazi Project in KZN, uMzimvubu project in Eastern Cape, the Construction of Lesotho Highlands Water Project- Phase 2 to provide more water security for provinces of Free State, North West, Mpumalanga, parts of Northern Cape and with a greater benefit of Gauteng Province. In other Provinces, the programmes to raising dam walls to capture and store more water is currently underway in Nwamitwa Dam in Limpopo, Clanwilliam's Dam in Western Cape, Hezelmerie Dam in KZN to mention just a few.**

Honourable President, we are also accelerating key water services projects such as the Olifants Management Model Programme in Limpopo where the Private Sector (Mining houses) and government are contributing **50%** each for a project that will provide water security for Sekhukhune District Municipality, Capricorn as well as Polokwane Municipality. The department is also accelerating Phase 2 of the Vaal Gamagara project in Northern Cape, Pillanesburg Bulk Project in North West and many others. However, while government is pursuing this call on infrastructure development and acceleration, the country still stands a huge risk of not achieving its SDG 6 by 2030, hence a call for action on water security by all sectors cannot be overstated.

## **MEDIUM-TERM DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

Distinguished Guests, there is no question that the availability of clean water and social development are directly related. Water is also a vital resource in the socioeconomic development process. Therefore, it made perfect sense for His Excellency, the Honourable President of the Republic, Mr Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa

to declare at his State of the Nation address that water is now the 7th Administration's top priority, as announced in the agreed-upon Medium Term Development Plan 2025–2029. Further to this call, the President made a call for the implementation of Phase 2 of Operation Vulindlela where key institutional reforms at Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Department of Water and Sanitation and National Treasury will be embarked on, with clear timelines for the next 5 years. The turnaround plan to be developed from the National Water and Sanitation Indaba deliberation have to align the approved Medium-Term Development Plan.

## **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL**

As I stated initially, like many other developed and developing countries, South Africa' reach to achieve SDG 6 by 2030 stands as risk. Over the intervening period, the state of affairs with respect to water supply and reliability has worsened and is affecting a number of communities and economic sectors. While South Africa might not be facing everything the global community is facing, we are on our own having plethora of issues that exacerbate the current water situation in the country like :

- ☐ organised criminality, water tankering, extortion mafia's, vandalism of critical public infrastructure, corruption,
- ☐ exponential growth especially in informal settlements in cities, resulting in high unplanned demands and illegal water connections,
- ☐ poor financial management, poor revenue management, escalating debt in the water sector, poor billing system
- ☐ illegal connection, over consumption, high non-revenue water,
- ☐ infrastructure decay,
- ☐ governance instability and poor enforcement of by-laws.

With the above mentioned challenges it is thus critical that the Water and Sanitation Indaba focus on mobilizing various sectors and expertise to agree on a high-level national water and sanitation turnaround plan on how to expand access to water and sanitation services to all, develop and implement measures to improve water security

and reliability of water and sanitation supply. We urge for partnership with all Institutions, to turn the tide for the better.

As evidently proven by our recent BLUE, GREEN and NO DROP reports, Many Water Services Authorities (WSAs), including certain Metros, are unable to meet their constitutional responsibilities as the results showed a decline in how the country manages its water and wastewater supply systems. The situation regarding the reliability and quantity of water has gotten worse over time, impacting several towns and economic sectors.

As a call for Action, Mr President, following on the results of the BLUE, GREEN and No Drop results, we have just finished profiling the **top 100 dismally performing municipalities** across Provinces and we will soon be embarking on a roadshow to meet all Premiers, MECs, Executive Mayors and their respective Municipal Executives where we will table our reports and intended intervention at each municipality. Mr President, while we know that the current fiscal set-up is not enough, we will use our current grant allocation and we call upon all Premiers, Executive Mayors to pass budgets that are water friendly to ensure that government achieves on its current commitments.

Mr President, we will be looking at various implementation models to support failing municipalities to ensure grants are spent on the intended purposes and that proper integrated planning is enforced accordingly.

- ❑ Water Supply is in the balance through Water Boards who play a pivotal role to ensure that clean water is provided to Municipalities and other Key Customers.
- ❑ These Water Boards are all owed by Municipalities ±R24 billion. This is a major risk to collapse water supply.
- ❑ There is no challenge of Bulk Water supply, the main challenge is reticulation of water to reach citizens underpinned by non-revenue water, we meet clean treated water running down the streets instead of it coming out of the tap in Households, because water has been pumped from the Bulk Supply.
- ❑ We are working very closely with SIU to track all Fraud and Corruption cases. To date a total amount of **R459 million** frauded from DWS has been recovered by SIU.

- ❑ We have working Terms of Reference on our route to launch Anti-Corruption Forum on Water and Sanitation Sector.
- ❑ Water Service Authorities who failed to comply on grants allocated to them. They will no longer get direct allocation from us as Department of Water and Sanitation but we shall manage and implement projects through both our grants WSIG and RIBIG.

Ladies and Gentlemen with the above said, it is thus very imperative that we meet today to commit on the strategic action plan to improve the water and sanitation situation in our country, to collectively unpack how we will ensure water security and reliability of water supply and the deliberations must be based on the following strategic pillars.

- ❑ Current Service Delivery Model of Water and Sanitation to be reviewed since water is a catalyst for economic development.
- ❑ The financing needs in the water sector are enormous—as are the opportunities. Therefore, financial Sustainability to Promote prudent funding decision for the improvement of water consumption resilience for all users, including commercial and agricultural is our priority focus area and are working with the Infrastructure Fund on the blended finance projects.
- ❑ In ensuring that we have a capable state, we will Improve capacity of Water Services Authorities and identify practical steps to advance scientific research and expand access to data while addressing gaps to improve for advancing the
- ❑ Building strong partnership and utilise a cross-sector approach to prioritize projects and investments aimed at carrying out climate-related and water-related actions, while concurrently achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through integrated solutions.
- ❑ We will further review and take stock on all the committed corrective action plans and Section 78 commitment as per the last water symposium of 2024 to measure progress thereof.
- ❑ Last but not least we must curb the growing trend of criminality, extortionist and vandalism of the infrastructure.

## **CONCLUSION**

As we kick-start this Water Indaba, I want to burden all of you with that we must come out of this Indaba resolute on how to tackle this challenge consistently with the limited resources at our disposal to ensure the water reliability of water supply, appropriate sanitation interventions and sustainable water resources management for now and for the future generation. As we do the provincial road-show to support municipality, we will be taking further stock on what municipalities will be implementing as part of the outcome of this Water Indaba and as aligned to the President' call of ensuring that Water is Priority number one in the 7<sup>th</sup> Administration and it should be afforded the commitment it deserves by all.

I thank you

**(Allow me to introduce our Guest Speaker to deliver Key Note Address)**