



MINISTRY

WATER AND SANITATION

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**OPENING ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF WATER AND SANITATION MS
NOMVULA MOKONYANE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE WATER AND
SANITATION SUMMIT, BIRCHWOOD HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTRE,
BOKSBURG**

01 AUGUST 2014

Programme Director,

Pravin Gordhan, Minister of COGTA,

Pam Tshwete, Deputy Minister of Water and Sanitation,

Cllr Mondli Gungubele, Executive Mayor of Ekurhuleni Metro,

Trevor Balzer, Acting Director-General of the Department of Water and Sanitation

Imraan Patel, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Science and Technology'

Chairpersons and CEO's of State Owned Entities and Agencies,

Senior Government Officials,

Invited guests

Media in attendance

Ladies and gentlemen

It is with humility and sense of togetherness that we requested your presence at this our first inclusive stakeholder meeting of the role-players within the water and sanitation space.

We are here, the Deputy Minister and I, to in effect request your co-operation and a meeting of the minds towards the ideal of this government of the people to really and truly better the lives of South Africans through the delivery of these very essential services we have been mandated to deliver.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is always important to remember where we come from in order for us to have a clear view of where we are going. This we do not do in order to feel sorry for ourselves but rather to appreciate the road we have travelled and also put into perspective the reality of where we need to get to.

At the dawn of democracy, the newly elected government took over a state with deep divisions, not just in terms of ideology but more so in terms of access to basic services. Hitherto, access to water was below 60% and mainly in urbanized and primarily then “white areas”. Accordingly, humane sanitation services were relatively unknown in the then “black” and rural areas, and therefore, expectations of the electorate and the people at large had to take centre stage.

Indeed, we have to also remember that the state then won accolades where its work around major infrastructure drives of dam building, inter-basin transfers and irrigation schemes were seen to be pioneering. What was then not obvious was the fact that all that effort was geared towards the comfort of the minority where the majority of citizens were destined and confined to under-serviced townships and un-serviced rural areas and Bantustans. The black majority was seen as an undeserving lot.

We cannot forget as well that in order to maintain the privileges of the white minority, the apartheid state incurred huge debts which were transferred to the new political order. The new government had to put policies and regulations that would ensure that the infrastructure that was in place servicing mainly minority section of the country had to be reconfigured to cover the rest of the population. This phase our transformation was grappled with through the Reconstruction and Development Programme. The achievement of the programme was not a mean feat.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I also indicated during the Budget Vote speech, our ideal as a department is to be guided by the National Development Plan, the Manifesto of the ruling party, the African National Congress and the second National Water Resource Strategy in our work.

Indeed we have resolved that we will apply a seamless integrated water approach. This will and must ensure that we provide a sustainable and holistic value chain of water supply from source to tap and from tap back to source.

All of these guiding documents have come to life through intense consultation and co-operation amongst partners. Such partnership must come to life in the way we do our work daily so that we do not compromise the desired outcomes that as we say must “take South Africa forward”.

The work that we do as a collective speaks to what is aptly called the “bread and butter issues” that confront our people. It cannot be right ladies and gentlemen, for a Ma-Dlamini or Rra-Mokgothu to continue to battle the elements in order to satisfy the basic needs of any human being, these being access to a safe and sustainable water supply as well as a dignified means of sanitation. It cannot be correct that

instead of returning home to study and prepare for the next day's lessons our learners must take precious time out of their days to draw water from unreliable water sources or to ensure better ablution facilities for themselves and their families, some of whom are child-headed.

Honourable Minister and guests,

Ours are indeed very complex yet exciting sectors to be involved in. We do take regard of the fact that our country is one of the thirty driest countries in the world; with the western part continuing to dry up. The challenges of climate change and inclement weather continue to be realities we have to face.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have called for this Summit conscious of the fact that as individual entities, working in isolation from one another, we will fail dismally in addressing the challenges to our country and people in the area of water and sanitation. We can only succeed by forging strong and meaningful partnerships based on a clear Programme of Action and a shared vision.

This, then, brings me to the issues that we have identified as central for this two-day engagement:

- Meeting the Service Delivery Challenge
- The Water and Sanitation Policy Environment
- Water Research, Technology and Innovation Choices
- The State of South Africa's Water Resources, and
- The Role of the Private Sector

We must even as we discuss and engage remember the role of local government in service delivery, thus the critical inputs by Minister Gordhan. This should include the role of science and technology for renewal and innovation as well as development and research.

Private sector has a very key and central role to play in helping unlock the growth and development of this key sector of water and sanitation. We also cannot and dare not downplay the role of civil society in the water and sanitation space.

We have to collectively take pride in the achievements of our fledgling democracy in the first twenty years of its life. As the two days' activities roll out, let us remember that our work is not about ourselves, but is rather about consolidating the gains that we have made over time, and ensuring that indeed "***Water is Life, sanitation is Dignity***".

Dankie

Ngiyabonga