



**OPENING ADDRESS BY MINISTER NOMVULA MOKONYANE AT THE INTERNATIONAL
GENDER, WATER AND DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE, EAST LONDON 4 NOVEMBER
2014**

- Programme Director: Barbara Schreiner
- Hon. Pam Tshwete , Deputy Minister , South Africa
- Hon. Mutaaz Musa Abdalla Alim, Minister , Sudan
- Hon. Kasukuwere Saviour, Minister, Zimbabwe (Represent President of AMCOW)
- Hon. Rahimzoda Sulton; Deputy Minister; Tajikistan
- Hon. Z. Kota-Fredericks; Deputy Minister; South Africa
- Hon. MM Soty, Deputy Minister of Police, South Africa
- Mr Phumulo Masualle, Premier of the Eastern Cape, South Africa
- Ms N Ncita, Mayor of BCM, South Africa
- Dr Dyantyi, MEC for Health-EC, South Africa
- Mr Lulu Johnson, Water and Sanitation Portfolio committee chairperson, South Africa
- Hon. Lucas Lempy, Deputy Minister, Namibia
- Mr Bai Maas Taal, Executive Secretary, AMCOW
- Mr Phera Ramoeli , SADC Secretariat , SADC Water Division
- Participating delegates from the 35 countries represented here today.

Colleagues and fellow delegates welcome to the inaugural Gender, Water and Development conference let me as well, appreciate the presence of my colleagues from in and around the Continent and East Europe who have travelled and made time to assist us as will deliberate for the next four days on how to involve Women in the Water Sector. The purpose of the conference is about mainstreaming gender focus in line with AMCOW Gender Strategy.

I also wish to sincerely thank the Government of South Africa for granting us this opportunity to host this conference, not forgetting the Eastern Cape Province for hosting us, in particular Premier, Phumulo Masualle.

In the spirit of the conference theme, which is “*The Untapped Connection*” we would aspire to help connect women, especially, those from the rural areas who had been denied the right to clean water and had been forced to share water with animals.

Programme Director,

This conference has an important role to play in promoting and sharing of experiences from different countries on Gender Equality and Youth Development in the Water Sector, which are critical components of our societies and central in advancing equality and equity. This platform should provide an opportunity for all of us to craft a new vision, common solutions and partnerships to overcome challenges still faced by women in the Continent.

Ladies and gentlemen, you will surely agree with me that South Africa is one of the countries where women contributed immensely in the fight against Apartheid and

oppression, they have been involved in different protests and have participated in historical events such as the anti-1913 Land Act led by Charlotte Maxeke, the 1956 march led by Lillian Ngoyi, against the pass laws. Although the dream of those women has been realised many decades later, we honour them for their sterling contribution to the economic, social and political emancipation of the people of South Africa, in particular women. However, in the same breath, the Youth became the game changers through the 1976 Uprising that turned around the education system and advanced the liberation of the people of South Africans.

As we all are aware, Water is Life and Sanitation is Dignity, the involvement of women in the sector is therefore important in accumulating considerable knowledge about water resources management, including water consumption, conservation, quality and storage methods. However, efforts geared towards improving the management of water as a scarce resource and extending access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation, often overshadow the central role of women in water management.

As part of a sustainable program to improve the participation of women in the water sector, the department has put an effort in identifying projects of excellence that are driven by women within their communities to be recognised at the Annual Women in Water Awards. The purpose of the awards has helped in encouraging and involving women to come up with new innovative means to help save water. These women come up with contemporary solutions of water resource management through indigenous knowledge including developing new technologies.

It is therefore important for this conference to come up with clear game changers that will take women a step further in the sector, the sharing of water with animals by women in the rural areas should be a thing of the past and instead women should be the developers and implementers of water of new technologies and innovation.

Women are under-represented in the 'water sector', women are lacking behind and this conference must assist with identifying gaps and help put women in the fore-front of this sector.

As part of this effort, the Women Leaders for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) are championing the role of women in decision-making, capacity building, educating children on sanitation and hygiene, and mobilizing political will around other priorities such as the linkages between water, sanitation, hygiene and HIV/AIDS.

Program director,

The World Water Council, comprising of members of Minister of Water globally, supports the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) to further encourage progress and achieve reasonable water security in the world. In addition, The World Water Council supports the proposal on "securing sustainable water for all", and draws particular attention to measurable and interconnected targets, especially those related to:

- Achieving universal access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene;
- Improving the sustainable use and development of water resources;
- Strengthening water governance;
- Improving water quality and wastewater management, and;
- Reducing risks of water-related disasters.

The upcoming 7th World Water Forum in Daegu-Gyeongbuk, Republic of Korea, 12-17 April 2015 will offer the perfect opportunity to create implementation roadmaps to enable the achievement of a dedicated water SDG concretely and collaboratively in the coming decades. This effort will be reinforced through the Forum's multiple process, including regional and political outreach at several decision-making levels.

Water must be appreciated, not only as an end in itself, but as a springboard to development and should be considered throughout the SDG framework, both inside and outside of the "water box." As such, it is necessary to work in partnership with the countries and organizations involved in other goals of food security, risk management, energy, sustainable cities, health, and ecosystems, to be sure that targets relative to water will be linked to these goals.

It is easy to draft global goals, but difficult to implement them, especially when financial flows are stressed. Because of the all-encompassing role of water within development, there is no way to break the vicious cycle of poverty unless we invest in water resources' development and management of uncertainty and risk, along with water and sanitation access.

The conference will in various sessions be deliberating on a number of issues that hinge on the essence of gender and development in the water sector. These will, include amongst other, issues such as:

- Policy, Legislation and Human Rights;
- Gender mainstreaming in African Water Policies and Strategies, especially, as to how far we have come.

An enormous challenge lies ahead of us – such as ensuring that we build and sustain partnerships across borders and gender stereotypes as well as the development of a shared vision on water resource management and conservation.

It is my believe that working together we can achieve all the goals and objectives that as conference we have set ourselves by giving answers to the challenges that women face in this particular sector.

I once again welcome you to this conference and hereby declare it open.

Dankie

Ngiyabonga