



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

INTERNET ARTICLE

DWS holds first roundtable discussion to address water pollution

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The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) held a first-of-its-kind roundtable discussion on water pollution which brought together a variety of stakeholders in a bid to address one of the biggest challenges besetting the country.

The discussion, which aimed to deal with fragmentation in government's approach to tackling issues of common concern, was held at the Department's Emanzini Building in Pretoria on 28 August 2018.

Amongst the discussion's objectives was to foster integration between the different Departments and to root out fragmentation that characterises government's response to the cross-cutting issue of water pollution.

Departments that attended the discussion included Science and Technology, Environmental Affairs, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and Cooperative Governance as well as the Water Research Commission (WRC).

Ms Nthabiseng Fundakubi, the DWS's Chief Operating Officer (COO), welcomed all participants, saying that their presence reflected the kind of skills that would ensure that the objectives of the roundtable discussion were met.

"The purpose of today is about water pollution. Water is a challenge in our country and we are amongst one of the driest countries in the world but also are grappling with the challenge of water losses. Hence, the War on Leaks (WoL) is one of our means to curb the water losses," said Ms Fundakubi, adding that losing water through leaks meant that revenue was lost.

She said water was a catalyst that affects the economic growth of the country, and expressed her excitement that the roundtable would provide a valuable platform for realising the objectives that the roundtable discussion had set.

Setting the scene, DWS's Chief Director: Mine Water, Mr Marius Keet, started by explaining what was meant by water pollution, saying it was the direct or indirect alteration of the physical, chemical or biological properties of a water resource to make it less fit for any beneficial purpose for which it may be used for or harmful or potentially harmful to the various uses.

Mr Keet said there were many challenges country-wide which included, but not limited to, legacies on water quality and poor maintenance and aging of waste water infrastructure.

He said: "For instance mining was an economic driver but now government has to clean up. Many years ago if you drove around the mining industry you would have said this is great because there is some development in the country. But today you would immediately ask yourself what type of pollution is coming from there."



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He said roles and responsibilities with regard to water quality management were not clear and in some instances duplicated, leading to lack of accountability when it came to non-performance.

“The Department is the custodian of water management but does not have a champion to drive the inter and intra initiatives and Monitoring in some form is done by all relevant Departments, but information is not shared,” noted Mr Keet, adding that data was being captured on various systems but never turned into useful information to allow managers to manage optimally.

He said despite the challenges there were a number of achievements that have been made, which include, amongst others, the revival of the Water Quality Forum including all regional offices and the relevant Head Office components and the establishment of various Inter departmental working groups.

All sector players made presentations, highlighting some of the challenges they were faced with while also providing solutions to some of these challenges. Common to all the presentations made by the WRC and the different Departments was the need for all sector Departments and role-players in the water value chain to work closer together.

To concretely deal with water pollution across the country and to nudge all stakeholders to work cooperatively, a team which comprised members from various Departments was formed to work with local government to resolve the challenge.

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