

**5<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum**  
**Ministerial Roundtable : Making Water a Tool for Development in Africa**  
**Closing Statement by Mrs L B Hendricks, Minister of Water Affairs and**  
**Forestry**  
**Sutluce Congress and cultural centre**  
**Istanbul, Turkey**  
**22 March 2009, 09:30 To 11:30**

Chairperson

Ministers

Deputy Ministers

Ambassadors

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning. It is my pleasure to report back on the outcome of the Ministerial Roundtable “Making Water a Tool for Development in Africa.

At the outset let me say that this was an extremely well attended and participative session. It was very clear from the inputs and discussions that there is over whelming consensus on the very urgent need to move from “commitment to implementation”, by the African Ministers attending this Forum. Water must be mainstreamed in all political agendas and we must focus on implementing the various political declarations and commitments which have been made during the last few years (some examples are the eThekweni, the Tunis and the Sirte Ministerial Declarations and the Sharm El-Sheikh Heads of State Commitments).

In particular, we need to build on the elements of the plan of action for the implementation of the Sharm El-Shaik declaration and commitments on water and sanitation. The need for comprehensive national Water strategy/action plans (road maps) was emphasised. Furthermore we need to resuscitate the G8 Evian

Water Action Plan. In fact as we stand here today we cannot, and should not, allow ourselves to just adopt yet another Ministerial Statement without making very firm and tangible commitments for a “call to action” and ensuring that effective mechanisms are put in place to monitor implementation (a form of “peer review” may be necessary).

Water security is undoubtedly the key to unlocking the growth potential of Africa and is absolutely necessary for development, and indeed, given our vulnerability to the potential impacts of climate change, the danger of not managing our water resources has the potential to retard our development. In this regard we have to ensure that we achieve the correct balance in our water mix in terms of the use of surface water, return flows, groundwater, rainwater harvesting, desalination and effluent re-use. In terms of dealing with the vulnerability of communities in the face of climate variability, there has to be a greater focus on gender mainstreaming with a particular reference to women and girl children.

Given the natural and historical legacy of Africa’s water resources, trans-boundary river management is a necessity. These co-operative arrangements will provide a significant opportunity for regional integration and the use of trans-boundary resources within a ‘win win’ environment.

The immediate thrust of in-country and regional level actions must be on improving delivery to achieve the MDGs through the instruments that are already in place. In this regard, progress will only be made if the current constraints to funding are removed in order to deliver results. While the Ministers recognised the negative effects of the current world economic and financial crisis, there is nevertheless a need for a major expansion of Africa’s infrastructure assets and the protection of existing assets, in ways that will support economic growth and development. This will of course require a significant scaling up of finance to

meet the object of accelerating progress on and meeting the MDGs and delivering on economic growth. Governments must engage/embark in multi-sectoral development planning and inter-sectoral dialogues in preparing investment plans and financing strategies that will combine resources from taxes, tariffs and transfers.

Our Development Partners are encouraged to support and commit to the implementation of the African water agenda through existing mechanism such as the African Water Facility and the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Initiatives and any other new initiatives where this is necessary. The African Development Bank (AfDB) in particular, has declared that they are ready and have made a commitment to assist countries in implementing national water strategies, our other Development Partners must also therefore come on board.

In conclusion, the way forward is to: (i) follow-up on creating new partnerships/links with other intergovernmental processes; (ii) the mainstreaming of water in political and development agendas; (iii) moving away from the implementation of the very popular pilot projects to the implementation of large scale projects; and, (iv) increasing budgets for water and sanitation.

I thank you