

5th World Water Forum

Ministerial Roundtable : Making Water a Tool for Development in Africa

Address by Mrs L B Hendricks, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry

Ceylan Intercontinental Hotel, Istanbul, Turkey

21 March 2009, 09:00 To 13:00

Ministers

Panel Members

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning. In order to set the scene for the Roundtable discussion this morning, I am going to use this opportunity to make reference to our experiences and the work we have done in South Africa on the formulation of our Water for Growth and Development Strategy.

We are currently managing a cross-sectoral approach to water management in South Africa through our *Water for Growth and Development* framework. This framework represents my Government's commitment to water security for the people, the economy, and the environment. Through the framework emphasis is being placed on the life-sustaining importance of water as a scarce resource and to focus the attention on the fact that, unless the continuous judicious use and effective management of our water resources is taken on board by every stakeholder, water availability could become a constraint on growth and development in the future.

South Africa's water management policies and legislation provide for participative water governance and through our established water management and water services institutions powers and responsibilities will be delegated to relevant levels. Although many of these institutions have already been established, the processes of

their establishment and shared water management by (and in conjunction with these institutions) is complex.

South Africa is classified amongst the driest countries by world standards. We have to therefore ensuring that the water we have is protected from pollution, is conserved and used efficiently. This requires the careful management of this valuable resource so that we are able to ensure universal access to basic water services to every citizen (this is a basic human right in terms of our Constitution) whilst also meeting the needs of economic growth in a way that does not threaten the environmental integrity of our water resources. We constantly have to balance the increasing and competing demands on the country's limited water resources, ever mindful of the fact that water for social development, economic growth and environmental sustainability are all equally important for the success and prosperity. We see water Security as the key to unlocking our growth potential and is therefore absolutely necessary for development, and indeed, the dangers of not managing our water resources has the potential to retard our development. We are also very mindful of our vulnerability to the potential impact of climatic change.

Our **Water for Growth and Development Framework** is the result of two years of consultations with key players in the water sector. It is an initiative which has been considered and approved by our Cabinet and we are currently engaging in an extensive consultation process with all stakeholders involved in the water sector regarding the implementation of the recommendations emanating from this Framework. The process of developing the framework has forced both government and the water sector partners to confront some hard truths about challenges in the sector, it has also provided a platform for us to continue to engage in seeking appropriate long-term solutions to respond to these challenges.

We see this framework is a ground breaking initiative that will set in motion a course of action to ensure that there is sufficient water, in both qualitative and

quantitative terms, to support South Africa's growth trajectory and development. We have to ensure that there is sufficient water available for us to achieve our economic growth targets. At the same time we need to ensure that we meet our 2014 target for universal access to water and basic sanitation. Needless to say, that these goals have to be achieved in a way that we do not compromise the ecological sustainability of the resource. Having said this, we do realise that we are going to have to make some very difficult and bold decisions in the way we harness and allocate our available resources which will have to be very different to the way we have done this in the past. Through the Water for Growth and Development Framework, we will pursue a course of action that will ensure that in future, informed decisions and trade-offs with regard to water use are taken in support of any cross-sectoral planning and development initiatives.

Our water availability and quality has been negatively affected by illegal abstraction, water pollution and the poor management of water resources infrastructure. We are therefore exploring the most cost-effective and appropriate options to augment the country's water supply as complementary alternatives to the traditional but expensive augmentation schemes such as the construction of dams and inter-basin water transfers. These alternatives include water loss control, water conservation and demand management, effluent re-use or effluent recycling, desalination for coastal locations and groundwater abstraction.

We are engaging extensively and intensively with water sector users in order to: (i) ensure the mainstreaming of water use requirements in our critical sectoral planning decisions; (ii) effecting a change in water use behaviour among those who negatively affect our water resources; (iii) the setting of targets per water use sector; and (iv) implementing a mix of mechanisms to effect these changes which will include regulatory and market-based instruments, self-regulation, awareness and education.

I will now briefly make reference to the seven key recommendations contained in the Framework as well as some of the actions which will be taken:

Strengthening institutional capacity

We have embarked on a process of institutional establishment and re-alignment to ensure that the Catchment Management Agencies are able to fulfil the critical water resource management functions at a basin level.

Mainstreaming water

Water must be placed at the heart of all development planning decisions, to ensure that any decisions taken that rely on the steady water supply both from a quantitative and qualitative point of view are adequately factored into water availability.

Diversifying the water mix

The diversification of our current water mix is important in terms of having greater flexibility in providing for future water needs. Currently our water availability is based on surface water (77%), return flows (14%) and groundwater (9%). Through our assessment studies (referred to as Reconciliation Strategies) where we reconcile supply and demand for both water scarce areas as well as those experiencing high levels of demand, we have identified that desalination and effluent re-use must be included in our water mix. Such a mix will depend on the most affordable and appropriate source, as well as the volume of water required. The desalination of seawater for limited productive uses in coastal locations is considered highly feasible.

Striking a balance between supply and demand-side measures

It is our intention to give priority to the establishment of a Water Demand Funding Facilitation Unit to provide support to municipalities in their effort to expand water conservation and demand management. One the key challenges to sustained and healthy water supplies is the poor maintenance of

waste-water treatment works (WWTW). Recommendations are made with regard to the possible restructuring of the Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) so that a greater proportion of the budget is used for the purposes of WWTW rehabilitation and construction.

Addressing service backlogs

While we have made much progress and are still very confident that we will achieve our 2014 target for universal access to water and sanitation services, we are looking at other options in terms of dealing with the water service backlogs which could include rainwater harvesting as well as the further exploitation of groundwater sources.

Changing water use behaviour for the future

Two very concerning sets of behaviours have been identified which we will be dealing with: The first is the unlawful and damaging extraction from and pollution of some of our rivers and secondly, the extent of water use inefficiencies within the commercial irrigated agriculture sector. In this regard we are considering other interventions such as water allocation reform, water-trading regulation and the promotion of techniques to enhance water use efficiency by the agricultural sector.

Nurturing attitudinal and behavioural changes towards the value of water

Also of importance is the value of awareness-raising campaigns. We are in the process of conceptualising and launching a massive national awareness campaign, which will aim to instil a sense of appreciation of the value of water among all of our citizens.

In bringing my input to a conclusion, let me stress Ladies and Gentlemen that water is a shared responsibility. We have to make water everybody's business. We need to strengthen multi-stakeholder dialogues on the security

and the utilisation of our water to achieve balanced and sustainable socio-economic development.

In this regard, practical actions would include:

- Increased research on improved appropriate technology to deal with various challenges (water quality, storage, access, recycling etc);
- Financing of the various initiatives to improve water availability and quality;
- Skills development and knowledge management; and
- Institutional development and support.

Finally, we do understand that there is no single solution to remedy the growing water stress and rainfall unreliability which will be exacerbated by the impact of climate change. Our Water for Growth and Development Framework addresses these key issues, it is a framework that maps a course of action to ensure that the central role of water is promoted as a cross-sectoral input that supports social development, economic growth and ecological sustainability.

I Thank you