



**MINISTER
WATER AND SANITATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**SPEAKING NOTES FOR MINISTER FOR WATER AND SANITATION
OPENING ADDRESS: WISA BIENNIAL CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION 2018
25 JUNE 2018, CTICC, CAPE TOWN**

Programme Director

President and CEO of WISA

Excellencies and members of the Diplomatic Corps

Members of Parliament

International and Local Guests

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning. Thank you for being here at this very important 2018 WISA Biennial Conference and Exhibition which is being held under the theme: “Breaking Boundaries, Connecting Ideas”, a Conference which has brought together a significant cross section of the Water Family from South Africa, the Continent and International participants.

The Southern African region faces increased uncertainty and vulnerability regarding water supply and we are still emerging from one of the worst droughts in many years. Furthermore, we live in a country that is the 30th driest in the world; a country where water and sanitation services were previously used to promote inequality.

In 2003, Nelson Mandela said: “The very right to be human is denied every day to hundreds of millions of people as a result of poverty, the unavailability of basic necessities such as food, jobs, water and shelter, education, health care and a healthy environment”.

We need to face up to these inequalities where they exist and in South Africa in particular, robustly deal with the more than 3 million people who do not have access to a safe and reliable water supply, the 14.1 million people who do not have access to safe sanitation and furthermore deal with the very low level of reliability of services (64%) as a result of aging infrastructure and poor operations and maintenance.

The thematic areas for the conference seek to promote, inspire and demonstrate the value of working beyond existing mandates and perceived restrictions. While an emphasis is placed on Southern African case studies and research, international examples applicable to the Southern African context are welcome.

We anticipate therefore, that this conference will present some of the solutions to deal with these afore mentioned inequalities. With this in mind, and as we work through the Conference programme, as we network and as we share best practice examples in water resources management and water and sanitation services provision, let us dedicate this conference as well as the outcomes to the memory of our icons, President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela and Mama Albertina Nontsikelelo Sisulu whose Centenary we are celebrating this year.

This year’s WISA theme of “Breaking barriers, connecting ideas” seeks to address the past, existing and future water resource challenges by promoting collaboration, cooperation and integration within the water sector. This supports the objective to create the perfect opportunity for people in the water sector to network with sector partners, to create new partnerships as well as strengthen existing ones and work together to achieve a common goal of sustainable water resources and water services provision.

Furthermore, this conference provides a vibrant forum for exchange of information and views to improve water resource management and water services provision in southern Africa. It is in this conference where sustainable long term mechanisms to increase the levels of competency and education in the water sector must be discussed, considered and proposals made for improving human capacity of the sector. After all, WISA is recognized as a Professional Body by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) so you must capitalize on this competitive advantage.

Having just completed a 100 days of very intensive “Induction” into the Water Sector, we now have a much better understanding of some of the challenges facing the South African Water Sector in particular. As an outcome of this induction, we have developed a five pillar turn-around strategy, aspects of which can only take effect in the next Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF 2019 to 2024). These Pillars are:

- **A National Water Resources and Services Authority:** This Authority will be established to finance, develop, manage and operate national water resource infrastructure and sanitation.

- **A National Water Resources and Services Regulator:** The possibility of an independent economic regulator to regulate tariffs, standards and performance in the water services sector has been proposed and processes are underway to consult on the appropriateness of such an institution.
- **A Water Resources and Services Value Chain:** The water and sanitation sector is currently comprised of a large number of institutions with a complex suite of functions divided amongst them, which creates an overly complex value chain (currently 428 entities) which we need to streamline.
- **A Water Resources and Services Master Plan:** A Plan which sets out prioritised actions and investments we must implement between now and 2030 to overcome challenges and ensure a water secure future supporting inclusive development across the country, and also to ensure that universal sanitation coverage protects the health of our people.
- **Institutional Rationalisation and Organisational alignment:** An early action will be to establish a business case for streamlined institutional rationalisation and organisational alignment in the water sector in accordance with the outcomes of the Presidential review on State Owned Enterprises (SOEs).

These pillars require implementation support from all levels within the sector. As a first step to give effect to these pillars, we have streamlined the organogram of the Department in order to respond more efficiently and effectively to the challenges. As a second step the National Water and Sanitation Master Plan will be shortly presented to Cabinet for approval. The Five Pillars are fully embedded into the Master Plan and the more detailed implementation plans will be finalized through an intensive round of stakeholder engagements which will take place during the latter half of this year.

Given that the key objectives of the Institute which are the promotion of and application of scientific and engineering knowledge and management skills in the planning, design, control, operation, maintenance, investigation, research and education within the natural and controlled water cycle: WISA is therefore very well placed to support the Department of Water and Sanitation, other government departments, local government and water institutions in the water sector in these specialist areas.

Let us also recognize and welcome the Wet-skills Challenge participants who are also with us. The six teams are made up of graduate trainees and final year university students from South Africa, Lesotho and the Netherlands. The teams have been presented with case studies and they have had to develop innovative solutions to the case studies. This is the fourth time that the Challenge has been held in South Africa and culminates here at WISA. This challenge is designed to:

- Involve and energize young talent to enter and stay in the water sector, and
- Create a network of young professionals and international universities supported by companies/governments in the global water sector.

Before concluding, it is important to highlight the necessity of partnerships and collaboration with organisations in the international environment, as this brings with it significant opportunities for enhancing our local expertise and benchmarking ourselves

so that we are able to become a world class water sector. We of course also have a lot to offer our international partners in terms of our own expertise and the very significant research, development and innovation by our own institutions such as the Water Research Commission (WRC), the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and our Universities.

With regard to partnerships we must recognize and appreciate the following:

- Firstly: South Africa, working closely with other African members of the High Level Panel on Water (HLPW), Mauritius, Senegal, and others is being supported by Global Water Partnership (GWP) to follow up on the recommendations of the HLPW and implement an Africa HLPW Legacy Initiative: The Africa Investment programme on Water, Job creation and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) implementation (the Africa Legacy Initiative will include and promote relevant activities of the HLPW Water Action Decade 2018-2028). We will be working together with the African Ministers on Water (AMCOW) and will host one of the regional consultations on Valuing Water, Job Creation and Industrialisation.
- Secondly: Recognise the very positive support by the Netherlands Government and the Kingdom of Denmark in providing resources with the preparation of the Master Plan;
- Thirdly: The conclusion of a new Memorandum of Understanding between South Africa and the Netherlands and one of the programmes is the "Kingfisher Programme" which will be signed during the conference; and
- Finally: The fourth Wet Skills event where our youth have participated in solving challenges in the water sector in South Africa which will also be concluded during the course of the conference. The Wet Skills winner will be announced tomorrow after the participants make their final presentations.

In conclusion, WISA as a family of water professionals and organisations involved in every aspect of the water industry is well positioned to address the many challenges we face and to ensure that the gains we have made continue to produce and surpass our achievements thus far. Through continued engagement on all water related issues, strong partnerships, robust legislation and policies and consistent implementation of our policies, we will be better placed to respond to the challenges of climate change, broadening access to water and sanitation services, ensuring acceptable drinking water quality and any other challenges which may confront us.

I hope that when this Conference comes to its close you are able to take from the Conference concrete actions that will indeed result in improved water security in the shortest possible time. To achieve this, we need to strengthen stakeholder commitment to work together in the spirit of "Thuma Mina".

I wish you a successful Conference and encourage you to be robust in your deliberations. It is therefore my pleasure to declare the Conference open.

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