

**ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF WATER AFFAIRS AND FORESTRY  
RONNIE KASRILS  
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE EXTENSIONS  
TO THE SHEMULA PROJECT IN KWAZULU-NATAL  
SATURDAY, 23 OCTOBER**

HRH King Goodwill Zwelithini, Mr Mthethwa (*Chairperson of uThungulu Regional Council*), Mr Mike Mabuya Khulu, (*MEC for Economic Development and Tourism*), Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour to be present here today. It is always a pleasure to come to KwaZulu-Natal, especially this particular area which is full of memories for me. It was here that on the borders of Swaziland and Mozambique where we had our bases, I was active for many years before we won our freedom. And very near here, in the Lubombo hills, four young men like Tunki Maphumulo, Post Khuzwayo and Jameson Mngomezulu died. Like so many of those who struggled for an end to apartheid, they paid the ultimate price.

That part of the struggle has been won. But, as we all know, there are other struggles ahead.

To this day, in this province, we see women and children carrying heavy containers of water in the scorching heat of day. Often that water comes from polluted rivers and springs.

This government has promised that every citizen shall have access to good, clean drinking water and sanitation. Our Constitution guarantees this. It also gives us the right to dignity.

This means that, instead of toiling up and down hills with buckets of water on water on their heads, our women and children must have easy access to clean unpolluted drinking water close to home. It means that our children must go to school and learn rather than walking miles to fetch water. It means that our people must be healthy and well. They must not be forced to drink polluted water which can makes them very sick.

These are the things we must attend to now. Because, although a good start has been made, there are still large areas in South Africa where people do not have these basic rights.

As Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, it is my responsibility to make sure that we bring good clean water to the people of this area.

So what have we done to try to make this happen?

My Department has established a special branch whose job it is to create community based water supply and sanitation projects.

A number of projects are underway. R500 million has been spent on 200 rural water and sanitation projects in this province. In two years, these projects will have been completed and will bring basic levels of safe drinking water close to the homes of over a million people in the province for the first time. Other projects must be set up and implemented to cater for the other three and a half million people who urgently need to be catered for, in this Province alone.

However, our greatest problem has been, not the setting up of projects, but making sure that sustainable delivery happens.

The idea has been that national government would initiate projects, but actual delivery would happen at local level.

But, as we know, the ideal of ensuring local delivery of services to South Africans has proved to be extremely difficult. In many places, particularly in our rural areas, the local infrastructure has been hard to establish and often finds it hard to deliver everything that has been promised. This, of course, is because of our past and the fact that our people are sometimes very new to the complex process of local delivery.

This is a great worry, because it means that, even if we set up grand projects, we may not be able to sustain them. So, one of the things I need to do as Minister is look carefully at ways we can make sure that all the projects we put in place ... remain in place.

In other words, the delivery of water and sanitation must be a fact and not just a promise. And how we sustain these projects will be a very important part of my work as Minister.

We are gathered here today to celebrate the official opening of the Second Phase of the Shemula Water Project.

This is a very important project, because it brings an end to water supply problems in the town of Ingwavuma and Shemula. Now, for the first time, secure water supply services will be available in this part of our lovely country.

The Shemula project builds on the earlier success of the Ndumu Pilot Water Supply Project and the resulting Presidential Lead Project at Shemula. It

extends the infrastructure to enable access to safe basic water services to a further fifty thousand people in this area.

This is a very great thing and we must pay tribute to the efforts of the local leadership and communities who have helped make this project possible. This is your project and it will bring dignity and a better life to all who have access to it.

This project is new today. The pumps are new, the pipes are new, the reservoirs are new and the standpipes are new, and it will work well. But, it is like a newborn baby. As it grows older, it will need love and care to stay healthy, and that love and care will have to come from its parents, the people of Shemula and Ingwavuma.

This means that the people of Shemula and Ingwavuma must handle their standpipes carefully so they are not damaged by accident. Water and pumping costs must be saved, so taps must not be left running. The water must be paid for so the pumps can keep running and there will always be water in the reservoirs and the pipes. If everybody joins hands and looks after this infant, it will grow to bring happiness and health to its family for many generations to come.

Government at all levels must put its shoulder behind this project and make sure it is sustainable. This means that the uThungulu Regional Council, backed by the Provincial and National Government must take responsibility for making sure that people continue to receive clean water and adequate sanitation ... not just for a short while, but for ever.

I want to commend the uThungulu Regional Councils for the trust and support they have shown. My best wishes go to the Amanzi Trust for the smooth operation and maintenance of the project. If you build on the successes of the first phase of the project, I am sure you will be able to solve the problems you may encounter in the future. And last but not least, I want to thank Mhlathuze Water as the implementing agent who, together with their consultants and trainers, made this all possible.

I want to assure you all of my support, and that of my Department, in your quest to improve the living standards of the people of this province.

Councillor Mthethwa (*Chair of uThungulu Regional Council*), I congratulate you with this wonderful new project and wish you well in securing its long term maintenance and operation. People of Shemula and Ingwavuma, enjoy the safe drinking water from your project and take good care of it. The implementing agent, consultants and trainers who helped to build this project, thank you for assisting our people to make their dream come true, and thank you for serving the RDP policies of our nation.

I salute you.

## **OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY**

With this safe, clean water from the project I congratulate (toast) the people of Shemula and Ingwavuma. Take good care of your project and it will serve you for many generations to come. I declare the Shemula Extension Project now officially open.

Viva Water, Pure and Clean!!!

Thank you.