

MEDIA RELEASE



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JOINT MEDIA RELEASE BY THE MINISTER OF WATER AFFAIRS AND FORESTRY, MR RONNIE KASRILS AND THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR, MR TRISTAN D'ALBIS

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FRANCE TO HELP SOUTH AFRICA EXPAND A TRAINING CENTRE FOR THE WATER SECTOR

Mr Ronnie Kasrils, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, and Mr Tristan d'Albis, the Ambassador of France to South Africa, today signed a financial agreement for the expansion of a training centre for the water sector.

Through this initiative, the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry expects to train more than 2000 plumbers and other water technicians in priority areas over the next three years. By empowering semi-skilled individuals, it is hoped to enable them to ensure the setting up and maintenance of water networks in their respective communities.

France is providing a grant of 5 million Franc, out of a total estimated at 19 million Franc, towards the strengthening of the centre in the Northern Province. The centre will be an extension of the National Community Water and Sanitation Training Institute (NCWSTI) of the University of the North. It is expected to be generating its own funds at the end of the initial three years. This centre will be established with the co-operation of Japan, Netherlands,

the Flemish community of Belgium and the support of companies in this sector.

The French will fund the training component, which is indispensable in ensuring the sustainability of the project. In this regard, the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, the NCWSTI and the Co-operation and Cultural Service of the French Embassy, have agreed to expand the existing training programme for the water sector to include professionals in the sector as well as and ordinary citizens. In the first phase the Northern Province, KwaZulu Natal and Eastern Cape, will be the main beneficiaries of this project.

Since the first democratic elections in 1994, one of the principal objectives of the government has been to reduce the inequalities inherited from apartheid. Access to clean water and sanitation, closer than 200 meters from the household, are priorities. Considerable efforts have been made and 7 million people have been connected to drinking water networks. Despite this, some 7 million people, mainly in rural areas, do not have access to this basic service,

In order to reduce these inequalities, a large scale programme has begun to connect more than 2,5 million people to water networks between 2001 and 2004. This programme is estimated at R2, 2 billion. The European Union supports this project with an amount of 75 million Euro (R525 million)

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