



## **JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **MINISTERS SANCTION THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PHASE II OF THE LESOTHO HIGHLANDS WATER PROJECT**

**Maseru, Lesotho: 13 July 2018**

The Minister of Water and Sanitation, Honourable Gugile Nkwinti, visited Lesotho on 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> July 2018 in response to the invitation by his counterpart, Minister of Water in Lesotho, Honourable Samonyane Ntsekele.

On the first day Honourable Nkwinti, accompanied by the South African High Commissioner to Lesotho, His Excellency Sello Moloto were taken on a guided tour of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) sites by Honourable Minister Ntsekele.

The Lesotho Highlands Development Authority then made presentations to the two Ministers on Project implementation, challenges and issues of concern.

The Ministers emphasized the need to take concrete measures and strategies to bring to realization the Phase II Agreement provision to ensure that companies registered in Lesotho and in South Africa equally share the monetary value of all infrastructure works. They further reaffirmed the key tenet that all procurement processes shall foster competitiveness, transparency, cost effectiveness and quality-

The Ministers further reaffirmed their commitment towards the empowerment of both Basotho and South African previously disadvantaged entities, women and youth, people with disabilities to ensure that they can in turn later effectively compete with the multinationals who currently dominate the global market. The Ministers underscored the need for developing measures, creating opportunities and encouraging sub-contracting to smaller local firms.

The lead firms will be given specific targets for mentoring and capacitating small companies to a point where they will be sufficiently capacitated to effectively compete in the procurement of goods and services throughout the water value chain.

The Ministers underscored the need for succession planning and building capacity for sustainable operation and maintenance of the physical structures created by the Project. Deliberate measures shall be taken to ensure that local Basotho are capacitated to carry out operations and maintenance of the infrastructure post construction phase. The Ministers charged the officials to develop concrete programmes for capacity building and assessment of the impact of that intervention.

The Ministers took cognizance of the environmental degradation that continues to take place in Lesotho and in particular within the Project Area. They affirmed their commitment to upscaling measures to ensure protection of the environment. This will include ensuring that the Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) system is fully implemented taking into consideration the involvement of the local communities.

Furthermore, the Ministers underscored the importance of taking into account lessons learnt during implementation of Phase I of the LHWP and committed to ensure that Phase I complaints from affected communities are adequately addressed. They also confirmed that implementation of Phase II will ensure that the lives of the people living within the Project area are improved and that people benefit in a tangible way.

The meeting of the Ministers demonstrates the cordial relations between Lesotho and South Africa, and is also seen as the continuation of the deepening of the ties between the two countries.

Following their one-on-one political meeting, the ministers acknowledged the vital role and contribution of the Project to the socio-economic development needs of both countries. They reaffirmed their commitment to its successful implementation.

The Ministers identified and committed to address the following potential obstacles which may impact negatively on the successful and timeous implementation of the Phase II of the Project:

- Cross border movement of people, goods and services
- Issuing of mining licenses in the environmentally sensitive areas of the Project
- Work permits issues
- Tax related matters
- implementation of hydropower component
- Timeous decision making by Designated Authorities.

The meeting affirmed the continued healthy co-operation between both Governments, especially on transboundary water resources management. The Ministers recognized the urgent need to revive the Joint Bilateral Cooperation Commission (JBCC). They further underscored the fact that senior officials (DG/PS) will be meeting soon to prepare for the meeting. The Ministers committed to meeting half yearly according to the schedule of Ministerial Meetings or when need arises.

A joint media briefing was held at the end of the programme where both Ministers articulated the outcomes of the visit and what they agreed as the way forward on the implementation of LHWP Phase II. The LHWP is poised to secure a sustainable independent energy supply for Lesotho to meet the country's electricity requirements, while also ensuring the security of water supply for the Gauteng region of South Africa.



**Honourable Samonyane Ntsekele (MP)**  
Minister of Water  
Kingdom of Lesotho



**Honourable Gugile Nkwinti (MP)**  
Minister of Water and Sanitation  
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