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MEDIA STATEMENT

SA's water future on the map at World Water Week 2018

30 August 2018

Organised annually by the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), World Water Week is the focal point for the globe's water issues and the 2018 theme "Water, ecosystems and human development" is one that resonates strongly with South Africa. Due to increase in human activity, many ecosystems are in critical condition and require protection, which is why the Department of Water and Sanitation has featured regularly in the various panels over the 6-day conference – as the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 is being driven robustly by the national department.

Wednesday 29 August 2018, saw South Africa who is one for the members of AMCOW (Africa Ministers Council on Water) and represented by the Honorable Deputy Minister of Water and Sanitation, Mrs. Pamela Tshwete, participate in two Africa-focused sessions.

"Accelerating project preparation and financing of transboundary water and hydropower projects in Africa: learning from Africa and scaling up" was the first of the two sessions at which the Deputy Minister addressed esteemed guests from the African and International community, taking the opportunity to highlight the traction made by South Africa in accelerating Transboundary Water Management through innovative projects that attract investment for implementation.

The Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) is one such project which sees South Africa gaining access to water and Lesotho access to hydro energy. The Deputy Minister elaborated on Phase 1 of the project which entailed harnessing the waters of the Senqu/Orange River in the Lesotho highlands through the construction of a series of dams for the mutual benefit of South Africa and Lesotho. However, it is the benefits Lesotho has realized since Phase 1 that has the greatest impact, which includes their GDP increasing from 3% per annum in pre-project period to 5.5% per annum during construction, with more than 16,000 jobs created. Development of two large scale trout farms, construction of high quality roads with improved access, improved electricity supply network and industry growth realized from the power



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generation. Clinics and Community halls were also built and there is now improved telecommunication systems network.

The benefits for South Africa are equally significant, a steady supply of high quality water that is transferred from Lesotho to South Africa with reduced water treatment costs, allowing for a secured and cost effective water supply for Mining, Industrial, Agricultural and Households. Employment opportunities were created during construction of the Delivery Tunnel, and new Border posts established.

The Deputy Minister further stated that “Phase II of the project promises benefits beyond the increased water and electricity supply. The two governments have agreed that 30% of the construction will be designated to women and youth”.

Despite this clear example of how transboundary projects can be implemented successfully, the underlying message remains that the current level of financing for water and sanitation activities on the continent falls far below the level required to meet the SDG’s, AU agenda 2063 and Africa Water Vision 2025 commitments.

“I would like to encourage African Governments to commit to providing the necessary political support in implementing both the AIP and PIDA.” concluded Deputy Minister Tshwete.

At the *“Africa Focus – High Level Ministerial Panel: from Policy to Action”*, the mobilisation of ministers on the African continent continued with the drive being to share experiences on how each are delivering water and sanitation for the benefit of their people. AMCOW has seen the value of involving all relevant sectors in the dialogue towards sustainable solutions in the water sector and thus, the session included ministers from other sectors like urban development, youth empowerment and works and housing in order to reflect on the AMCOW Strategy.

The High Level Ministerial Panel discussed actions required to address issues identified in the technical sessions and further deliberated on the policy and strategic directions to be undertaken at continental, regional and national levels.

Deputy Minister Tshwete took the opportunity to speak to the process of developing the National Water and Sanitation Master Plan (NW&SMP), a new paradigm that will guide the South African water and sanitation sector towards the urgent execution of tangible actions that will make a real impact on the supply and use of water and sanitation. The Master Plan will set out the framework for how South Africa



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is going to manage its water resources and implement water and sanitation programmes. Furthermore, The Master Plan will assist South Africa to achieve the targets set in the National Development Plan (NDP), the global and African agendas outlined in the SDGs, the Africa Water Vision 2025 and the AU Agenda 2063. “South Africa strongly supports the AMCOW Strategy, in particular, the AMCOW Strategic Priorities and their related cross-cutting strategies as they resonate with our national interest on water and sanitation” said Deputy Minister Tshwete.

Thursday 30 August 2018 saw the Deputy Minister participating as a panelist in the “*SDG-Paris Agreement – Building a Resilient Future through Water*” two-part session, where presenters, panelists and audience alike agreed that building the future we want, will take what Henk Ovink, Special Envoy for International Water Affairs for the Kingdom of The Netherlands, describes as the “Systems Approach” which at a high level entails the 5 C’s: Commitment, Capacity Building, Cross-Cutting, Collaboration and Consistency.

When asked to provide insight from a South African perspective, the Deputy Minister was clear that Collaboration and Capacity Building are key in the South African approach. Using the recent drought in the Western Cape to illustrate this point, she clarified that overcoming the “Day Zero” threat was a politically collaborative responsibility given the unpreparedness of the country and government to deal with the devastating results of Climate Change. Once again reflecting on the progressive NW&SMP, Deputy Minister is confident that as a country, we will be ready.

If delegates, who came to World Water Week 2018, were unaware of what South Africa is doing in terms of driving not only the SDG’s and AMCOW’s Strategies but also Water Governance and Transboundary Resource Management, over these past few days here in Stockholm, they are most certainly more knowledgeable.

There is still much to achieve in South Africa in terms of equitable, inclusive and transparent water resource management but looking at what has been done to date and what is to come, the future of water in South Africa certainly looks bright.

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