

Minister Sonjica launches the Host Cities Drinking Water Quality Report in Parliament

Visitors to South Africa during the FIFA World Cup Soccer tournament in June need not to worry about the quality of drinking water during their stay here, Minister Buyelwa Sonjica, said recently.

Addressing journalists at a media briefing to launch the *2010 Host Cities Drinking Water Quality Report* in Parliament, the Minister assured the visitors that the water quality will be of high standards and that they did not need to bring along bottled water from their own countries.

“The South African water has been regarded as adequately managed for some time since high levels of compliance were generally recorded against the set national standard (SANS 241 – 2006), in spite of the odd failure that spoilt the good record . Through the Blue Drop Certification process , progressive transformation from “ good” to “excellent” has been stimulated. Appropriate measures are applied to ensure turn-around. This prestigious regulatory programme has been used to determine the levels of confidence the department should have in the management of drinking water quality of the various municipalities and relevant entities.”

“The world therefore can be assured that the tap water in our host cities comply with the rest of the national standards and that adequate management practices are in place to sustain this during the FIFA World Cup tournament and beyond,” Minister Sonjica said.

The department’s Manager of Drinking Water Quality, Mr Leonardo Manus, said the Drinking Water Quality Regulation (DWQR) programme has successfully ensured that the South African water sector intensified its focus on the manner in which tap water quality is being managed since its inception in 2005. It was, however, always acknowledged that the public’s trust had to be restored since various negative contributing factors manifested misleading conceptions on the actual situation.

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The host cities are:

- Tshwane
- Johannesburg
- Cape Town
- Nelspruit
- Polokwane
- Bloemfontein
- Port Elizabeth
- eThekweni

- Rustenburg

Manus said the Drinking Water Quality Regulation Programme benefited from the knowledge sharing tour of regulators from the United Kingdom in the week of 23 – 26 February 2009. The Drinking Water Inspectorate was very impressed with the progress made by the South African DWQ Regulation programme but identified areas where they could be of assistance to improve the local initiatives.

This project will be executed jointly with the Partners for Water and Sanitation (PAWS), a non-profit organisation in the United Kingdom (UK) which secures UK expertise to support and build capacity within the water sector. PAWS currently works in South Africa, Nigeria and Ethiopia by aligning itself to country efforts to meet the MDG goals for water and sanitation. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in the UK (DEFRA) will be sponsoring this support and identify lead experts from DEFRA and the UK Environment Agency (EA), and PAWS will source regulation experts from the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) and the Water Services Regulation Authority (OFWAT), he said.

“DEFRA and the Environment Agency have worked with the Department of Environment Affairs and Tourism to develop and implement the Green Scorpions model for enforcement of environment regulation. There may be valuable lessons from this model that could be extended to the water sector. DEFRA and the EA are willing to investigate the possibilities with DWAF. The Drinking Water Inspectorate will be represented at the 2nd Drinking Water Quality Conference with the assistance of the PAWS programme.”

Manus also introduced a computerized concept known as *My Water* which allows anyone to open the department’s website and view the water status of each town or city. This was in order to ensure that the general public and potential visitors access to information on the quality of drinking water in the areas of their concern.

“The webpage will reflect the actual quality compliance trends as monitored according to the registered monitoring programmes. This is another initiative from the department to empower the South African community with the required information to make important contributions towards performance,” Manus said.

By Themba Khumalo