Media Statement

Government proactively working on water issues

Government has noted the domestic media coverage of water related issues around the country, and further reiterates its commitment to deal with such challenges and ensure that no citizen is left without water. Recent pointed interventions by national government to support municipalities in dealing with the water shortages prove our commitment to end the scourge of water shortage.

These short- to medium term interventions include the deployment of technical teams, consisting of engineers, technicians and other artisans to assess systems in the problem areas and attend to these urgently to restore the water supplies. To date, government has announced capital injection in excess of R500m to deal with issues of infrastructure refurbishment, operation and maintenance to ensure that such interruptions in the water supply do not recur.

In areas like Madibeng in Brits, the national department has installed new pumps in the treatment plan and has fully restored the functionality of the system. In partnership with Eskom, a leak detection exercise is being conducted to check if there are leaks which can be fixed to maximize the yield of water in the system.

These interventions add to the long term infrastructure programs such as the Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grant which has been running for over ten years in building infrastructure for bulk water distribution. Other programs include the Accelerated Infrastructure Program focusing exclusively on municipal infrastructure and the Municipal Water Infrastructure Grant whose main aim is to serve those outlying areas that either experience erratic supplies or did not have infrastructure at all.
These programs have to be seen in an integrated way as a system that works together to provide the water infrastructure and services for all South Africans. There are areas that are still not served that experience water shortages. Others experience these interruptions because of inadequate old infrastructure problems. It is these areas that need our attention the most and with our long term plans implemented, the country should be able to deal a final blow this problem.

It is imperative to bear in mind that there are various causes of water related issues, some of which can only be remedied over the long-term. Phumla Williams, Acting GCIS CEO, said “the facts must be separated from alleged statements, so that we have a well-informed citizenry. Yes, there are challenges, some of which are historical and others pure negligence. However, government has put in place the Municipal Systems Amendment Act which aims to fix non-functioning municipalities and eradicate corrupt and errant managers in local government.”

Another intervention of government is the implementations of the National Water Resource Strategy which aims to ensure that national water resources are managed towards achieving South Africa’s growth, development and socio-economic priorities in an equitable and sustainable manner. In its endeavor to work closely with communities, government has, in its Vision 2030, defined a New Growth Path with a focus on diversification and wide participation by South African citizens.

To this end, Government calls on all communities to use water sparingly, as South Africa is a water scarce country. Communities play an integral part in curbing water pollution and starting the fight against human negligence.

“South Africans must be cognisant of the fact that human negligence, such as pollution, has long lasting effects. Water plays an integral part of daily living, as well as a central point to many sectors of the economy, and the onus of safeguarding the resource lies with each and every citizen,” said Williams.

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