

**SPEECH BY MS, REJOICE T MABUDAFHASI, MP, DEPUTY MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA ON *SHARING BENEFITS AND BUILDING BRIDGES OVER WATER IN SOUTHERN AFRICA – THE SADC APPROACH AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCE - AT THE HIGH LEVEL OF THE STOCKHOLM WATER SYMPOSIUM ON 17 AUGUST 2009.***

Programme Director, *Excellence, Our host the Mayor*

Distinguished guests and Participants

Friends of the water sector

Ladies and Gentlemen

What brings life?

What brings smile in human land?

What brings love to both flora and fauna?

**THAT IS WATER**

***OUR SHARED DESTINY, BUILDING PEACE AND DEMOCRACY, DEVELOP OUR ECONOMIES FOR THE GOOD OF OUR PEOPLE... WATER SOME FOR ALL FOREVER.***

We are honored again as South Africa to participate in these important debates, to share our views, but equally to learn from all of you on how we need to improve our management of our precious natural resource water. As South Africa, we welcome the special focus of the 2009 World Water Week here in Stockholm on Trans-boundary Waters.

Africa as a developing country is vulnerably and impacted by climate change. Already we are starting to experience some effects of draughts and floods in some parts of our countries. These are a threat to food security, our extinct, some of our rivers running dry and desertification creeping in. The result will be more poverty, hunger and diseases'. That is why to us developing countries adaptation is a priority.

The economic growth in some of our SADC Countries has resulted in rapid of urbanization, with migration to the cities and some of our countries with fast growing economies, putting more strain on our water resources. This economic growth with sharing of water resources needs to be well managed with the uttermost care. We will have a challenge to achieve our MD GS. To give an example South Africa Shares four major river basin with six neighboring countries, namely Namibia, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

## **TRANSBOUNDARY PERSPECTIVES**

Trans-boundary is inherently political and economic. Therefore it cannot be an approach of one-size- fits all. It is about national priorities, future benefits and risk perspectives. It should take into consideration women and children, developmental stresses and climate change realities. For this reason the sharing of water resources in SADC is for us not merely a policy exercise, it is about peace, stability and prosperity in the continent and in the region,

Programme Director, In SADC we have developed protocols on Shared Watercourses. In the SADC Protocol the SADC Member States have undertaken to respect the existing rules of customary or general international law relating to the utilisation and management of shared watercourses (Article 3 (3)). In line with these rules of international water law the SADC Protocol contains the principles of “equitable and reasonable utilisation” (Article 3 (7)) and the “duty to prevent significant harm” (Article 3 (8)). It furthermore, among others, contains provisions dealing notification and consultation requirements regarding planned measures and rules on pollution, prevention, reduction and control. It contains the generic rules for the management of shared rivers within the SADC region, but does not contain basin-specific rules. The latter are to be included in (basin-wide) watercourse agreements.

Some SADC countries have now incorporated in their new domestic water laws the devolution of water management to the lowest possible levels, in line with the principles of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM).

### ***Ladies and Gentlemen***

In our developing world in Africa, we want to state that it would be in the interest of the developed world to support capacity building in our institutions. Your support will consolidate good governance and assist us in taking responsibility for the decisions we have taken in implementing international agreements. We build institutions so that women do not have to continue spending time to fetch water for rivers, we do that so that we deliver on our Millennium development goals on halving poverty and bring dignity to all. Above all we do that as trans-boundary management is driven in the believe that our people must continue to be the main benefactors of our decisions.

### **Challenges**

Ladies and Gentlemen, sharing of water resources does not only come with benefits, there are also associated challenges that have to be managed. The recent cholera epidemic that affected both South Africa and Zimbabwe is a typical example of what sharing of resources mean and the need for effective management mechanisms. Many of you still recall the floods that affected Mozambique in 2000 and because the greater part of the catchment's area of the Limpopo River lies in South Africa we were committed to working together in providing early warning systems to alleviate such occurrences. It is for this reason that flood control management has been prioritised as the first challenge to be addressed in the region.

We also need to address;

- The limited cooperation across sectors
- lack of integration of different natural resources governance systems, such as land, forests to name but a few
- virtual exclusion of groundwater from the existing management framework (This has been realised and a Groundwater Management Programme for the SADC Region has been launched )
  
- As a consequence of the destruction wrought by extreme weather events that are associated with climate change, there is growing global consensus on the need to develop a sustainable society and to thoroughly re-examine existing economic systems as the likely cause of many global environmental problems, including climate change.
  
- Poverty, food insecurity and environmental degradation, all of which are impacted upon by climate change, are key concepts underpinning the discourse within developing countries, and have been recognised as critical development problems that are given highest priority in the development agenda.

Meeting growing water demand is essential for the economic development of the AFRICA region in general and thus to the reduction of poverty: the aspects of environmental security and human security, which recognizes the importance of the human-environment interface. The assumption has for a long time been that water scarcity is the key driver for conflict over water resources.<sup>1</sup> Climate change models predict with some certainty that the south-western parts of the SADC region will become significantly drier in the next few decades.

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<sup>1</sup> Wolf, 2005.

This combined with population growths (though slowed down due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic); increasing demands for agricultural and industrial water use and high dependency ratios in some SADC countries would let it seem that there is growing potential for conflicts in the light of increasing water scarcity. Yet, instead of growing conflict, the response has been increased cooperation with respect to shared water resources. An illustrative example in this regard is the changing approach to the sharing of hydrological data.

Water resources managers, planners and Ministers from various countries in Africa met in Accra, Ghana in September 2006 to develop guidelines on inter-basin transfers (IBTs) on the continent. The meeting, under the auspices of AMCOW and the UNECA (UNWater/Africa), developed a framework to assist and support African countries in formulating cooperative arrangements for meeting the challenges of water scarcity and associated problems on a regional basis.<sup>2</sup> This framework is going to be developed into a set of guidelines by UNWater/Africa for the construction of IBTs on the continent

At present the framework consists of four main areas:<sup>3</sup>

- *General policy matters: building of trust between partners.*
- *Economic and financial matters: equitable distribution of benefits between parties.*
- *Institutional and civil society issues: strengthening and formation of appropriate institutions, AMCOW etc. to assist where no appropriate institutions exist and the impacts of an IBWT on*
- *Technical and Environmental issues: the potential environmental effects should be assessed, monitored and mitigated and reliable baseline data is needed.*

***In conclusion*** Programme Director , Ladies and Gentleman, meeting growing water demand is essential for the economic development of the SADC and Africa region in general, and specifically to the reduction of poverty. Given the strategic value of water to the countries of the SADC region, in areas such as food security, economic development, power generation and health, it seems evident that water resources and the way they are managed, have security implications.

The drivers of change (climatic, demographic or other) are not the sole determinants of the degree of cooperation or conflict between states. The degree of institutional development – represented by the laws, treaties, agreements and organisations – is important to analyse from the SADC perspective. As the countries in the region develop, whether through large-scale agriculture, industry, mining, services or tourism, so do the available options for mitigating water stress increase. Countries lacking abundant or stable supplies of the primary resource, in this case, fresh water, can source solutions in the realm of secondary resources. These secondary resources include aspects such as the socio-economic development of the country, education and health levels of the population, diversification of the economy and political stability. The competition is about to slow the importance of water.

I THANK YOU INDEED FOR YOUR ATTENTION