

# **hort Statement by the Government of South Africa on Water and Sanitation Commitments for the first Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) High Level Meeting and Water Ministers Dialogue, April 22-23, 2010<sup>1</sup>, Washington DC, USA**

## **1. Introductions**

The Constitution of South Africa, as contained in the Bill of Rights makes provision for the rights to an environment that is not harmful, access to health, well being, food and water. This set the scene for the development of water policies and legislation that are socially and economically enabling, while ensuring sustainability.

On attaining democracy in 1994, South Africa, a water-scarce, middle-income country, inherited an infrastructure with significant service backlogs, skewed by apartheid. A combination of political prioritization, innovative policies, full mobilization of stakeholders and strong planning processes lead to the development of successive successful water and sanitation national programs. South Africa has moved from 59% access to safe water in 1994 to 98% coverage in 2008. The national reference value on improved sanitation facilities was 48% in 1994. By 2008 access to improved/shared facilities had increased to 73%. Open defecation has been reduced to 2% by 2008. South Africa achieved the water MDG in 2005 and the sanitation MDG 2008.

## **2. Political will and Commitment**

The Water for Growth and Development Strategic Framework and Government Programme of Action are an expression of the political will at the highest level and commitment geared towards strengthening the national compact in the coordination and implementation of key government priorities such as:

- Access to basic services such as Water and Sanitation
- Health; and
- Education

High level political commitment also manifest in the establishment of the National Planning Commission and Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Unit in the Presidency. Through these structures, water and sanitation will be given the required focus.

## **3. Key Messages**

- **Political Prioritisation for Water and Sanitation: Endorsement of Sanitation and Water for All: Emphasis on Political Leadership and Budget Priority:** South Africa endorses “Sanitation and Water for All” in recognition that rapid scaling up of service development is underpinned by political leadership, a consultative approach, strong stakeholder involvement and substantial budget allocations
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- Countries should commit to poverty reduction through the improvement of access to clean drinking water and adequate sanitation
- Countries should commit to assurance of supply through the development, protection and conservation of the resource, including ground water, which often implies joint planning and management of the resources with other countries taking a multi-sectoral approach.
- Countries should commit to the development of National Water Resource Management Plans which should form the integral part of the National Development planning process including climate change adaptation
- **Regional Collaboration:** South Africa is committed to Regional collaboration and support to its neighbours. South Africa is active in regional dialogue, having the Chair of AMCOW and being centrally engaged in collaboration within the SADC region. In addition to governmental support, many South African institutions, such as the Water Research Commission, South African Local Government Association, Water Institute of South Africa play leading roles in technical support in Africa.

#### 4. Challenges

We have been privileged over the years to have received adequate allocation for the planned extension of access to clean water and safe sanitation. However, the unplanned urban and cross-border migration remains a challenge which adds an unknown factor in our ability to plan.

Secondly, there is inadequate funding for rehabilitation and refurbishment of water services and water resource infrastructure as well as to some extent a lack of technical and management capability in municipalities.

Lastly, as a water stressed country that is constantly grappling with the effects of climate variability, the threat of climate change imposes additional challenges in how we manage and allocate our water resources.

#### 5. Expectations for Attending the High Level Meeting (HLM)

The strong South African delegation is coming to the first HLM meeting to learn, share our experiences, and meet partners. South Africa is looking to SWA at a global level to provide a framework for an exchange of views between governments, civil society and international agencies, a forum for the development of global strategies to achieve sanitation and water for all and for accountability in making progress and providing support for the achievement of global targets.

South Africa notes the skewedness of international aid flows as identified in the GLAAS report and welcomes SWA's initiative to discuss tools and approaches in the architecture of international development assistance to the water sector. We are hoping that SWA will provide a vehicle for:

- giving higher global prioritization to the sector,
- increasing the global resource base for the sector;

- better targeting of resources to areas of greatest need;
  - enhanced country and sector knowledge and share experience on strengthened donor harmonization;
  - increasing transparency in international aid and accountability of commitments; and
- providing a stronger voice for developing countries in global dialogue on WSS development