



SOUTH AFRICA'S NATIONAL STATEMENT DELIVERED BY H.E. MR SENZO MCHUNU, MINISTER OF WATER AND SANITATION AT THE PLENARY OPENING OF THE UNITED NATIONS 2023 WATER CONFERENCE, NEW YORK, MARCH 2023

*Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I speak on behalf of the Government of South Africa, to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to take forward the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda, including SDG 6 on Water and Sanitation. Working with international partners and all stakeholders we are more determined than ever to reach our shared goal of “Achieving access to water and sanitation to all by 2050”. This is a cross-cutting goal that is fundamental to human rights, the elimination of poverty and to the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, leaving no one behind.

The obligation to ensure that South Africa's limited water resources are used to improve the quality of lives of our people is enshrined in our Constitution. It also finds expression in the Southern African Development Community's development plans and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

Excellencies,

I am pleased to inform that since the advent of democracy, South Africa has made great strides in bringing water and sanitation services to our people. Millions have been lifted out of poverty as part of a society-wide effort to overcome the legacy of underdevelopment, colonialism and apartheid. However, far more needs to be done and we face serious challenges with regard to deteriorating reliability of municipal water and sanitation services, largely caused by poor governance and weak management. We are therefore of the view that progress towards sustainable delivery of quality water and sanitation services to all can only be achieved if we focus on creating professionally managed and well governed water services institutions.

All three tiers of government in South Africa and critical partners, such as the private sector, civil society and research institutions, are working together to address these challenges. We are working concurrently to promote gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of youth and people with disabilities in the water sector; to establish multistakeholder partnerships for the achievement of water security by 2030; and for

enhanced transboundary water cooperation relations between neighbouring countries for the protection of our shared water resources.

Excellencies,

I would like to mention that South Africa has introduced a Draft Resolution on Groundwater at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), to raise awareness on the importance of groundwater and the need for greater investment in knowledge, research and training on this important resource. This builds on the UN decision to designate 2022 as the year of Groundwater, under the Theme: “Groundwater, Making the Invisible Visible”; and the launch of the United Nations World Water Development Report.

Allow me to further announce that South Africa will be hosting the 50th Congress of the International Association of Hydrogeologists in Cape Town from 18–22 September 2023, which will bring international experts and researchers to share their experience.

Excellencies,

The international community will be on the right course to implement the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development in its entirety, if there is due recognition of the central role of water and sanitation services.

I thank you.