

■ SUSTAINABILITY

Master plan launched to ensure water security across South Africa

LIAM NGOBENI

liam.ngobeni@inl.co.za

APPROXIMATELY R898 billion will be needed to ensure short-, medium- and long-term water security in the country.

Launching the master plan at the CSIR Convention Centre yesterday, Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation Minister Lindiwe Sisulu said the plan already had R565bn available in funding.

However, the minister said more money was needed, and as such partnerships would be vital.

The plan outlines a series of urgent steps to be taken and implemented in order to address, among others, infrastructural challenges to secure continuous and uninterrupted water supply for both community and business use.

It also sets out the critical priorities to be addressed by the water sector in

the period 2018 – 2030. These include structuring the department to make it fit for purpose, eliminate wastage and any loss due to corruption and mismanagement of resources.

It also aims to address the water and sanitation goals and to support the President's Economic Stimulus and Recovery Plan, which has broad parts that include investing in municipal infrastructure and a fund.

Sisulu said the plan's priorities were clustered into two sections – water and sanitation management and enabling environment.

She said as the water and sanitation sector, their job was to guarantee the availability of water and to assure investors that South Africa was open for business. "We also have to provide the same guarantee for our local businesses big and small, and our farmers. It is for that reason that we are launching this plan," Sisulu said.

While significant progress has been made in reducing the inequalities in the water sector, the country still has significant and unacceptable levels of inequality and poverty.

Sisulu said inequitable access to water and sanitation services, and the deteriorating safety and reliability of these services, was threatening the country's ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal.

"There is not enough water for a country that is industrialised with a high population growth. The demand simply outweighs the supply (and) these shortcomings are impacting negatively on job creation, economic growth and on the well-being of everyone in South Africa.

"To date, there are still over three million people without access to basic water supply services, while only 64% of households have access to reliable water supply."

She said with respect to the bulk water resources, on which the country depends, it was projected that demand would grow by 17% in 2030.

"This demand will only be met if planned infrastructure is timeously completed and demand growth constrained by appropriate policy interventions coupled with a mixed development approach."

The plan also looked at maintaining and upgrading ageing infrastructure such as malfunctioning waste water treatment works.

Public Works and Infrastructure Minister Patricia de Lille stressed the need to maintain ageing infrastructure while building new infrastructure.

"We need to look at the water leaks all over the country so that we don't waste the resource," De Lille said.

She said government would be investing in a number of water resource infrastructure projects, including, the

Lesotho Highland Water Project phase two, De Hoop Dam in Limpopo and Clanwilliam Dam.

Sisulu added that they wanted ethical leadership as they embark on implementing the plan and ensure there as no corruption or wasteful expenditure as they were already painted in a bad light at the National Treasury whom they seek funds from.

Consequence management for officials complicit in corruption would also be instituted, with some of the processes under way for some officials.

"We will also fast-track pending cases for various misdemeanours, those cleared will work and those not cleared will face consequence management and those that we remain will sign a code of ethics."

She also turned the crosshairs on the private sector, saying "stop luring my officials with rewards for doing their job".