

**MARION RESEARCH BASE OPENING ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY
MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS HON, HENDRIETTA BOGOPANE-
ZULU, MP**

DATE: 18 MARCH 2011

- **The Deputy Director General in the Department of Environmental Affairs, Dr Monde Mayekiso,**
- **The Regional Manager of the National Department of Public Works, Mr Fred Johnson,**
- **All the Scientists present tonight,**
- **All Government Officials,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen of the Media,**
- **Distinguished Guests:**

In one of the books that I have read, a gentleman by the name of Ralph Charell one of the philosophers I have great respect for, actually set a trend for me when he said, "Nobody succeeds beyond his/her wild expectations unless he/she begins with some wild expectation".

When I look at the journey to get here, I really think that somebody had a real wild expectation when they annexed these Islands and today we are humbly grateful for the wild expectation that we can benefit from today.

I want to pose a number of questions this evening for a thought:

- Do we as a country have a science and technology strategy, because I guess that as soon as we have that developed then we will not have to ask the question of how much resources as that would have been predetermined.
- The next question is what is the role of science and technology in a broader South African development agenda as well as in our attempt to establish a developmental state? How does it contribute to job creation, economic growth, social upliftment and the broader challenges including the building of the skills pipeline?

- As a woman, I would have failed if I do not ask a question whether indeed we are looking at how we are progressing in engendering our science programmes. Do we conduct a gender based analysis in any of these programmes?

The National Department of Public Works is the custodian of the state assets of which Marion Island is one of them and the Department of Environmental Affairs is the user. I would like to extend our sincere thanks to all the scientists, past and present who made sure that this property we hold so dearly is actually utilized and it will be utilized to its maximum in the near future, but this also extend to other islands including the SANAE Base in the Antarctica and the Gough Island which is utilized courtesy of our agreement with the UK Government. We remain committed that these properties are utilized by South Africans.

One of the things that this Marion Island project has showed us is that DPW does have the capacity. We also do have a dedicated team that I can proudly say that indeed South Africa Work because of Public Works. They have demonstrated to us that indeed if we put our money where our mouths is, we can actually deliver as a department utilising our own in-house competencies, our own employees, thereby minimizing the tendering process and that we can deliver just as much the state of the art products and services and would like to thank them by saying your personal commitment did not go in vain.

I believe that the vision and the future of the many programmes that DEA will come up with will assist us in taking comfort in knowing that the money spent will also benefit South Africans. It is our intention as NDPW to create a number of opportunities, but also to utilize this particular island as we have never utilized it before. For us as we roll out our maintenance plan, we remain committed to enlist and expose our young people to projects such as these, ensuring that our young trainees and artisans undertake a stint for a month to any of these islands.

We look forward to using these islands as a yardstick to recognize the best we have in our artisans both those still in training and the qualified ones as we continue transforming the industries we are active in. Ours is to ensure that these islands are not a privilege of a

few but more and more South Africans begin to interact with, understand and respect these islands.

We remain committed to servicing our clients and making it possible for them to be able to deliver what they are required to do as without us they are unable to do so. At the same time we are cognizant of our reliance on the client departments because without them Public Works will have no job and no projects to dispense.

Having said that, I wish to reiterate that government remains committed to provide the required resources to make this base a functioning one. We remain committed to ensure that the country becomes competitive in the field of Science and Technology. We remain committed to ensure that the transformation we need happens in this island as well.

We are all aware of our participation in BRICS and IBSA but also having ratified a number of UN treaties, has made us a leading country in African Politics and has given us a number of negotiating power. These commitments and participation will give our own scientists international recognition and ensure that South Africa remains at a cutting edge as a leading African Country.

Our hosting of the upcoming CORP 17 conference in December 2011 is another opportunity to showcase our strengths and competencies. Therefore I want to invite the team here, the scientists and the rest of DEA to begin to indicate what would be the link between the work done here and the rest of the science community. The conference, remember, will allow us to showcase what the colleagues and scientists that have weathered the weather in this island have done as we believe that the work done here continues to talk to, among others issues of climate change etc.

It will be important that both the build up events to the CORP 17 and the conference itself will ensure that the work done in Marion Island is highly profiled. This will assist us to ensure that it is not only an area to gather and achieve PhD's but the findings and information should assist to inform policy, decision making and South Africa's arguments in International Fora's.

The data, the integrity and utilization thereof should be able to guide us as a country as we march towards compliance in a number of international instruments.

Allow me to take a moment to go back to Joseph Daniels, a gentleman whose cross we unveiled yesterday. For us as a department of public works we did not know much about him but we are honored to learn that he came to Marion as a construction worker to contribute to the construction of the first Marion base following its annexation in 1947. As the regulators and custodians of the Construction Industry, we feel much honored and hereby commit that his legacy going forward will be preserved. As we leave this room, we will ensure that we unleash our non state sector through EPWP to profile the community where he came from with an intention of locating some of the family members as this has been done before. We will be trying to find his family or living next of kin, to come to some form of agreement to preserve his memory by constructing a mini monument, acknowledging his role and contribution but also acknowledging that the construction industry is still one of those sectors where the educated and the uneducated continue to work side by side. That will just be the beginning.

As we take pride and hand over this facility, we are looking at honoring those who made us proud as the department given the fact that we are in a process of reopening the workshops and return them to their former glory. We are looking at also honoring each and every man who have participated in the construction of the Marion base and the other bases in future.

For the Marion base it will be important to honor and thank them for their bravery in the challenging weather conditions and working long hours to deliver this state of the art facility given its remoteness. , we will honor them with the Joseph Daniels merit award. From 2003 to date, all the men who spent days in the ship to travel to Marion to construct this facility will be recipients of this award. The award is intended to highlight the commitment and the willingness to serve without complaining and the sacrifices made and at that particular time we will have to thank them more than we have and use this base as an opportunity for us to launch our long awaited alternative construction technology of which one of our Public Entities, the

Agreement's SA, certifies. I am personally proud as I believe that as a country for us to meet our infrastructure challenges, we would have to ensure that alternative construction technology is utilized and indeed this Island will stand to prove that.

In conclusion, if Robben Island was the final birth place in the history of freedom and democracy, then let Marion Island and other Islands be the birth place of our new scientific frontiers.

Finally, let me leave you with a thought which I am directing to the DPW team that has delivered this wonderful facility and the scientists that will be enjoying it, he said: "The sight of an achievement is the Greatest Gift a Human Being could offer others".

From DPW we bow out with pride as we hand over this wonderful facility. It is indeed a sense of achievement and pride as we do that this evening.

I thank you