

Wastewater: The untapped resource

Wastewater can and must be used to augment water sources, says Water and Sanitation Minister Nomvula Mokonyane.



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“The issue of ‘Wastewater: The Untapped Resource’, as adopted by the United Nations, is a clarion call to say let us not waste.

“The realisation of Sustainable Development Goal six is a must do for all member states,” Mokonyane said at the closing of the week-long World Water Week held in Stockholm, on Friday, 1 September.

She said billions of people across the world are still without basic access to clean water and sanitation services.

The minister said the conference remains a focal point for dealing with global issues, but despite this, a lot more people were still in dire need of basic services.

She said that despite all of the good work that has been done since 1991, the world still faces the challenges of 2.1-billion people without access to safe water and 4.5-billion people without decent sanitation.

“We continue to abuse our water resources with our waste streams. In Africa the demand for water for human consumption is growing, but also the demand for water to meet the growing demand for food and energy,” the minister said.

She said access to piped water increased in absolute numbers from 82-million urban dwellers with piped water in 2000 to 124-million in 2015, adding that the urban population served with piped water on the premises declined from 40% to 33% over the same period.

Mokonyane cited sanitation as grave, stating that only 30% of Africans have access to improved wastewater services, and that more than 23% of them were practicing open defecation.

“A vast majority of the African utilities do not provide wastewater services, and some that did in 2000 to 2006 dropped wastewater collection services due to high costs and technical difficulties,” she said.

The minister also urged the delegates about the need to adapt to climate change, because whenever anything was discussed about climate change, it affected the question of water.

“We have to be ready to deal with the consequences of extreme weather events, both extreme drought and extreme flooding. Having said this, we must recognise the work of the men and women who have been dealing with extreme droughts in Somalia, parts of Kenya, South Sudan and in my own country South Africa.”

She said as they drive the African continent towards the realisation of the African Union's Agenda 2063, they should continue to play a critical role in all matters regarding delivery of water and sanitation to the African people.

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