

**RESPONSE BY COUNCILLOR RETIEF ODENDAAL
THE HONOURABLE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF THE NELSON MANDELA BAY
MUNICIPALITY
TO: LAUNCH OF NELSON MANDELA BAY WATER PARTNERSHIP
THURSDAY, 17 NOVEMBER, IBHAYI BREWERY AT 09H00**

Programme Director: Tinumzi Lubelwana

- *Ms Alyssa Jooste: SAB Africa Sustainability Manager*
- *Mr Peter Varndell: CEO of NEPAD Business Foundation & Host of SWPN*
- *Representatives of SA Breweries*
- *Senior Officials of the NMBM Water & Sanitation Directorate*
- *All Stakeholders*
- *Members of the Media*
- *Ladies and Gentlemen*
- *All Protocol Observed*

Greetings!

It is my great pleasure to join you at the launch of the ‘NMB Water Partnership’ between the Strategic Water Partners Network (SWPN) and the South African Breweries. A partnership which I believe will create the necessary platform for all stakeholders to engage in one of the most important challenges facing our city, namely, that of the crucial quest for water resilience through better water management in the NMBM and in so doing proactively co-create solutions.

It is in this spirit of partnership that we announce today’s launch of the SWPN/NMB/SAB partnership initiative towards a water secure future in the NMB. With this partnership we aim to push the boundaries of traditional thinking about financing water-related investments through analytical tools to support policies to best invest in water security for sustainable growth.

This partnership will build on and feed into ongoing work to find solutions. We therefore count on your support, if we are to stand any chance of transforming water governance and investment for sustainable development. This partnership we believe is evidence that our water challenges are not a source of conflict, but a symbol of partnership and resilience. Deepening that cooperation is why we are here today.

This is an extraordinary occasion because water is about our climate and nature, our energy sources, our health, and our food supplies. Water is about the NMB we live in, the security of our environment, and the quality of life of our communities. Take gender equality, for example: having access to sanitation and hygiene at home

and at school is especially important for women and girls. It protects them against gender-based violence and provides privacy and dignity. The right to water is a human right. And we must always uphold it!

Water is the very essence of our daily livelihoods and critical to our wellbeing, a key growth driver and an apex priority in the agenda of the NMBM for sustainable development. This partnership, I believe is a strategic investment in water security that will certainly contribute to the social and economic growth in the NMB.

Water remains high on the political agenda. Hence this partnership calls for a new platform for solidarity to bridge the water infrastructure gap emanating from research data and our understanding of the water crises in the NMB. This is an important and positive development signaling progress but, if we are to continue to rely on water to propel our local economy and bring some relief to our communities who live under severe water stress, we will need to invest much more in water security.

With this partnership, we envisage better stakeholder engagement that can help build trust and ownership, secure willingness to pay for water services, raise awareness of water challenges, ensure accountability, and foster innovation and inclusive decision-making.

Climate change only adds more uncertainty about water availability and demand, and possibly more tensions between users in the NMB. Therefore, we must be very proactive on confronting water security issues facing our Metro, which emphasizes the role of water for sustainable growth and the importance of finance and investment for water security.

Three main challenges facing the NMB in providing safe, reliable, and sustainable water: (1). Economic, social, and environmental costs of water security are rising (2). Ageing infrastructure and (3). Water governance

Hence, we need to better understand the risks to growth and social and economic development from poor water management. Once we get this right and understand how poor water management affects our economy and where the need for investment is more dire, we must implement robust policies that will enable us and our partners to invest in water security. For example, we must look at innovative ways to better allocate risk and returns between key players, which is a key issue in better motivating investment for water and growth.

Getting water governance and investment in water security right are crucial for the development of our local/regional economy, our communities and for the environment. Let us continue to work together, and pool our efforts, to put water security at the heart of sustainable development in the NMB.

Climate change is a stark reality. Thus, cooperation will become even more crucial as droughts and low flows are expected to increase in number and become more severe. And for this reason, building water resilience becomes paramount as climate change affects water quantity and quality, water temperature, water-related ecosystems and the magnitude and occurrence of extreme weather events such as floods and droughts.

Time is not on our side, but we still do have the opportunity to make ourselves more resilient to disasters and water scarcity through cooperation and adaptation strategies in a comprehensive way by working at policy and institutional levels as well as implementing concrete adaptation activities on the ground that will endure the effects of climate change in the NMB Metro in our efforts to manage our water resources holistically.

We say this, because a fragmented approach in the governance of our precious water resource is a grave and real threat to our ability to find workable and implementable ways of developing the necessary savvy for water resilience in our NMB Metro. The consequences of fragmented governance and mismanaged natural resources are now evidently clear, and the water resilience approach is one of the most viable to solve the complex challenges facing our city.

Our shared future depends on all levels of government and decision-makers working together to drive meaningful change through policy and action for the coordinated management to restore and maintain our water resource capacity. Now is the time for all of us to come together to create meaningful change by developing frameworks which drive stakeholder collaboration. It calls for immediate action and for government, industry, business, academia, and citizens to work together.

I would like to commend you all for your tireless efforts that have now culminated in this launch and to continue unabated with our efforts to champion and advance the cause for water security significantly in the NMB.

Yes, this is our opportunity to act decisively by working together to develop sustainable solutions. We all must be part of this endeavor to become a water resilient city for the future!

We thank you.