

## **Inaugural Speech by Mr. AM Mancotywa, President of the Water Institute of Southern Africa (WISA) on the 25<sup>th</sup> May 2011**

Council Members, Senior Fellows, Fellows, Members, Students, Patron Members, Company Members, Ladies and Gentlemen, I greet you all.

Thank you to the Water Institute of Southern Africa (WISA) Council, Executive Board and the members who have entrusted me with the position President of WISA for the period 2011/2012. It gives me great pleasure and honor to deliver this address to you and members of the water community in South Africa, Africa and the World. This Institute has played and will continue to play an important role in the water sector in our country. With your support, I wish to assure you that we will collectively make a positive difference in the lives of many people not only in our country, but in this continent and worldwide.

On behalf of the Executive Board and WISA staff, I thank Dr Kevin Pietersen for his service and inspired leadership as President of WISA for the past two years and his continued contribution to WISA and the wider water sector. I also welcome Mr. Ronald Brown as Vice President and look forward to his support and contribution.

As I read one of the magazines I saw the promise below which I liked and hope that we can all share in the sector. This article was published in Do It Now magazine, readership 4500, by Bernelle Verster.

### **The FLOW promise**

***“I promise to respect water as a source of life, to be mindful of how I use water, and to preserve our water resources. I am for love of water.”***

Today we are a sector in a continual change. We are faced with unprecedented public scrutiny as well as confronted with frequent media headlines about a water crisis. What a water crisis means can be debated but we cannot neglect the fact that we are currently confronted with the following challenges: -

- Planning and implementation of new infrastructure projects
- Rehabilitation and maintenance of aging infrastructure
- Limited human resource skills base
- Acid mine drainage decanting and other water quality threats
- Poor drinking water and wastewater effluent quality in some areas
- Rising demand for water
- Non-compliance with legislation

Fellow colleagues it was clear prior to the recent elections that there were many challenges faced by the municipalities. Municipalities need the assistance of both National and Provincial governments in order to deal with these challenges. Government has over the last 17 years put in place a range of acts, policies, intergovernmental structures and planning instruments to ensure that priority setting, resource allocation and implementation takes place in an integrated, effective, efficient and sustainable manner. Although we have three distinctive spheres, they are inter-related and inter-

dependant and have a shared area of impact. The co-ordination of the various spheres of government remains a challenge especially with the provision of basic water and sanitation services.

Managing our water resources to ensure their sustainability requires concerted efforts from various government departments, industries, communities, etc. This is an effort that needs long-term perspectives and collectively will be aimed at providing better lives for current and generations of people to come.

Our strong commitment in serving the sector and improving results will be critical to sustaining economic growth and alleviating the suffering of the millions of poor people, especially women and children, in South Africa and Africa. Better water and sanitation services, and integrated water resources management are key to this.

WISA is your partner in this journey, and we look forward to working more closely as a team rather than as individual stakeholders.

My term of office will also deal with the implementation of the WISA Strategic Plans as outlined in WISA Vision 2015. This requires a number of strategic actions over the next few years, which includes:

- Improve corporate structure effectiveness
- Drive membership quality growth
- Strengthen Corporate Governance
- Cultivate Donor, Sponsorship and Volunteer Support
- Produce Deliverables and Operations

WISA's corporate structure needs to be improved and simplified in order to align with organizational strategy, size, accountability, effectiveness and efficiency as well as governance requirements. We need to ensure improved membership benefits as well as increasing membership growth. As we work with third party contributions, we need to ensure good corporate governance. The precautionary suspension of the Chief Executive has to be finalized as soon as possible. The appointment of the Marketing Manager is also on the priority list.

The role of WISA is to build expertise, share knowledge and improve quality of life. This has been done on the reputation of WISA members laboring in water and wastewater treatment works, industrial and mine water plants, research and educational institutions, consulting firms, government departments and our Young Water Professionals.

Without these members who are at the coal face, the organization is much diminished. Your volunteerism is much appreciated. As you continue to volunteer, remember that the ones involved in volunteer work have lower mortality rates, greater functional ability and lower rates of depression later in life than those who do not.

I look forward to working with the WISA Team, Mr. Kerneels Esterhuyse, (WISA Treasurer) and all Portfolio Committee chairpersons.

It is also my pleasure to welcome Ms Anita Pillay, Training Manager, who started with WISA few days ago.

To the Council and Board, I look forward to your continued support.

I wish to thank my family for their understanding and support over the years; my friends and colleagues who helped me in one way or another; my previous and current mentors who introduced me into this exciting water sector; my current employer, Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality for donating my time to the sector in this vital manner.

Finally, my appreciation to the entire WISA staff for the excellent work that they do on daily basis and for organizing today's event.

I thank you all.

**Anderson Mluleki Mancotywa**

**WISA President 2011/2012**