

11 November 2024

Joint statement by the Ministry of Water and Sanitation, Gauteng Office of the Premier, City of Johannesburg and Rand Water on water challenges in Johannesburg

Yesterday, Sunday, 10 November 2024, Minister of Water and Sanitation, Ms Pemmy Majodina, convened a meeting to address the challenges of water in the City of Johannesburg. The meeting was attended by Gauteng Premier, Mr Panyaza Lesufi; Deputy Ministers of Water and Sanitation, Mr David Mahlobo and Mr Sello Seithholo; Gauteng MEC for CoGTA, Mr Jacob Mamabolo; Executive Mayor of Johannesburg, Mr Dada Morero and leadership of Johannesburg Water and Rand Water.

The meeting reflected on the extent of the water challenges confronting the City of Johannesburg. The demand for purified water in Gauteng is very high and the system remains vulnerable to disruptions caused by electro-mechanical breakdowns or theft of cables and intensive maintenance.

Johannesburg's consumption for purified water from Rand Water exceeds available licensed supply and as water is gravity-fed from municipal reservoirs to households, high-lying areas are worst affected by disruptions in supply.

The leaders acknowledged the impact of water challenges on ordinary citizens, the economy and on service delivery in general, and called for urgent action. The Executive Mayor of Johannesburg was commended for demonstrating exemplary leadership and for bringing renewed commitment and energy required to turn around the situation. Time is of the essence!

The meeting agreed that all stakeholders will continue to work together in the spirit of cooperative governance to address water challenges. The meeting noted the City of Johannesburg's commitment to implement the following interventions as a matter of urgency:

1. Implement the Council-approved turnaround strategy for Joburg Water, including the key elements of ring-fencing revenues from the sale of water for the water function, and creating single-point accountability for the water function.
2. Improve its billing and revenue collection systems for water and sanitation
3. Ensure that the required proportion of the Urban Settlements Development Grant is allocated to Joburg Water
4. Reduce both physical (leaks) and commercial losses (meter by-passes and illegal connections)- currently water losses in Johannesburg (Jhb) are approximately 34%, compared to the international norm of 15%
5. Improve the turnaround time for fixing reported leaks
6. Ensure that Joburg Water is adequately funded for maintenance, including fixing leaks
7. Ensure that Joburg Water' regional maintenance depots and stores are replenished and that vehicles are available at all times
8. Put in place a Public Private Partnership to reduce non-revenue water as soon as possible, to mobilise private sector funding and expertise for reducing non-revenue water
9. Infrastructure investment and upgrading of ageing pipelines, reservoirs and treatment plants. City of Johannesburg will complete infrastructure projects to make Joburg Water's distribution system more resilient
10. Ensure that Joburg Water is adequately funded to complete its infrastructure projects to improve the resilience of its systems as soon as possible
11. Rigorously enforce level 1 restrictions and bylaws
12. Communicate consistently, openly and timeously with residents, including regarding the need to use water sparingly.
13. Reduce water supply to high-consuming areas between 21:00 and 04:00

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14. Increase the number of teams to attend to water leaks both during working hours and after hours.

15. Current pressure-reducing valves in the city will be refurbished as part of water conservation and demand management measures.

16.

We are confident that the City of Johannesburg will embark on practical steps to implement the above interventions with the necessary urgency and resolve with the support of the Office of the Premier and the Department of Water and Sanitation.

We are satisfied that the calls by Minister Majodina and Premier Lesufi as well as consistent pleas to municipalities are being heeded. Our immediate task is to sustain this momentum. We are confident that the City of Johannesburg will be able to resolve the current water challenges with urgency.

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