

IN South Africa, water demand is expected to increase significantly over the next 30 years, resulting in a 17 percent gap in supply and demand.

Given the current trends of poor usage habits, physical and commercial water losses, South Africa is facing a water supply crisis.

Population and economic growth largely drive the source of this demand, which in turn leads to substantially increased water requirements for agricultural and industrial uses. This crisis is not soluble through public sector response alone.

The Minister of Water & Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa, announced at COP17 the formation of the Strategic

Business and government in partnership to resolve water crisis

Water Partners Network (SWPN), driven by the ministry to close the water gap by 2030.

She invited business to collaborate in this partnership to solve the water crisis, as part of a comprehensive water strategy for the country.

It is a unique response to a problem that is ordinarily managed in the public sector space by the Department of Water Affairs (DWA) and is based on a sector wide common goal, which is securing future water supply for public and commercial purposes.

Its pioneer partners are the Water Resources Group, supported by the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation, World Economic Forum, South African Breweries, Coca-Cola, Anglo American, Sasol, Nestlé, Eskom and the NEPAD Business Foundation.

The network has identified two roles for its members. Firstly, defining industry specific water projects best practices and reviewing current projects that are either increasing or conserving supply.

Secondly, clustering solu-

tions in special working groups and discussing, between the public and private sector, the projects that ought to be undertaken in the future with a unique buy-in and collaboration between the two sectors.

The partnership uses a two-stage model that involves producing a diagnostic of the supply-demand dynamics for South Africa by 2030 and using findings to justify the replication of projects that can curb supply-demand gaps by 2030.

The SWPN, which is a public-private advisory platform,

helps government shape and test concepts and governance processes seeking to close the identified future water volume gaps.

This country-level support entails the use of such the SWPN as an expert group to work with government in shaping concepts into implementation.

The two key focus areas include water conservation/demand management involving increasing water use efficiency (in agriculture, industry and households), leakage reduction

from distribution networks (municipal and others, including irrigation).

The other area is diversifying the water supply mix encompassing reuse of effluent water, desalination (sea water and acid mine drainage) and use of groundwater (development and sustainable management of groundwater resources, in particular for rural areas).

Under the leadership of the DWA and by engaging industry partners and experts in the above areas, the SWPN is collaborating on an on-going basis to

seek innovative joint solutions that support the implementation of government water strategies and overall water security for South Africa.

By promoting the efforts and activities of this partnership, government can build an even wider public-private-expert movement for action.

Currently, the working groups are identifying a pipeline of potential projects and assessing their collective potential to close the water supply gap if implementation takes place.

By identifying best practices, experiences, technology and solution suppliers and advisors, the SWPN is jointly reviewing with the DWA, the challenges for replication and recommending a strategy to overcome challenges, including incentives for widespread adoption and contributions by each stakeholder to enable replication.

With coordinating assistance from the NEPAD Business Foundation, which is the neutral secretariat of the SWPN, joint public-private expert collaborations within the SWPN will then structure and take forward pilot projects including buy-in, funding and implementation at a Water Summit to be held later this year.