

**SPEECH BY MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
AFFAIRS, MS EDNA MOLEWA, AT THE DBSA  
KNOWLEDGE WEEK SESSION, MIDRAND**

**14 October 2011**

**Programme Director**

**Chairperson of the DBSA Board**

**Distinguished guests**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

It is almost a decade since our country hosted the World Summit on Sustainable Development here in Johannesburg. And as we look forward to Rio +20 next year, the international community is learning from experiences of the past 20 years.

Central to the debate on sustainable development is how to enhance environmental governance and further articulation of environmental sustainability in economic development through the green economy concept in the context of poverty eradication.

International studies such as those undertaken by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) show that some of

the levers available to the public sector to promote greening of infrastructure and the economy include the following:

- Establishing sound regulatory frameworks,
- Creating incentives for increased investment in green economic activity,
- Utilising sustainable public procurement to encourage the use of sustainable goods and services,
- Prioritising government investment and expenditure in areas that stimulate the key “green economy” sectors,
- Limiting government spending in areas that deplete natural resources, and ,
- Increased investment in training, capacity building and education in support of a green economy.

Our approach is therefore in keeping with international best practice which has shown that by increasing investment in natural assets and resources used by the poor to build green agriculture and sustainable tourism development, rural communities are able to move out of poverty and benefit from economic development on a sustainable basis.

As government, we have made great strides in addressing each of these areas. Our regulatory and policy frameworks make provision for thorough environmental impact procedures which balance our need for investment and development with those of sustainability principles.

South Africa has developed policies that support a green economy transition. These include the:

- National Framework For Sustainable Development
- Medium Term Strategic Framework 2009-2014
- New Growth Path
- Industrial Policy Action Plan
- Science and innovation plan
- Integrated Resource Plan
- National Skills Development Strategy
- National Climate Change Policy
- Carbon Tax

On our response to climate change in particular, we are making great strides in developing a policy. This week Cabinet approved our White Paper on Climate Change Response Strategy. This policy will help us as a country to map out a socio-economic transition to a climate resilient and low carbon economy and society. We will engage all stakeholders further on means of implementing the strategy.

Market-based policy measures such as an escalating carbon tax to price carbon and internalizing the external costs of climate change are being implemented. This will drive the diversification of our energy mix, and implement energy

efficiency measures and investments in new and cleaner technologies and industries.

We must also realize that when we take care of our environment it will reciprocate by taking care of us as well. For example, waste collection and the recycling industry make a large contribution to job creation and GDP, and there is considerable potential to expand this further.

We have adopted an aggressive approach to scaling-up and accelerating the implementation of our various “Working for.....” programmes that are carried out in our Department of Environmental Affairs. These programmes provide an effective basis for skills development, labour intensive job creation, and local economic development on a sustainable and green basis.

An example of this initiative is in operation at a pilot project in Mafikeng which services more than 30 000 households, and has created jobs and entrepreneurs who now own their waste collection trucks.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we view green economy as a sustainable development path based on addressing the interdependence between economic growth, social protection and the natural ecosystem.

Since the green economy summit of May last year, work has continued and has been gaining momentum to address transition issues requiring attention in the short, medium and long term. Key focus areas were identified at the summit that include:

- Resource conservation and management
- Sustainable waste management practices
- Water management
- Environmental Sustainability
- Green buildings and the built environment
- Sustainable transport and infrastructure
- Clean energy and energy efficiency
- Agriculture, food production and forestry
- Sustainable consumption and production

Our view is that greening the South African economy represents a critical lever for bringing about the structural

transformation needed for a more equitable and inclusive economy.

Government is demonstrating its increased commitment to the implementation of sustainability practices through major investment in programmes to address a range of environmental problems whilst addressing the economic and social development.

We believe that increased investment in green economy industries is a powerful basis for job creation. By promoting green cities through sustainable and integrated planning of infrastructure and service delivery, we will be able to contribute to increased efficiency and productivity.

These approaches, however, require increased commitment from the government and the private sector to provide increased resources to support institutions at local, district and provincial government level and up-scaling infrastructure development on a sustainable basis.

Spatial planning and land use management are important determinants of the sustainability of the built environment. In order for the built environment to serve as an effective habitat for human beings, it must be designed, constructed, managed and used in such a way that the natural elements that sustain human life are preserved (air, water, soil, biodiversity).

This entails the design of built environment which is characterised by urban greening, biodiversity conservation and enhancement, effective waste management services with greater levels of recycling, and green public transportation including the prevalence of non-motorised transportation infrastructure. All these are vital for the built environment.

South Africa's major events of the Greening Programme, including for the 2010 Soccer World Cup and COP17 demonstrates our ability to raise awareness, minimize waste, diversify and use energy efficiently, consume water sparingly, compensate our carbon footprint, practice responsible tourism, and construct our infrastructure with future generations in mind.

Fortunately, we have adopted these pro-green approaches as we prepare for the COP 17 in Durban next month.

Ladies and gentlemen, we need to ensure that public sector finance institutions and private developers implement more integrated and environmentally appropriate development with regard to retrofits, new developments, infrastructure development and ecosystem maintenance.

Our efforts at building a green economy must focus on efforts to support biodiversity and to protect our natural resources so

that they are available to all of South Africa's people on a sustainable basis.

Our partnership approach of collaboration between government departments and public entities ensures that we are able to harness effective skills and resources to support our goals of sustainable development, greening our economy and ensuring that our natural assets are valued, protected and enhanced.

The DBSA is one of our key partners in the green agenda and we are engaging the Bank in various initiatives to support our green agenda.

In one of the initiatives with the DBSA, Independent Development Corporation (IDC) and the Department of Economic Development, we have managed to produce a report early this year in support of the green economy initiatives.

Together, we have also designed programmes in support of transitioning South Africa to a green economy. These programmes focus on identifying, at a high level, green economy initiatives prioritised according to criteria for social, economic (emphasizing job creation and localisation) and environmental sustainability.

Our partnership with the DBSA also sets out to identify the resource requirements for green programmes, with a specific



focus on a proposal to establish a funding mechanism for green economy initiatives. A draft MOA has been prepared and will be signed soon in this regard. The MOA calls for the implementation of programmes through the development of a portfolio of green projects in the DBSA. This is meant to address infrastructure related mitigation and adaptation and generally moving to climate resilience.

We have already signed another MOA earlier this year to implement a Drylands Fund, which is critical to managing our natural resources.

Ladies and gentlemen, we must address the dire need for early funding and pre-feasibility work as we grapple with new concepts, technologies and transitions and I was pleased to learn that the DBSA is looking into this. I am also pleased that a proposal has been developed by the DBSA and my Department and other key players on a mechanism to manage the large amounts of funds that exist. Called “The Green Financing Mechanism”, this will develop a means to attract, manage and direct international and national financing for transitioning South African projects – from research and development to investment - to green economy initiatives.

Lastly, I want to thank the DBSA for participating in our Green and White paper processes, thereby contributing to policy initiatives to enhance our green agenda.

I want us to emphasize the importance of building on existing processes, programmes, indigenous knowledge and initiatives in key sectors to shift *“towards a resource efficient, low carbon and pro-employment growth path”*. Government alone cannot manage and fund a just transition to a green economy and the private sector and civil society must play a fundamental role.

This Knowledge Week enabled us to deliberate on measures required to green our infrastructure programmes. Let us continue our implementation efforts while we share the knowledge and learn from each other in various key sectors.

As we conclude today, the knowledge that we shared and the actions that we identified to green our infrastructure must be implemented to scale up our efforts and continue to promote a sustainable development path.

I thank you!