

CITY OF CAPE TOWN

22 FEBRUARY 2018

SPEECH BY MAYORAL COMMITTEE MEMBER FOR FINANCE, COUNCILLOR JOHAN VAN DER MERWE, AT THE LAUNCH OF THE GREATER CAPE TOWN WATER FUND PILOT PROJECT

Note to editors: The following is an extract from a speech delivered at the launch of the Greater Cape Town Water Fund Pilot Project. The fund will contribute towards clearing alien vegetation that has grown on top of our aquifers to increase rainwater recharge and increase the sustainable yield of groundwater. Read more below.

Cities are major contributors to climate change. Although they cover less than 2% of the earth's surface, cities consume 78% of the world's energy and produce more than 60% of all carbon dioxide and significant amounts of other greenhouse gas emissions, mainly through energy generation, vehicles, industry, and biomass use. At the same time, cities are extremely vulnerable to climate change. The World Bank forecasts that water availability in cities could decline by as much as two thirds by 2050 as a result of climate change and competition from energy generation and agriculture.

The reality is that many cities have not yet addressed climate change. However, when properly planned, capacitated, and managed through the appropriate governance structures, cities can be places of innovation and efficiency. Together with their local authorities, they have the potential to diminish the causes of climate change and effectively protect themselves from its impacts. This project which is being launched here today is an example of how cities can increase their resilience to climate change.

The project was initiated in 2014 when the City of Cape Town reached out to The Nature Conservancy (TNC) requesting it to establish a Water Fund for Cape Town. In 2015 a TNC delegation visited Cape Town and we agreed on Atlantis as the right location to run a pilot for four main reasons:

- It serves as an example for other managed aquifers
- It is in a key biodiversity area
- We are able to create much-needed jobs for the local communities
- Thirsty invader plants have a negative impact on the biodiversity and on water resources

The City of Cape Town however looks forward to work hand in hand with TNC and our partners to expand this work to benefit the greater Cape Town region.

Without water the city's economic growth is limited, jobs are affected, it impacts stability in the region and has severe social consequences, especially on our poor communities.

It is time to think differently about our relationship with water. Water can no longer be taken for granted. The City of Cape Town, in collaboration with national and provincial government, industry and residents of Cape Town are working hard to avoid the immediate threat of running out of water.

But the threat to our water supply will not be simply avoided by receiving good rainfall this winter. We have to make sure that we plan for the medium term and position the city to cope with the unknown. That means among other things less reliance on surface water and a greater appreciation for diverse water supply options.

The City recognises the contribution by the Coca-Cola Africa Foundation and commits to work with the Greater Cape Town Water Fund Partners to manage our water resources to ensure the region continues to serve its people. As we navigate the drought that has hit our region, it is important for us at all times to ensure that we build stronger partnerships to ensure that we can withstand the water-related shocks of the future. I wish this project every success and look forward to seeing the results.

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Media enquiries: Councillor Johan van der Merwe, Mayoral Committee Member for Finance, City of Cape Town, Tel: 021 400 3794 or Cell: 074 568 3980, Email: Johannes.VanDerMerwe@capetown.gov.za (please always copy media.account@capetown.gov.za).