

SA, Cuba extend water agreement to 2023

The South African Government and Cuba have extended the SA-Cuba cooperation agreement in the field of water resource management and water supply to 2023.



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Deputy of Minister of Water and Sanitation Pamela Tshwete, on behalf of South Africa, signed the agreement with Cuba's Institute of National Hydraulic Resources (INHR) during the third RSA-Cuba Joint Steering Committee meeting held recently in Pretoria.

The meeting was held to review and evaluate the agreement cooperation in the field of water resource management and water supply agreed upon in 2013, and identify areas of improvement.

The two countries also approved to extend the contracts of the 35 Cuban engineers stationed in all nine provinces to June 2018, in order to share more knowledge with their South African counterparts.

The agreement makes provision for the Department of Water and Sanitation and the INHR to cooperate in the areas of geo-hydrology and engineering services in rural and other disadvantaged areas, where such services are inadequate.

The implementation of this programme has been ongoing for the past 18 months and specialists have been placed in different clusters in all nine provinces where future engineers are being mentored.

Deputy Minister Tshwete said the extension of the cooperation agreement between the two countries is a step in the right direction for South Africa, as it will empower future engineers with much needed skills to help address the country's water challenges.

"We want to acquire as much skills as possible, and Cubans are the best teachers in the field. We want to capacitate our engineers so that they can help the country address its own water challenges, particularly now that old engineers are leaving the field," Tshwete said.

She added that South Africa will forever be grateful to Cubans for their generosity in sharing their knowledge and skills in the health, as well as the water sector.

INRH first vice president Bladimir Matos Moya said they are determined to assist South Africa in improving water supplies. He said Cubans have directed South Africa to identify its specific training needs so that those can be attended to as a matter of urgency. The Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) has also committed to speedily processing requests from Cuban engineers to be recognised as professional specialists.

Currently, ESCA does not recognise the Cubans' qualifications and the type of work they are doing in the country because they are not registered with them.

Report vandalism of water infrastructure

Meanwhile, the department has urged citizens to report to the police any acts that interfere with distribution of water like vandalism and theft of water infrastructure, water pollution and unauthorised use of water.

This follows a pipe burst in the Komati Water Augmentation Scheme area on Sunday morning, 24 September, which affected water supply to the Duvha Power Station.

"The department engineers discovered the cause of the pipe burst at the Komati Water Augmentation Scheme to be due to a case of vandalism. Someone or some people attempted to steal the isolation valve leading to the burst.

"The engineers were able to relieve the pressure in the pipeline, which allowed them to do a proper inspection of the area. The other reservoirs also supplying the power station have remained mainly stable at 93% and 81% of capacity, ensuring that all other operations at the Duvha Power Station continue, with power generation uninterrupted," the department said.

The department reported that a new valve has been installed and work continues with concrete, and a steel plate being put in place to close the access.

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