

KwaZulu-Natal Water Conference

THREE of KwaZulu-Natal's major water utilities, Umgeni Water, UThukela Water and Mhlathuze Water, have teamed up to host a water conference in Durban.

The key objective of the conference is to deliberate on the issue of water backlogs in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal and brain storm collectively on the formulation of innovative, practical and cost-effective solutions that will ultimately ensure that every household in this province has access to safe drinking water.

Various sources, including Statistics South Africa, estimate

that about 750 000 households in KwaZulu-Natal have inadequate or no access to piped water.

In the past 14 years, since the advent of democracy and the implementation of Reconstruction and Development strategies of the present government, much progress has been made in the provision of potable water to communities across the country.

However, much more still needs to be done, especially in KwaZulu-Natal.

In line with the Millennium

Development Goals, the Government has set 2014 as the year in which water backlogs in South Africa will have to be eliminated.

It is against this backdrop that Umgeni Water, UThukela Water and Mhlathuze Water will convene a joint water conference on December 4 where numerous papers will be presented by key role players in the water sector and civil society.

Deliberations will be held in breakaway groups with a view to collectively formulating possible solutions to the challenge of water backlogs.

Deliberations will also be held on:

■ The role of water in poverty alleviation and economic regeneration of rural areas in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal. Speakers have been drawn from the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, the Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs and key civil society formations, among others.

In broad terms, a critical avenue that will be explored is the co-ordination of delivery of potable water in the Province of KZN as an endeavour to find cost-effective and innovative

joint solutions to assist Water Service Authorities and municipalities eliminate the water backlogs within their areas of jurisdiction by 2014. The consequence of initiatives that are expected to be developed will ultimately assist South Africa (the government) to meet the Millennium Development Goals targets for water.

Proposed new institutional arrangements for the water sector, headed by the Department of Water Affairs & Forestry

Among those who will be present at the water conference are Chairpersons and other

representatives of water utilities, organized labour, representatives of the Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs, the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, traditional leaders and the South African Local Government Association. The conference will be held on December 4 at the 1 on 1 Conference Centre at Gateway in Durban, starting at 8.30am. The conference, to be held under the theme Water, People and Sustainable Development, represents the first joint initiative of its kind by the three water utilities.

