



It is a day which serves as a painful reminder of the sacrifices made during our struggle for a united, non-racial, non-sexist, just and prosperous South Africa.

It is also a reminder that we were not alone in this struggle but that the people of the world stood with us in solidarity and this august body declared Apartheid a crime against humanity.

We commemorate not only to remember, but also to measure how far we have come in achieving the ideals cherished by those who lost their lives in the struggle. Central to these ideals is the life sustaining access to water and the dignity afforded by sanitation, rights which are now enshrined in our Constitution.

On 18 July this year South Africa will celebrate the centenary of the birth of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, first President of a democratic South Africa.

We reiterate our appreciation to the General Assembly for declaring 18 July, Nelson Mandela International Day for Freedom, Justice and Democracy. This year's theme is: "Action Against Poverty".

Speaking at the launch of the "Make Poverty History Campaign", in 2005, President Mandela reminded us that: "Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings."

This underscores our shared responsibility to ensure implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, understanding that they are inter-related and inter-dependent and that SDG 6 is central to them all.

During the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, President Mandela gave delegates the following powerful message:

"When I return, as I often do, to the rural village and area of my childhood and youth, the poverty of the people and the devastation of the natural environment painfully strike me.

And in that impoverishment of the natural environment, it is the absence of access to clean water that strikes most starkly.

That our government has made significant progress in bringing potable water nearer to so many more people than was previously the case, I rate amongst the most important achievements of democracy in our country.

Amongst the many things I learnt, as a president of our country, was the centrality of water in the social, political and economic affairs of the country, continent and indeed the world.

I am, therefore, a totally committed "water person".

The excellent work done by the High-Level Panel on Water and International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development" 2018-2028 are indeed calls to action for all of us to be "totally committed "water person(s).

I THANK YOU