

Annex 1 – from SADC MET Newsletter 2004

Namibia's water 'amongst best in Africa'

NAMIBIA'S and South Africa's potable water supplies are among the safest in the region but the quality of water elsewhere in southern Africa and the continent is cause for grave concern. Access to clean potable water is considered a basic human right, and analysis of water samples by laboratories cannot be overlooked, says the German Embassy in Namibia.

According to Dr Mukayi Musarurwa of the CSIR-NML, Regional Co-ordinator for SADC Metrology, unreliable results obtained from water laboratories across Africa has left many communities exposed to potential health threats. Representatives from all SADC countries, as well as from Kenya, Ethiopia, and Uganda, met in Windhoek during February 2004 to discuss the establishment of a regional proficiency testing scheme for water testing laboratories throughout the region - with the aid of specialists from Europe.

Musarurwa said people throughout Africa had lost faith in the claims of city and town councils that their water was not only safe for consumption but of good quality.

“In many rural areas, he said, the quality of water was not even known.”

Musarurwa said with limited water resources available in many of the region's countries, the issue of quality and reliability of measurements were of prime importance.

"Namibia is far better off than other countries. And there are lessons to be learned here for putting in place a system that is reliable and credible," said Musarurwa.

During their stay, conference delegates visited the water testing laboratories of NamWater and the City of Windhoek.

With limited water resources, the City relies on the Gammams Reclamation Plant for 30 per cent of its potable water. The German government also pledged its continued commitment to the good management of cross-boundary natural resources, and set aside N\$60 million for this purpose last year.

German Ambassador to Namibia, Wolfgang Massing, reminded delegates of water's role as a basic service and human need and that safeguarding its quality was of the utmost importance.