



Press Release

September 28, 2018

Groundwater is key to navigating Climate Change in the SADC region, say experts

Only proper management of critical groundwater resources will see the SADC Region prosper as climate change impacts are increasingly experienced. This was the reason behind the formation of the SADC-Groundwater Management Institute and the first annual SADC Groundwater Conference, where by top groundwater experts, policy makers, government officials, young professionals and students discussed how to future-proof the region.

The three-day conference, held by SADC-GMI at the Birchwood Hotel and OR Tambo Conference Centre in Johannesburg, South Africa closed on Friday, 28 September 2018. The conference theme was *“Adapting to Climate Change in the SADC Region through Water Security – A Focus on Groundwater”*.

Groundwater is critical to the future of agricultural and industrial sectors, and people in the region, particularly in the rural areas, are largely dependent on it. It is also a regional issue as countries in the region share aquifers. Collaboration on water is critical for peace and socio-economic development in SADC.

The complexity and number of role-players in the region has necessitated regional organisation and this conference has made strides in ensuring information sharing and collaboration. “Working together is crucial to water security as the effects of climate change are increasingly felt,” said James Sauramba, Executive Director of the SADC-Groundwater Management Institute.

Climate change, poor maintenance, population growth, pollution, and rapid urbanisation are all challenges impacting groundwater sustainability and development in the region.

“We hope the takeaways from the conference will help us build a strong research and informational base to make decisions to ensure proper supply of water for industrial and agricultural development. This is a crucial piece of the puzzle in meeting future needs of our growing populations for food, water and jobs,” said Sauramba.

The conference provides a platform for all groundwater stakeholders to advance knowledge sharing on sustainable management of groundwater at national and transboundary levels across SADC members states. Sauramba said “The conference provided a platform to discuss and contribute to international development on groundwater.”

Monitoring, maintenance and development of groundwater infrastructure is key to future proofing the region. “We are particularly grateful to our sponsors who have generously supported this event and made it a reality. We would also like to say thank you to everyone who participated in the inaugural SADC Groundwater Conference” said Sauramba

The keynote speakers for the conference included Dr. Karen G. Villholth (IMWI-SA), Prof. Jason Gurdak (UNESCO – IHP), Dr. Roger Parsons (Parsons & Associates), Dhesigen Naidoo (Water Research Commission, South Africa), Dr. Callist Tindimugaya (International Association of

Hydrologists) and Gavin Kode (Western Cape Government, South Africa). Together they tackled groundwater's critical role in dealing with development, economic and environmental challenges.

SADC-GMI is hosting the conference in collaboration with UNESCO, IGRAC, the Government of South Africa, IWMI, GWP-SA and GRIPP.

The groundwater experts look forward to the recommendations being taken up by the African Ministers Council on Water (AMCOW) in conjunction with the African Union Commission in the upcoming meeting "Toward Achieving Water Security and Safely Managed Sanitation for Africa" to be held from October 29 to November 2, 2018 in Libreville, Gabon.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: SADC-GMI is a subsidiary structure of the SADC Secretariat launched in 2016 to raise the prominence of groundwater in national and regional policy, legal and regulatory frameworks. SADC-GMI gets its mandate from the Regional Strategic Action Plan (IV) on Integrated Water Resources 2016 – 2020.

Part of its mandate is to facilitate the integration of groundwater into shared watercourse commissions and agreements through transboundary cooperation. It aims to assist Member States pursue a harmonised Integrated Water Resources Management framework that promotes equitable and sustainable use of shared international water resources.

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