NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO 443**

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 4)**

**443. Ms D Carter (Cope) to ask the Minister of Water and Sanitation:**

(1) Whether her department was ready to initiate an adequate number of desalination plants, using the latest proven and most cost-effective technology, especially in areas which long term forecasts have indicated will experience water shortage in the foreseeable future; if not, why not; if so, (a) when, (b) where and (c) with or without partners;

(2) Whether her department will acknowledge Operation Hydrate in an appropriate manner and develop close working relationship with the specified group to ensure clean drinking water for all? NW497E

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**REPLY:**

1. My Department encourages measures to extend the available water resources in South Africa which include the utilization of ground water, re-use of water, rainwater harvesting and desalination of sea water. A sea water desalination plant is essentially a water purification plant and the norm is for water purification plants to be developed and owned by Water Boards and Water Services Providers (municipalities). In the conciliation strategies developed for the coastal towns, sea water desalination is an important option being considered for implementation by Water Boards and Municipalities, depending on the particular institutional situation in the area  Currently the Durban area is investigating the desalination as an option and there will be a decision made soon on whether to implement a medium sized sea water desalination plant to the south of the city, or to develop conventional water storage close by is expected soon.

Experience shows that sea water desalination is becoming more and more economically competitive when compared with other available water resource options and with the comparative advantage of coastal cities having an abundance of sea water available close by, we can expect see medium to large sea water desalination plants being implemented there in future.  We can also expect to see small sea water desalination plants, making use of less expensive beach well raw water abstraction (as compared with expensive ocean abstraction for larger sea water desalination plants) becoming viable in certain local applications.

(2) I have noted and acknowledged the humanitarian support that the civil society is playing in distributing drinking water to needy communities across the country. In this regard the effort by Operation Hydrate, Gift of the Givers, Nelson Mandela Foundation and Proudly South Africa, among others, are greatly appreciated. These organizations are most encouraged to work with my Department in continuously monitoring and identifying communities that have been hit the most by the drought, and therefore who can benefit the most from this gesture.

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