



**UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA**

*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*

**6<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum  
Partnership for strengthening Water Security in Africa**

**Conference on  
The Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Initiative & The African Water  
Facility**

**Opening Remarks**

**by**

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UN Under-Secretary-General and  
Executive Secretary of ECA**

**Marseille, France**

**14 March 2012**

**Your Excellencies,**

- **Mr. John Kufuor former President of the the Republic of Ghana,**
- **Dr. Jean Ping, Chairperson of the African Union Commission**
- **Dr. Donald Kaberuka, President of the African Development Bank,**
- **HRH The Prince of Orange, Chairman of United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB),**

**The Honourable Edna Molewa, President of the African Ministers Council on Water AMCOW**

**Mr. Bai Mass Taal, Executive Secretary of the African Ministers Council on Water (AMCOW)**

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**I am delighted to have the opportunity to say a few words at this important side event of the 6<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum.**

**But before I so, let me salute H.E. President John Kufour, former President of Ghana who continues to be an inspiration for the good governance and development agenda in Africa. Similar appreciation goes to Dr. Jean Ping, Chairperson of African Union Commission, Dr. Donald Kaberuka, President of the African Development Bank and HRH The Prince of Orange, Chairman of UNSGAB whose leadership of this event demonstrates their commitment to the vital task of ensuring rural water supply and sanitation in Africa.**

**The African Ministers' Council on Water has through its commitment and versatility in addressing Africa's water challenge established itself as a best practice for other sectors to emulate. I therefore take this opportunity to express appreciation to the Council represented here by its President, Ms Edna Molewa and Executive Secretary, Mr. Bai Mass Taal.**

All of us here know about and appreciate the dire situation of water needs in Africa but the point is still worth emphasising. Yet, the situation is a perplexing one because the continent is actually awash with large rivers, big lakes, vast wet lands and widespread ground water resources. Indeed, in the context of this 6<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum, it is notable that Africa is endowed with transboundary waters with international river basins that cover not less than 62% of its land area.

The natural question that then springs to mind as it has in all the previous Forums is how to harness the resources needed to transform this immense potential into assets for Africa to grow food for its burgeoning population and save millions of lives from water diseases.

The uneven natural distribution of water resources poses another layer of challenges. While areas such as the Congo are endowed with enormous water resources, there are arid regions of Africa, towards the north of the continent that are afflicted by physical water scarcity. The situation is such that in some countries per capita physical water availability is less than 1,000 m<sup>3</sup> per person per year.

Another key issue that continues to engage our minds is directly related to our concerns about rural water supply and sanitation. The rapid growth of population in Africa means that by 2025, water availability will dwindle and the population at risk of water stress could increase to 460 million people. This could exacerbate simmering conflicts over water, particularly in arid and semiarid regions, and also between urban and rural areas.

The implication of all these scarcity in the midst of plenty, unequal distribution of water resources and rapidly growing demand for water is that the MDG targets on water supply and sanitation may be harder to achieve. This is why it is pleasing to note that Africa has acted on all these challenges especially within the framework of the African Water Vision.

**The Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Initiative (RWSSI) and the African Water Facility fit squarely within this vision and the achievements recorded both in terms of the resources raised and countries covered is quite pleasing to note. Nevertheless, there is still a lot to be done as over 150 million people in rural areas are still to gain access to required water supply and up to 220 million yet to be covered in terms of meeting the MDGs sanitation target. This meeting is of course aimed at addressing all such challenges which must also be seen in the context of implementing the Sharm El-Sheikh Commitments of African Heads of State and Government.**

**Our efforts must therefore continue to be concentrated on ensuring appropriate financing for rural water and sanitation initiatives. The starting point for this of course would be to assess where we are and what are the remaining gaps, which is a crucial objective of this conference. Eventual success would also require continued commitment and partnership, which is why I join others in calling for African governments, bilateral and multilateral partners and other key stakeholders to help raise the required resources, which I am informed is in the magnitude of \$400 million over the next three years.**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

**Let us renew our resolve and strive to leave this beautiful city with concrete pledges to support African countries in meeting the MDG targets for water and sanitation, particularly in the rural areas.**

**As we agree to strengthen partnerships to mobilize the resources required for the different initiatives, let us also agree on a work programme that would lead to the achievement of the goal we have set ourselves while continuing to place water issues at the forefront of Africa's development agenda.**

**On its part, the United Nations is working within the ambit of UN-Water/Africa, which brings together 9 UN agencies, to continuously lend support to AMCOW and other stakeholders to promote Africa's water agenda. ECA hosts the secretariat of UN-Water/Africa and we remain committed to providing the support that will enable the water sector in the continent to build on its pioneering role as a model of Inter-Agency Coherence and Synergy.**

**It is also pleasing to know that our host country that France is committed to making this World Water Forum “a time for solutions” and an important step in preparing the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).**

**That clearly resonates with Africa's position which is that water must be placed at the heart of all the issues on the agenda at Rio+20: for the green economy and in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication.**

**I wish you successful deliberations. Thank you for your kind attention**