

The African Development Bank Group



Opening Statement by
Omar Kabbaj,
President of the African Development Bank Group

at the

Inaugural Meeting of the African Water Facility Governing Council

Tunis
8 July 2005

Introduction

Your Excellency M. Amor EL ABED, Secretary of State for Water Resources of
And Fisheries of Tunisia

Honorable Mrs. Maria Mutagamba, Chairperson of the African Minister Council
on Water

Distinguished Members of the Governing Council of the African Water Facility,

Distinguished Representatives of Regional and International Institutions,

Members of the Board of Directors of the Bank Group

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure to welcome you all to the Bank and to the Inaugural Meeting of the Governing Council of the African Water Facility (AWF). The African Development Bank views this meeting as an important step in implementing the Water Vision that Africa presented at the 2nd World Water Forum in March 2000 at The Hague. As you will all recall, this is a vision of *'an Africa where there is an equitable and sustainable use and management of water resources for poverty alleviation, socio-economic development, regional co-operation, and the environmental quality.'*

The African Water Facility

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you will also recall, African countries had agreed on a Framework for Action to achieve the goals set out in the Water Vision, with a particular focus placed on major undertakings to meet urgent water needs and strengthening the investment base to secure Africa's water future.

Indeed, the financial resources required for achieving the targets of the African Water Vision and the Millennium Development Goals are considerable and are estimated

at around \$20 billion per year up to 2015. These represent a major challenge to African countries and their partners. As a first step in mobilizing the required resources, the African Water Task Force, created to help implement the African Water Vision, recommended the establishment of the African Water Facility. This was subsequently endorsed by the Accra African Water Stakeholders Conference held in April 2002.

Since the Accra Conference, the African Ministers Council on Water (AMCOW) has championed the establishment of the Facility as it views it as an important instrument for achieving both the Water Vision and the Millennium Development Goals. AMCOW also requested the Bank to host the Facility and to work with it in ensuring its speedy implementation.

The Bank welcomed this request and the Board of Governors approved its establishment as a Special Fund in May 2005. The former Chairperson of AMCOW, the Honourable Shagari, Nigeria's Minister of Water Resources, formerly launched the Facility during the ADB Water Week last year. Since its establishment, AMCOW and the Bank have put considerable effort in presenting the goals of the Facility at international and regional fora and to bilateral donors. I am pleased to note that the Facility has garnered considerable support from the international community and from bilateral donors.

Indeed, the commencement of operations of the Facility that we are witnessing today has been made possible through the generous support of a number of donors. Financial commitments have been secured from the Governments of Canada, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Austria, France and the European Union, with a grant of C\$ 10 million already received from Canada. We are confident that other donors will soon join.

I wish to also add in this regard that in addition to the responsibilities it has assumed for managing the AWF's Fund, the Bank has made a pledge to contribute approximately \$2.3 million, over a three years period, to support the Facility, in the form of staff secondments, office space and facilities, and other logistical and administrative

needs. I am also pleased to inform you that it has appointed Mr. K. Bedoumra as the Director of the African Water Facility. In addition, the recruitment of two senior professional staff has been effected and the Bank will also provide the services of its other staff, as well as external experts and consultants, as needed.

The Urgent Need for Coordination of African Water Initiatives

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The commencement of operations of the African Water Facility is an important element our quest to achieve the Africa Water Vision. Yet, as I am sure you would all agree, the enormous resource requirements to realize the African Water Vision and meeting the MDGs are beyond the means of any single institution or initiative such as the AWF. We will therefore have to redouble our efforts on other fronts as well as mobilize the needed resources. In this regard, I am pleased to note that important advances have been made in recent months.

In the area of rural water supply and sanitation, the ADB has launched its Rural Water and Sanitation Initiative (RWSSI) a programme aiming to achieve a coverage of 80 per cent of the rural population with respect to potable water supply and adequate sanitation by 2015. African countries and the international community gave their full backing to the Initiative at the Paris International Conference held on April 1, 2005 and accepted it as a framework for accelerated provision of water supply and sanitation services in rural Africa. I am also pleased to note that the AMCOW Executive Committee, at its meeting last month in Addis Ababa, passed a resolution directing AMCOW members to implement the Paris Declaration.

In addition to RWSSI, the Bank is also supporting NEPAD in the implementation of its trans-boundary water and sanitation programme. Other notable initiatives, outside of the ADB include the EU, UNDP, USAID water initiatives and many others.

While we welcome these various initiatives, there is clearly an urgent need for coordination of regional water activities to avoid unnecessary overlap and duplication. In this regard, we urge AMCOW to strengthen its coordinating role to ensure that all water and sanitation programmes fit into the national and regional programmes of our countries.

We are confident, in this respect, that the establishment and operation of the African Water Facility will enable AMOCW to fully undertake its responsibility and I would also like to assure you the Bank's full support in all such endeavors. Towards this end, I am pleased to inform you that the Bank is currently setting up a Water Coordination Committee to ensure complementarities among its initiatives and to liaise with other water programmes and initiatives outside the Bank. I have asked the Director of the African Water Facility to lead this coordination.

Concluding Remarks

Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Representatives of International Organizations,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Permit me to conclude by stressing once again that the AWF provides a great opportunity to address the critical problems that African countries face in the provision of water infrastructure, by helping to create the right environment for the large investments that are needed to provide water security in Africa. Water security will require access to clean drinking water and basic sanitation, and more efficient use of water for agriculture and energy. The benefits of a solid water infrastructure base for Africa are multiple and far reaching. They include significant health gains, improvements the livelihoods of women and girls, and increased food security.

I would therefore like to take this opportunity to call on African countries to give the needed priority to water security in their development plans and take advantage of the

opportunities provided by the AWF to improve the management and investments in water infrastructure. I also wish to call on the international donor community to increase its support to the AWF by providing the required resources.

I am confident that in this inaugural meeting of the Governing Council, you will be able to give guidance on the areas of intervention and operational focus of the Facility to enable the Bank to take the necessary steps to get projects and programmes approved for implementation.

Before concluding let me extend my special thanks to Honorable Maria Mutagamba, for the effort she made to be here with us today to guide the Facility at the inaugural meeting of its Board of Governors. I also wish to take the opportunity to thank the African Ministers of Water for their support and commitment and the donor countries for their demonstrated partnership by availing needed resources. I also wish to thank the ADB Board of Governors, the Board of Directors, as well as Management and staff in making the Facility a reality.

I have the honour and privilege to declare open the inaugural meeting of the Governing Council of the African Water Facility. I wish you fruitful deliberations.