

The African roadmap to the 4th World Water Forum: Challenges and potentials

Africa's participation to the 4th World Water Forum: An opportunity for beneficial exchanges of experiences towards sustainable Water Resources Development

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The World Water Forums, which have been organised every three years since 1997, provide an opportunity to review the most current ideas in the water sector, effective strategies for responding to the global challenges of extending water and sanitation coverage, effective development and management of water resources to reduce poverty and promote development and to discuss and exchange information and experience. Considering that Africa is the region being confronted by the biggest challenges in the water sector, it cannot afford to be left out of these forums. The African Development Bank (AfDB) and the African Ministers Council on Water (AMCOW) are leaving no stone unturned to ensure Africa's effective participation in the Forum.

62 per cent of the population has access to improved water supply (against a global average of 82 per cent). Over 300 million Africans lack adequate water and sanitation services. Africa has abundant water resources but the level of exploitation remains abysmally low with only 3% of the available resource extracted every year for use in households, agriculture and industry. One of the main issues Africa has to face is the lack of financial resources to ensure the sustainable exploitation and management of the available water resources.

The factors in the water issues that African countries have to deal with are multiple. Firstly, the development of water resources management and infrastructures do not benefit from a favorable policy and regulations environment in most of African countries. This situation had been reinforced in the last decades by the weakness of the political will to enhance policy framework in the sector. However, recently, African institutions and governments, supported by the international community, measured the socio-economic development impacts of the water sector and initiated processes to boost the institutional input in this domain. Secondly, the sustainability of African water infrastructures and management systems suffers from

the low maintenance of equipment, particularly in remote location. Lastly, the weak local expertise and regional water resources knowledge and evaluation on the continent fostered this phenomenon.

The importance of this Millennium goal for Africa's development

Within the broad framework of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and within the perspective of the UN Millennium Summit last September, the conference emphasised the importance of this Millennium goal for Africa's development: Water supply and sanitation are, indeed, crucial factors

of development as they impact on health, education of people and particularly women. In the

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context of the World Water Vision and Framework for Action, the World Water Council is organising the 4th World Water Forum (WWF4) in Mexico City, Mexico, 16-22

March 2006. The aim of the Forum is mainly to review and share experiences from all over the world with a view to generating concrete and contextually relevant solutions to water sector challenges. The output of the Forum would include a Ministerial declaration, reports from all five regions of the World and thematic reports and



Fetching Water prevents girls to access education – AfDB Water Supply Project's beneficiary in Malawi.

Water in Africa

- Access rate to water supply: 62 per cent for Africa (global average of 82 per cent, 81 per cent for Asia and 85 per cent for Latin America)
- 35 out of the 55 countries in the world with domestic water use of less than 50 litres per person per day are in Africa
- Water and health: Almost half of all Africans suffer from one of six main water-related diseases
- Women and children spend two-six hours per day, on average, fetching water.

More than 300 million people in rural areas do not have access to water supply or sanitation infrastructures.



Photo: UNICEF/HQ00-0507/RADHIKA CHALASANI

Children pumping water in Burkina Faso.

recommendations on five major global water challenges and five cross-cutting themes, with specific regional and local dimensions.

The regional preparatory process for the Forum would include the preparation of a regional report by each region and the identification of local actions that could be promoted, scaled up or duplicated.

For Africa, the African Ministers

The main objectives of the African technical preparatory meeting to the WWF4:

- Develop a concrete programme for African participation at WWF4, including the Africa day and themes and cross-cutting issues
- Discuss and agree on the content of the African regional report which would be presented at the Forum
- Commence preparation for African contribution to the Ministerial session
- Plan the regional exhibition and fair
- Develop a resource mobilisation strategy to finance African participation
- Define a road map leading from the preparatory meeting up to the Mexico Forum, including plans for the second pre-Forum stakeholder meeting

Council on Water (AMCOW) is providing political leadership.

The Executive Committee of the African Ministers Council on Water (AMCOW EXCO) met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 29 June 2005 to discuss the African contribution to the Forum. The African organising process is overseen by a Steering Committee that will provide overall guidance and is composed by the AMCOW EXCO Ministers. A Technical Committee co-chaired by the AMCOW technical advisory committee (TAC), represented by Burkina Faso, and AfDB gave technical guidance to the process. The meeting also nominated AfDB to play the role of a 'Regional Beacon' and be responsible for coordinating the preparatory process and provide a secretariat function.

Within the context of its programmes and initiatives to help achieve the MDGs and the African Water Vision and Framework for Action, the AfDB has played a major coordinating role in the previous world water forums. In response to the request of AMCOW and in accordance with its established role, the AfDB took the necessary steps to coordinate African participation at the WWF4.

The African roadmap to Mexico: One voice to the 4th World Water Forum

The first meeting of the Technical Committee took place on 28th and 29th September 2005 in Tunis. A meeting reuniting the Steering and the Technical Committee

will be organised on early December 2005 in Namibia. The First technical preparatory process was meant to address Africa's issues in the water sector in a unique and comprehensive way to outreach the awareness of regional and international stakeholders to commit and invest to fulfil the needs of Africa.

The regional process has the objective of enabling dialogue and networking amongst stakeholders from an early start.

The main objective of the 1st preparatory meeting was to develop a roadmap leading to Mexico. 66 participants including regional representatives of the technical advisory committee of AMCOW, River and lake basin authorities, UN agencies, World Bank, international and local NGOs and representatives of bilateral donor agencies involved in water collaboration programmes with the AfDB were

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gathered to provide their contribution to the African Preparatory process. The Prince of Orange from the Netherlands, as well as Mr. Loïc Fauchon, President of the World Water Council, also attended the meeting.

The Regional Process was oriented at identifying from the bottom up the factors that affect the unfolding of local action; the most pressing challenges prevalent in each of the sub-regions and finding exemplary local projects that can serve as foundation for the development of policy-oriented solutions. Such findings will feed the ministerial process to influence decision-making.

The objectives of the 1st Regional meeting were the following:

To take stock of the efforts that African Organizations and International Organizations active in the African water sector have done so far for the preparation of WWF 4 in Mexico:

- To enhance through comments and discussions the zero Draft Regional Document prepared by the ADB;
- To define the African contribution to the framework themes and crosscutting perspectives;
- To identify a number of local actions for presentation in Mexico for inclusion in the Regional Document;
- To define a roadmap leading to Mexico which comprises one final regional conference;

- To establish the modalities for a common African exposition at the Mexican fair;
- To agree upon a resources mobilisation strategy in order to optimise African participation at WWF4; and
- To identify a number of key African champions to promote the African input into Mexico.

The outcome of the Technical Preparatory meeting can be categorised in two dimensions – **technical, as explained previously**. African political leaders in the sector moved a step forward in obtaining ownership for redressing the African water development challenges. This ownership is devolved to the local government and community levels through ownership of the local water actions that is the main theme of the Forum – *Local Actions for Global Challenges*. This paradigm shift will ensure that appropriate solutions are applied to water development issues specific to Africa.

Development of water resources in Africa: An instrument for social and economic growth

The African Development Bank Group has been engaged in responding to the grim statistics of water resources in Africa. The Bank Group has been supporting the management and

development of water resources in both its lending and non-lending activities since its establishment. It has spearheaded a number of regional water sector activities with the most significant initiatives being the 'Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Initiative', the 'African Water Facility' and the 'NEPAD Water and Sanitation Programme'. The AfDB is complemented in these endeavours by many other institutions and stakeholders who share in the increasing consensus that water is an important instrument for poverty reduction and socio-economic development.

The establishment of the African Water Facility is a response to the low levels of funding of water in Africa. It is also an initiative resulting from regional and international consensus to address investments in the sector. Moreover recognised that the level of development and exploitation of water resources in the region is very low. While per capita water availability is higher than in South Asia or Western Europe only about one quarter of the irrigation potential is being utilised – most of the hydropower resources remain unexploited. The Facility is tool to reinforce the role of water where it should be, that is to say in the core of life.

The African contribution to the World Water Forum is a way to underline and to raise awareness on this centrality in Africa as in the World.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND THE ORGANISATION

Born in 1952, Mr. Bedouma is a Chadian citizen, Mr. Bedouma holds a IT Engineer Degree from l'Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Télécommunications (ENST), Paris (France) as well as a Master's in Electronics, Electrotechnics and Automation. After that, 22 years experience with the African Development Bank, of which more than 10 years of Management level Experience in the Water Sector, from 1996 to 2002 as Infrastructure Manager for the Northern African Region and from 2002 to 2005 as a Infrastructure Director for the North, East and South Region, Mr. Bedouma played a key role in the conception and the development of the AfDB Water Sector Initiatives such as the AfDB Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Initiative (RWSSI). Mr. Bedouma also supervised the organisation of the AfDB First Water Week, held in Tunis on July 2004 as well as the last Rural Water Supply International Conference held in Paris on 1 April 2005, which aim was the resources mobilization for the development of Water Supply in Rural Africa. Mr. Bedouma was the AfDB representative in the World Panel on

Water Infrastructure Financing, chaired by Mr. Michel Camdessus. As a central actor in the AfDB's water sector activities, Mr. Bedouma has been designated Director of the African Water Facility (AWF) in April 2005.

The AfDB is a regional development bank with a wide and growing portfolio supporting economic growth and poverty alleviation in Africa. 12 per cent of the bank's portfolio is in the water sector. The AfDB has made a significant new thrust to support the continent's water development, not only by providing financial support but also in the policy coordination field. The Bank has embraced integrated water resource management principles and supports the African Water Task force. It recently established the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Initiative (RWSSI), and the African Water Facility (AWF). The latter will provide the much needed additional financing to water and sanitation projects in Africa.

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