

Africa's participation in the 4th World Water Forum, Mexico 2006

African Political Leaders Call for Strong Regional Commitment to Enhance Water Situation on the Continent

Windhoek, Namibia, 9 December 2005- The Africa Regional Steering Committee of the 4th World Water Forum – co-chaired by the African Ministers Council on Water (AMCOW) and the African Development Bank (ADB) – put final touches to Africa's roadmap to Mexico in Windhoek on 8th and 9th December 2005, and called for a strong regional commitment to improve water supply on the continent.

The call was made at the end of a meeting of ministers, heads of national and regional water management departments, water experts and stakeholders from several African nations in who met in the Namibian capital to finalize the Africa Regional Report and the Ministerial Declaration that will be tabled at the 4th WWF on behalf of the continent.

Jose Antonio Rodriguez Tirado, Coordinator of the Regional Process of the 4th WWF said it was “*nothing less than exemplary*” how African Ministers had boldly come together to speak with a common voice, reuniting for the first time technical experts and political leaders in the effort to address water supply and sanitation issues. “*Africa stands alone as a region that has been proactive in sitting around a common table to discuss the message the continent will deliver in Mexico. The political will of the various countries in Africa is clearly visible and speaks volumes for the continent's determination to share experiences and find solutions for water problems,*” Rodriguez Tirado said.

The overriding theme of the 2006 Water Forum is “Local Actions for a Global Challenge”.

Mr. Henry Ntale, the Ugandan Chairman of AMCOW's Technical Advisory Committee, explained: “*The water related problems of Africa are interlocking, creating vicious circles that reinforce one another. However, water can make an immense difference to Africa's development if it is managed well and used wisely. Given clear policies and strategies and real commitments to implementation, water can help to eradicate poverty, reduce water-related diseases and achieve sustainable development.*”

The Africa Regional Report identifies problems and challenges of water availability and commits the continent to the achievement of full access to water supply and sanitation services by 2025, by reinforcing investment in water infrastructures as well as human, social and institutional capacities at the regional, national and community level to ensure the sustainability of solutions through the local population empowerment at a very early stage.

Mr. Kordjé Bedoumra, Director of the African Water Facility (AWF), stressed that the establishment of this new financial instrument initiated by the AMCOW and administrated by the ADB was in response to the low levels of funding hampering water sector development in Africa: “*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 regional process has enabled dialogue and networking amongst stakeholders, the formulation of practical considerations for each of the 4th WWF forum themes and has ensured movement towards a common vision and voice in Mexico,*” Bedoumra added.



The Africa Regional Steering Committee also drafted the Ministerial Declaration which indicates the way forward for African countries to meet the Millennium Development Goals for water and sanitation targets. They must:

- Upscale all efforts to decentralize water supply and sanitation services to appropriate administrative levels and create transparent, open, accountable, gender responsive, communicative and effective water governance at all levels of water management,
- Give prominence to sanitation including an extensive and intensive health and hygienic education at the community level
- Invest adequately in building gender balanced institutional capacity, and technical and managerial capacity at all levels of the professional ladder.

Dr Libertine Amathila, Deputy Prime Minister of Namibia, host of the meeting, stressed the importance of Africa's strong stand and unity on water issues adding that *"by speaking with one voice, Africa would be heard loudly at the WWF"*. She praised the AMCOW for mainstreaming gender issues in the water supply and sanitation sector: *"Women have direct contact with water and possess comprehensive traditional knowledge concerning water use and protection. Hence they must be allowed to play a central role in the decision-making process on water and related issues,"* she added.