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PRESS RELEASE

African Water Facility's first grant supports the establishment of the Volta Basin Authority

Six West African riparian countries will benefit from joint water resources management and development

Ouagadougou, 6 April 2006: The African Water Facility (AWF) supports the formal establishment of the Volta Basin Authority (VBA) by providing its first grant of 165 000 Euros to the Volta Basin Technical Committee (VBTC) through an agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulics and Fisheries in Burkina Faso.

"This first AWF grant is crucial for the establishment of the new Volta Basin Authority as it will facilitate the creation of a common convention between the six riparian countries Burkina Faso, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Benin and Mali", says Mr. Kordjé Bedoumra, Director of the African Water Facility. *"In order to obtain broad ownership and support to the new VBA it is essential that the process is based on systematic stakeholder consultations in all riparian countries."*

The Volta Basin Authority (VBA), coordinated by the VBTC, will be an inter-governmental agency with the main task to manage the Volta river basin, promote strategic water resources planning and development, and to create synergy among stakeholders across the national borders.

The African Water Facility decided to support the VBA as it recognises the major importance of River Basin authorities and increased collaboration among all riparian countries, in line with the objective to improve trans-boundary water management, one of the priorities defined by the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW).

The Volta is a major river in West Africa and it has significant potential for enhanced regional development related to hydropower, agriculture and other economic activities. The current water management situation in the basin is little coordinated with a multiplicity of projects and initiatives under the auspices of individual governments, and a variety of NGOs, private sector actors, and international funding agencies. In order to address these issues, which cannot be resolved at national or sector levels alone, the AWF supports the enhancement of effective trans-boundary water resources management.

"Once the VBA will be formalized and operational, all riparian countries will benefit from it due to enhanced collaboration regarding water resources management, a major engine for socioeconomic development", explains Torbjörn Damhaug, Water Resources Management Expert at the AWF.

The grant agreement between the AWF and the Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulics and Fisheries of Burkina Faso will be signed in a ceremony on 7 April 2006 in Ouagadougou, by Mr. Kordjé Bedoumra, Director of the AWF and his Excellency Mr Jean-Baptiste M. P. Compaore, Minister of Finances and Budget as a Representative of his Excellency M. Salif Diallo, Burkina Faso State Minister, Minister of Agriculture, Hydraulics and Fisheries.

The African Water Facility (AWF) is an initiative led by the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) to mobilize financial resources for water sector development in Africa. Created in 2004, the AWF is hosted and managed by the African Development Bank (AfDB).

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