

# AMCOW Bulletin

A report on the Sixth Ordinary Session of the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW-6)

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## AMCOW-6 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY AND TUESDAY, 28-29 MAY 2007

As part of the lead up to AMCOW-6, the AMCOW Executive Committee (EXCO) convened on Tuesday 29 May to receive recommendations from the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and reports from the AMCOW Subregional Vice-Presidents. A Forum for Civil Society and Media took place on Monday, 28 May and Tuesday, 29 May, and a Youth Forum on Water was held on Monday, 28 May.



L-R: Maria Mutagamba, outgoing AMCOW President, and Bruno Jean-Richard Itoua, the incoming President.

## MEETING OF THE AMCOW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Opening the Executive Committee on Tuesday 29 May, Maria Mutagamba, AMCOW-5 President and Ugandan Minister of Water and Environment, said AMCOW has been at the forefront of African cooperation, stressing AMCOW's important role in strengthening the regional integration process in Africa and promoting the prioritization of water and sanitation issues in national policymaking. She noted recent AMCOW achievements, including: development and strengthening of the EXCO and TAC; adoption of the programme of work; mobilization of resources from the EU and UNEP; development and strengthening of partnerships; and promotion of the development of national, subregional and regional portfolios of water projects and initiatives. She said AMCOW is a platform for defining African water priorities and developing common perspectives and decisions and provides a single voice for interacting with the international community. President Mutagamba said AMCOW is coming of age and taking its place in the institutional framework of the African sustainable development architecture. President Mutagamba noted future challenges, including: adapting AMCOW's role to meet the requirements of the African Union (AU); improving AMCOW's support structure through a strengthened Secretariat and the establishment of centers of excellence; better engaging civil society and other stakeholders; and better addressing transboundary water issues.

Bruno Jean-Richard Itoua, Minister of Energy and Water, Republic of Congo, and incoming AMCOW President, welcomed delegates on behalf of President Denis Sassou Nguesso, noting that this meeting demonstrates a commitment to addressing water and sanitation issues in Africa. He pointed to issues affecting access to water, such as the depletion of water resources in some regions, institutional weakness,

underinvestment and the effects of climate change. He underscored the EXCO's role in promoting effective decision making and the generation of new perspectives on water issues, and called for the consolidation of efforts.

Babagana Ahmadu, African Union Commission (AUC), underlined the significance of AMCOW as a vital policy organ given the context of environmental issues in Africa. He discussed initiatives emanating from the Sirte Declaration to enhance cooperation and strengthen river and lake basin organizations and elaborated on draft AU/UNEP guidelines on a cooperative framework for the integrated management of transboundary basins. Ahmadu drew attention to the consequences of climate change and cited a decision taken during the AU Summit in January 2007 to protect available water resources and implement adaptation measures to avert a water crisis resulting from climate change.

### TAC RECOMMENDATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Henry Ntale, TAC Chair, presented the TAC Report, including its recommendations on issues for consideration by AMCOW.

On rotation of the AMCOW presidency, Chair Ntale said the TAC recommends that the presidency rotate as follows: Central Africa, Southern Africa, Northern Africa, Western Africa, Eastern Africa. He noted that the particular country to be selected would be determined through subregional consultations. LESOTHO announced that South Africa had been selected by the Southern Africa subregion as the next president.

Regarding financing of the triennial work programme, Chair Ntale stated that due to a funding shortfall of 3.3 million Euros for implementing the work programme, the programme was revised to cover 2007-2009. He said TAC recommends that a resource mobilization subcommittee be established and that

the AMCOW President affirm with member states that their contributions should continue to be remitted if AMCOW is integrated as an AU Specialized Technical Committee (STC).

On AMCOW's relationship with the AU, Chair Ntale noted that the AU Assembly agreed in principle that AMCOW become a STC. The AUC stated that this issue was being addressed at the highest level and that the AU Assembly's final decision would be made in July. MOROCCO stated that his country is not part of the AU and does not wish to be excluded from AMCOW. President Mutagamba stressed that a political solution would be found to address this issue.

Noting the availability of seed funds, Chair Ntale, said the AMCOW information and communications strategy will soon be developed.

Regarding the AMCOW Secretariat, Chair Ntale said the TAC recommends that recruitment of the Executive Secretary commence as soon as possible, and that the AMCOW President and the Secretariat consult and establish an interim arrangement for the Secretariat. Following up on a meeting held to discuss administrative issues, Chair Ntale said that the AU would be requested to facilitate the selection of an Executive Secretary. During the discussions, ministers proposed establishing an interim arrangement to support the incoming President, and strengthening the Secretariat by January 2008. BURKINA FASO suggested that these measures be put into operation by 30 October 2007.

On strengthening subregional structures, Chair Ntale noted that the TAC recommends exploring modalities of strengthening them, highlighting that funds are now available to convene regular meetings of subregional organs. BURKINA FASO suggested AMCOW fund at least one meeting per year in each subregion.

Regarding the G8 Action Plan/German Initiative, Chair Ntale explained that following a review of the inception phase, two pillars have been added: strengthening AMCOW subregional structures; and the creation of an AMCOW strategy unit. Ntale discussed collaboration with civil society organizations and explained that a memorandum of understanding (MoU) had been signed with the African Network of Civil Society Organizations on Water and Sanitation (ANEWS). He also observed that the World Bank Water and Sanitation Programme (WSP) sought to formally engage more with AMCOW. He said TAC recommends entering into a MoU between World Bank/WSP and AMCOW, elaborating on areas of cooperation.

On the African Water Facility (AWF), Chair Ntale noted that this key AMCOW initiative had been successfully implemented. A representative of the AWF Governing Council gave an overview of AWF activities, discussing challenges such as the need to accelerate resource mobilization.

The African Development Bank (AfDB) explained that the AWF, which has been operational for one year, was designed to mobilize financial resources for investment in the African water sector and was hosted by the AfDB on behalf of AMCOW. He emphasized that the major challenge would be securing investment resources. REPUBLIC OF CONGO elaborated on the need for the AWF to report to AMCOW to provide follow up on the Facility's activities.

Chair Ntale highlighted recommendations from stakeholder consultations held in Tunis in 2006, suggesting, among other things, the harmonization and coordination of monitoring and evaluation activities.

Regarding the fourth World Water Forum, Chair Ntale highlighted the TAC's recommendation that a task force be created to promote the implementation of recommendations made at the Forum and to take steps to prepare for the fifth World Water Forum in 2009.

Chair Ntale highlighted the need for an annual African water week. The AfDB suggested that the event be held in Tunisia in 2007 and UN Habitat expressed interest in assisting with the event in Kenya in 2008.

Regarding the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board (UNSGAB) Africa Dialogue, Chair Ntale noted the idea of proposing a water summit in 2008. President Mutagamba said a proposed joint water infrastructure financing meeting with the Infrastructure Consortium for Africa (ICA) should be linked to the proposed water summit. LESOTHO and REPUBLIC OF CONGO highlighted the value of including both finance and infrastructure ministers at these events.

Concerning a recommendation that a MoU be completed between AMCOW and GWP focusing on, among other things, cooperation in achieving integrated water resources management (IWRM) targets, ETHIOPIA suggested that this task be carried out by the AMCOW President.

ETHIOPIA commended a recommendation on promoting the institutionalization of groundwater management by river basin organizations. President Mutagamba suggested, and participants agreed, that EXCO also examine the promotion of water harvesting in this regard.

Chair Ntale reviewed recommendations on Rural Water



Henry Ntale, Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Chair

Supply and Sanitation Issues (RWSSI), the NEPAD Infrastructure Project Preparation Facility, the Medium to Long Term Strategic Framework Study, Water and Sanitation for African Cities Initiative, the Forum of Energy Ministers in Africa (FEMA), and UN-Water/Africa support to AMCOW. He also said the TAC recommended noting progress made on the Tiger Initiative, which makes

available remote sensing data for water management and water issues analysis in Africa.

Regarding the EU Water Initiative, Chair Ntale reviewed recommendations related to: promoting water and sanitation-related issues within the African-EU Infrastructure Partnership; establishing a water policy dialogue forum; and continuing the EU Water Facility. He said the European Commission is eager to have AMCOW contribute to the EU Water Initiative. SOUTH AFRICA advocated finding an entry point where AMCOW can influence decisions on the EU Water Facility.

On new partnerships and consultations with African river and lake basin organizations, Ntale conveyed TAC recommendations to, *inter alia*, establish a water basin organization subcommittee, noting this would fuse the institutional relationship between AMCOW and the African Network of Basin Organizations (ANBO). Incoming President Itoua noted legal difficulties with establishing such a subcommittee, while SOUTH AFRICA stressed that it would give AMCOW responsibility and knowledge on this issue. BURUNDI cautioned against establishing too many subcommittees, and RWANDA said existing organizations should be utilized. President Mutagamba said basin organizations are functional, have a budget and should be concretely linked with AMCOW.

#### **SUBREGIONAL REPORTS**

Asfaw Dingamo, Ethiopian Minister of Water Resources, highlighted major activities undertaken since 2006 in the subregion and described how water policy challenges are being addressed through the promotion of policy dialogue. He explained how ministerial consultations in Addis Ababa in

September 2006 highlighted the need to promote action on key policies in the subregion and develop indicators on IWRM. He said participants at the consultations also noted the lack of full implementation of global water objectives at the subregional level. Dingamo observed how appropriate policies at this level could create opportunities for achieving the internationally recognized targets on water and sanitation, particularly coherent water and infrastructure development plans, and called for preparing national water sector reports.

Ambassador Ahmed Abdessadok, Algeria, presented the report for Northern Africa. Describing AMCOW as a good example of South-South cooperation, he said more work is needed to turn political aspirations into sound water policies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). He stated that good governance is the key to sustainable development and explained that the region has invested in water infrastructure, involving stakeholders in the process. Abdessadok made a number of recommendations, including: favoring common management of transboundary resources; focusing on the effects of climate change; and creating centers of excellence to improve expertise on water issues.

Bonoudaba Dabiré, Burkina Faso Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Fisheries, presented the report for Western Africa. He emphasized constraints experienced by ministers in the subregion from engaging in consultations and highlighted the need for capacity building and funding. He stressed the need to improve consultations within the group and to accelerate plans of action in various countries in the subregion.

Monyane Moleleki, Minister of Natural Resources, Lesotho, reported on Southern Africa. Regarding the African-EU Water Initiative, he noted concerns relating to it being an overly donor-driven partnership, and supported establishing thematic *ad hoc* subcommittees and a political forum to sustain political interest in the partnership. Moleleki noted support for a clear and reasonable timeframe to guide the process of choosing an AMCOW Executive Secretary, and the transition from softer to hard infrastructure programmes on water. He also highlighted achievements made in his subregion, such as carrying out an assessment of status of progress in implementing IWRM, and establishing a water research fund and a consultative fund. President Mutagamba suggested that other subregions look at how to establish similar funds.

Incoming President Itoua presented the report for Central Africa. He discussed the water situation in the subregion, pointing to a paradox where despite being well endowed with water resources, the subregion had the worst performance indicators for the water sector in Africa. He noted challenges including: ineffectual privatization of public water utilities; a low level of civil society participation; inadequate investment in water-related activities; and a lack of policy coherence regarding the MDG water targets. He also emphasized the need for a water management authority for the subregion.

## YOUTH FORUM ON WATER

On Monday morning, Annika Schabbauer, Youth Forum Facilitator, UNICEF/Integrated Family Development Initiative, opened the Youth Forum. She highlighted the importance of water in everyday activities and the important role that children can have in improving water supply and sanitation in Africa.

Chair Ntale discussed the role of AMCOW and the importance of water for social and economic development activities.

Oumar Ndiaye, Senegalese Ministry of Water, discussed the problems of drought and desertification in Africa, stressing the need for good water management, and noted the important role that youth can play in addressing these challenges.



Children constructed models of human interventions in the water cycle during the Youth Forum on Monday.

The children were then divided into groups where they: created wall hangings depicting personal interpretations of threats, needs, opportunities and aspirations regarding river uses; played games and performed water-related experiments; listened to water-related stories; and constructed three-dimensional models of human interventions in the water cycle, including a model village, spring and borehole.

In the afternoon, the children viewed a presentation on the MDGs, and were visited by President Mutagamba who highlighted the links between clean water, sanitation, land degradation, health and economic prosperity, and expressed the need for youth to meet the challenges that these issues create so that they will be resolved in the future. President Mutagamba stressed the importance for youth to communicate at home and at school the need to address water problems. She emphasized that water is a finite resource, but because demand is growing, the need to preserve water resources is critical. She also stressed AMCOW's important role in addressing transboundary water issues and improving African cooperation and solidarity. During the ensuing discussion, children posed questions concerning: Republic of Congo's role in AMCOW; the reasons why there is a shortage of clean water in the Republic of Congo; the need for better access to clean water; funding; the links between water access and poverty; and AMCOW's past successes.

The children prepared inputs for a statement to be presented at AMCOW-6, focusing on: maintaining and improving water treatment facilities; reducing the cost of drinking water; facilitating provision of drinking water; and supervising entities charged with the treatment and distribution of safe drinking water.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA FORUM

### OPENING SESSION

On Monday morning, Jamillah Mwanjisi, Forum Facilitator, ANEW, opened the Civil Society and Media Forum, noting that participants had come from many countries.

Francis Bougaire, AMCOW Secretariat, provided an overview of AMCOW's aims and organizational structure with emphasis on the role of civil society in regional water policy. Highlighting the importance of water for social and economic development, he underscored the difficulties faced by African countries and detailed AMCOW's programmatic focus. He drew attention to AMCOW's efforts aimed at mobilizing disparate stakeholders working on water issues at the regional level and stated that while ministers in charge of water have a duty to work towards continent-wide reform of water, civil society has the responsibility of reinforcing these reforms at the regional and subregional levels.

Simon Thuo, Global Water Partnership (GWP) - Eastern Africa, described water-related challenges in East Africa, including population pressure, climatic unpredictability, overexploitation of natural resources and armed conflict. Explaining that the majority of the MDGs are directly related to water management, he underscored the importance of using IWRM for attaining the Goals. He stressed the importance of participatory decision making in achieving the MDGs. Thuo highlighted the value that working with AMCOW at the regional level adds to GWP's work and welcomed this "mutually reinforcing relationship."



Jamillah Mwanjisi, ANEW, facilitated the Civil Society and Media Forum.

Evariste Kouasi-Komlan, Regional Center for Water Supply and Sanitation (CREPA), highlighted CREPA strategies, including developing appropriate technologies, participatory approaches and alternative funding mechanisms. He reviewed: CREPA's programmes; challenges faced, including obtaining adequate funding; and expectations, including improving decision making at the local level and improving sectoral coordination.

Edward Kairu, ANEW, said his organization's work focuses on sustainable management of water resources, water supply and sanitation, and achieving the MDGs and World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) targets. He said ANEW facilitates coordination of diverse civil society voices on water issues, and has networks with civil society organizations in over 50 countries. He highlighted ANEW's activities, including advancing dialogue between civil society organizations and governments, maintaining communication and information systems, and developing ANEW as a platform for advocacy activities. He anticipated the signing of a MoU between AMCOW and ANEW, and noted a grant from the EU Water Facility of about two million Euros.

In the ensuing debate, participants discussed, among other things: overcoming domination of the water sector by scientists and researchers, ANEW's involvement in North and Central Africa, partnerships between ANEW and the media, improving water education, IWRM at the local level, and using water to overcome conflict.

### **CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

Goretta Nyassanga, Makerere University, highlighted how journalists and civil society organizations, acting collectively, can influence decision makers to bring about positive environmental change. She discussed advocacy strategies, noting the need to identify key issues for action using a systematic approach to engage policy makers and identify key players. She emphasized coordinated action and information sharing to avoid disseminating conflicting messages.

Frank Habineza, Nile Basin Discourse Forum - Rwanda, explained that his organization, which is active in ten Nile Basin countries, seeks to raise awareness of, and enhance cooperation with, Nile Basin projects and engage in poverty reduction strategies. He highlighted activities undertaken and key achievements such as the establishment of a discussion forum website and interactive radio debates on Nile Basin issues.

Desta Demessie, Ethiopian Kale Heywot Church, explained that his organization provides self-help programmes to groups living in the poorest areas to combat the "dependency syndrome". He explained how groups working on water issues in Ethiopia decided to collaborate on policy proposals which led to a coordinated approach and stronger dialogue between civil society and government. He said his organization also facilitates dialogue between otherwise disparate groups and promotes sharing of information, experiences and best practices. He suggested that civil society must win the respect of governments rather than demand it.

Malick Gaye, Environment and Development of the Third World (ENDA), called for the increased provision of microcredit to individuals and community-based organizations to replicate successful examples already undertaken. He argued that non-governmental organizations should be strengthened and the media should be trained to maximize civil society's impact on the policy process.

During the ensuing discussion, participants made a number of points, including: the heterogeneous nature of civil society; the influence that informed and organized citizens can have on policy; and the need for civil society to concentrate on developing and reinforcing its capacities.

Evariste Kouasi-Komlan, CREPA, discussed development of more equitable and participatory water policies and strategies. He said policies are often not viewed in a positive light, and stressed creating a favorable environment to encourage the water sector to improve water access and sanitation. Kouasi-Komlan said policies must address equity issues and take into account the needs of stakeholders, and stressed the importance of lobbying governments. He also underscored the value of integrating the work of diverse sectors that deal with water issues.

During the ensuing discussion, participants posed questions on, *inter alia*: how to reach the poorest of the poor, particularly the urban poor; having one ministry address all water issues; increasing funding to the water sector; consulting women's organizations when developing policies; the necessity of inviting governments to create, design and implement these policies; training government representatives to ensure that equitable policies are developed; coordination between all stakeholders and relevant institutions involved in water management; and increasing effectiveness and efficiency of networks. Participants urged making a strong statement and submitting concrete recommendations to AMCOW, ensuring that the statement specifies targets and means of achieving those targets, and using the best approach to ensure that the measures proposed in the statement are implemented.

### **PREPARATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA STATEMENT TO AMCOW-6**

On Tuesday, civil society and media participants met separately in the morning to draft inputs to a statement to be presented to ministers on Wednesday. In the afternoon, they convened together to discuss the draft statement. The statement underscores the role of civil society and the media in contributing towards the achievement of MDG targets related to water. On institutional issues, it calls on AMCOW to include participation of all stakeholders in the work of its subregional entities, TAC and EXCO and to nominate a civil society and a media representative to TAC. On financial mechanisms, the statement requests AMCOW to leverage and allocate funds to civil society organizations, the media and women groups and calls on AMCOW to support community empowerment and partnership building with civil society organizations and the media. The Forum was closed by President Mutagamba, who encouraged continued media and civil society engagement with AMCOW.