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AMCOW Bulletin

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

Published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)

ONLINE AT [HTTP://WWW.IISD.CA/AFRICA/WATER/AMCOW/](http://www.iisd.ca/AFRICA/WATER/AMCOW/)
ISSUE No. 4, VOLUME 4, No. 5, THURSDAY, 31 MAY 2007

AMCOW-6 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 30 MAY 2007

AMCOW-6 commenced on Wednesday, 30 May. During the opening session, participants heard statements from ministers, representatives of international and non-governmental organizations and Isidore Mvouba, Prime Minister of the Republic of Congo. In the afternoon, outgoing AMCOW President Mutagamba presented the President's policy statement and ministers discussed the composition of the next AMCOW bureau.



L-R: Kordje Bedoumra, Director, African Development Bank; Maria Mutagamba, outgoing AMCOW President; Isidore Mvouba, Republic of Congo Prime Minister; Bruno Jean-Richard Itoua, AMCOW President; and Babagana Ahmadu, African Union Commission

OPENING SESSION

Halifa Drammeh, UNEP, stated that Africa is a region of contrasts in terms of water availability, with the Congo River Basin alone providing 50 per cent of the water resources available for the entire continent. Regarding achievements, he said AMCOW is fully operational and is the preeminent intergovernmental authority for addressing water challenges in Africa, supported by a collective political will directed towards sound management of Africa's water resources.

Edward Kairu, ANEW, presented a statement on behalf of civil society and the media, which includes sections on institutional issues, financial mechanisms, community empowerment and partnership building for achieving the MDGs. He requested support for AMCOW's activities



Agnes Nansubuga, youth representative, with AMCOW President Itoua.

and said civil society and the media are prepared to work with governments on their national water management plans and engage in research, information dissemination and sharing experiences of pilot water projects. He urged AMCOW to undertake a number of commitments, such as: supporting and funding activities of civil society organizations and the media; endorsing civil society and media efforts at awareness raising, information exchange and capacity building; and ensuring participation of all stakeholders, especially women and children.

Agnes Nansubuga, youth representative, highlighted challenges in water provision, including pollution, conflicts, and the declining health of ecosystems. She called on governments to: protect and manage water resources sustainably; implement cleaner production methods; properly treat industrial waste; undertake education and public awareness campaigns; and involve youth in the planning and implementation of water policies. She noted how joint efforts could be effective in reducing effects of unsafe water, and could improve quality of life. She challenged ministers by stating that: "the children of Africa are ready to work with you, are you ready to work with us?" Paul Lesly Sambala, youth representative, appealed for the provision of safe drinking water and sanitation for all and the extension of water networks in cities and rural areas to enable children to grow and develop in a safe environment. He called for improving and maintaining water infrastructure facilities and making efforts to address deforestation. He also urged for

The *AMCOW Bulletin* is a publication of the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) <info@iisd.ca>, publishers of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* © <enb@iisd.org>. This issue was written and edited by Asheline Appleton, Harry Jonas, Leila Mead and Hugh Wilkins. The Digital Editor is Joe Nyangon. The Editor is Ingrid Barnsley <ingrid@iisd.org>. The Director of IISD Reporting Services is Langston James "Kimo" Goree VI <kimo@iisd.org>. The Programme Manager of the African Regional Coverage Project is Richard Sherman <rsherman@iisd.org>. Funding for coverage of this meeting has been provided by South Africa's Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism through the IISD/DEAT/UNEP ROA project for IISD Reporting Service coverage of African regional meetings. IISD can be contacted at 161 Portage Avenue East, 6th Floor, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 0Y4, Canada; tel: +1-204-958-7700; fax: +1-204-958-7710. The opinions expressed in the *Bulletin* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD. Excerpts from the *Bulletin* may be used in other publications with appropriate academic citation. Electronic versions of the *Bulletin* are sent to e-mail distribution lists in HTML and PDF format and can be found on the Linkages WWW-server at <<http://www.iisd.ca/>>. For information on the *Bulletin*, including requests to provide reporting services, contact the Director of IISD Reporting Services at <kimo@iisd.org>, +1-646-536-7556 or 212 East 47th St. #21F, New York, NY 10017, USA. The IISD Team at AMCOW-6 can be contacted by e-mail at <hugh@iisd.org>.

increasing children's involvement in water and environmental issues and expressed hope that AMCOW-6 would lead to a brighter future for all children.

Karl Wokalek, German Ambassador to Republic of Congo, emphasized the importance his country attaches to water issues and underscored its commitment during its G8 presidency to build on previous G8 efforts in this area. He acknowledged challenges that may impact on Africa's ability to meet the MDGs, stressing the importance of water for strengthening sustainable development, food security and peace, and for combating poverty in the region. Regarding the transboundary nature of water resources, Amb. Wokalek underscored the benefits of joint management and close cooperation between neighboring countries, in addition to effective strategies for addressing climate change.

Aly Kerdany, GWP, underscored the "visionary theme" of the meeting and explained that multistakeholder partnerships are integral to achieving progress. Highlighting the centrality of improving water supply and sanitation for achieving all the MDGs, he recommended that a number of approaches be undertaken to develop the water sector in Africa: adopting IWRM; including all stakeholders in planning, particularly the most vulnerable groups; building cross-sectoral partnerships, with an emphasis on engaging ministries of finance and the private sector; focusing on the effects of climate change; and promoting dialogue.

Kordjé Bedoumra, Director, African Development Bank, urged African countries to take advantage of their water resources. He said AMCOW acts as a key platform for



Kordjé Bedoumra, Director, African Development Bank

developing African water policy, but that much work remains to be done to achieve the water-related MDG targets by 2015. He underlined the necessity for Africa to prepare for the International Year of Sanitation in 2008 and for the African Water Week, and outlined a number of related preparatory meetings.

Babagana Ahmadu, AUC, drew attention to the forthcoming 2008 AU Summit on water and sanitation. Noting that 25 per cent of all renewable freshwater resources come from the Congo Basin, he urged AMCOW to recognize the region's importance and give the Congo Basin the support it needs. He highlighted climate change deliberations during the January 2007 AU Summit, which recognized the need to implement adaptation measures, and emphasized that 80 per cent of natural disasters in Africa are related to water. He urged integrating adaptation measures into AMCOW programmes and activities at all levels, and taking advantage



Commissionnaire de l'Agriculture et de l'Économie à l'Union Africaine
Babagana Ahmadu, African Union Commission

of irrigation opportunities to reverse negative trends in agricultural production. He recognized 2007-2008 as a defining period for AMCOW as it moves towards integration with the AU as a specialized technical committee (STC), and urged AMCOW and the AU to work together to harness

international assistance for developing the water sector.

Noting lack of access to water for over 300 million people in Africa, incoming AMCOW President Bruno Itoua, Republic of Congo Minister of Energy and Water, said progress on improving water and sanitation on the continent has been insufficient. He emphasized the need for the rational use of resources and better management of water. Looking towards the future, he said AMCOW must improve its governance and institutional structure. He acknowledged financial support from the EU, GTZ and UNDP, urged others to follow suit, and hoped AMCOW would establish some innovative instruments to address water issues.

Outgoing AMCOW President Maria Mutagamba, Ugandan Minister of Water and Environment, recalled that five years ago AMCOW was conceived by a small group in Nairobi, and has now grown into a continental forum. She said the MDG targets on water and sanitation must be met by 2015 in order to influence the achievement of other water-related MDG targets, and underscored improving water security as critical in achieving these targets. She reviewed measures undertaken by AMCOW, such as promoting implementation mechanisms and partnerships on water. She highlighted the consolidation of water governance in Africa through AMCOW activities



Dancers performed for the delegates during the opening ceremony

and urged the government of Republic of Congo to support the incoming AMCOW President to enable him to preside effectively. Mutagamba also urged Itoua to work on sensitizing finance ministers to water issues. Concluding, she said opportunities for women and children must be guaranteed and hoped women's voices would be better heard at the next AMCOW meeting.

Isidore Mvouba, Prime Minister of Republic of Congo, stressed the importance of tackling the water supply and sanitation challenges facing Africa. Noting the importance of the Brazzaville meeting in bringing together key ministers and stakeholders to address these issues, he stressed the importance of AMCOW as a means for promoting cooperation, security and solidarity. He underlined that water



Isidore Mvouba, Prime Minister of the Republic of Congo

is the source of life and the foundation for development and stressed the need to promote the supply, use and management of water to achieve sustainable development without ignoring the preservation of ecosystems. Mvouba further emphasized the need to mobilize further resources to address water issues and achieve the MDGs.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

POLICY STATEMENT BY AMCOW PRESIDENT

Maria Mutagamba, presented the AMCOW President's Handover Report, observing that a key strategy for engaging in the regional integration process lies in consolidating and strengthening relations with: entities such as NEPAD; parallel ministerial bodies like the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) and African Ministerial Council on Science and Technology (AMCOST); and civil society organizations, river and lake basin authorities and regional development organizations. She noted AMCOW's "coming



Maria Mutagamba, outgoing AMCOW President (right), chats with Bruno Jean-Richard Itoua, the incoming President.

of age", adding that her tenure had witnessed the evolution of AMCOW into a credible entity with many African governments now recognizing the pressing and urgent need to address water policy challenges. She emphasized that the outgoing ExCom members' tenure had been a defining period, and that both the regional and international context had been significantly altered. Acknowledging the daunting challenges that lay ahead, she noted successes including: the operationalization of the ExCom, TAC and subregional ministerial committees and structures; the adoption at AMCOW-5 of a triennial work programme containing specific priorities for action; and the leveraging of 2.6 million Euros from the EU and US\$100,000 from UNEP to enable AMCOW to finance its core meetings and activities. She said that AMCOW had succeeded in building a platform for defining Africa's water agenda and priorities and presenting a single voice in interacting with the international community. She outlined how partnerships had been brokered and consolidated with donors and other partners, in addition to the facilitation of interministerial dialogue with regional organizations and civil society organizations, and how resources had been mobilized. Mutagamba spoke of the need to strengthen the AMCOW Secretariat to: enable it to effectively implement Council decisions; and ensure the best strategic input into AMCOW decision making by creating a resource facility or center that builds on past experiences in partnership with relevant institutions and agencies. She paid tribute to people who had been instrumental in AMCOW's success during her tenure and proposed the establishment of an award scheme to honor them.

Mutagamba addressed key challenges and the way forward including: further engaging in the regional integration process by completing AMCOW's transformation into a STC of the AU; strengthening governance structures and support mechanisms; further exploring modalities for strengthening subregional structures and institutional relationships with African river and lake basin organizations and effectively engaging with the private sector. Regarding the AWF, she noted the need to strengthen communication between the AWF and AMCOW and for AWF to establish a monitoring and evaluation system for the water and sanitation sector. She concluded by expressing her appreciation for the honor accorded to her for serving as AMCOW President and officially launched the status report "Getting Africa on Track to meet the MDGs on Water and Sanitation", which is a status overview of sixteen African countries.

CONSIDERATION OF THE PROPOSALS FROM THE SUBREGIONS ON THE COMPOSITION OF THE 2007-2009 AMCOW BUREAU

Outgoing President Mutagamba turned to the election of the new AMCOW President, and called on ExCom Western African Subregional Vice-President Asfaw Dingamo, Ethiopia, to announce the nomination of Itoua as President. Itoua was elected by acclamation, and commended the competence of outgoing President Mutagamba, thanked her for a superb job and hoped she would be available for consultations, if needed.

Regarding the bureau for 2007-2009, ETHIOPIA, for Eastern Africa, communicated the following nominations for his subregion: ExCom members - Sudan, Ethiopia and Burundi as Vice President; TAC members - Kenya, Burundi, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Sudan; AWF Subcommittee - Rwanda and Tanzania; and EU Water Initiative Subcommittee - Kenya, with Sudan as the alternate member.



ALGERIA, for Northern Africa, noted the following nominations for his subregion: ExCom members - Egypt, Tunisia, and with Mauritania as Vice-President; and TAC members - Mauritania, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria and Libya.

For Western Africa, BURKINA FASO forwarded the following nominations: ExCom members - Ghana, Togo and Senegal as Vice-President; TAC members - Benin, Mali, Senegal, Niger and Nigeria; and AWF Subcommittee member - Burkina Faso.

For Southern Africa, LESOTHO said the ExCom members would be Botswana and Zambia, with Lesotho continuing as Vice-President until further notice. He also said that TAC members would be communicated to the President at a future date, pending consultations.

For Central Africa, Itoua detailed his subregion's nominations: ExCom members - Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo and Chad as Vice-President; and TAC members - Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, Cameroon and Central African Republic.

These nominations were accepted by the AMCOW, and Itoua noted that, in accordance with the rules of procedure, Republic of Congo would chair the TAC. He urged other subregions to submit nominations for the subcommittees.

SUMMARY: A summary of the meeting will be available on Monday, 4 June 2007 at <http://www.iisd.ca/africa/water/amcow/>



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REPORTING ON ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

IISD Reporting Services African Regional Coverage Project

In April 2006 the International Institute for Sustainable Development Reporting Services Division (IISD RS) and South Africa's Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT), in partnership with the UN Environment Programme's Regional Office for Africa, joined together to assist in communicating the policy outcomes of regional meetings on environment and related sustainable development issues to the larger international community. The African Regional Coverage (ARC) project is the result of the identified need to give African meetings and activities a higher exposure to the international community. Building on the success of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* (ENB) in covering international environment and sustainable development meetings, this project expects to replicate this success at the regional level in order to make the outcome of Africa's ministerial meetings available to the world in real-time. The project provides reporting services for African ministerial meetings on sustainable development and environment as well as those on water, energy, transport, human settlements and technology. Through the distribution of targeted policy briefs on upcoming intergovernmental meetings, IISD RS will also be building a network of environment and sustainable development policy experts working in African capitals.

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