



AMCOW Bulletin

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

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SIXTH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN MINISTERS' COUNCIL ON WATER: 28-31 MAY 2007

The sixth Ordinary Session of the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW-6) will take place from 30-31 May 2007, at the Palais du Parlement, in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo. In the lead up to the session, a range of events and meetings will be held on 28-29 May. On Monday, 28 May, a Youth Forum on Water will take place, alongside AMCOW subregional consultations, and a Forum for Civil Society and Media. On Tuesday, 29 May, the AMCOW Executive Committee will convene to receive communications from subregional groups and recommendations from the AMCOW Technical Advisory Committee.

When AMCOW-6 commences on Wednesday, 30 May, ministers will meet for roundtable discussions on partnership issues relating to the financing of water infrastructure; access to the EU-ACP Water Facility; resources for the African Water Facility; follow-up to the G8-Africa Water Action Plan; follow-up to the Africa Commission Report; tracking commitments towards the attainment of the targets created at the World Summit on Sustainable Development and those in the Millennium Development Goals; collaboration between the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation and AMCOW; and preparations for the 2008 Year of Sanitation. On Thursday, 31 May, ministerial discussions will focus on water infrastructure development, water supply and sanitation, and climate change impacts and adaptation.

Side events focusing on groundwater management in Africa, the promotion of rain harvesting in Africa, and the Congo River Basin are also scheduled to take place during the meeting.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF AMCOW AND RELATED MEETINGS

AMCOW's mission is to provide political leadership, policy direction and advocacy in the provision, use and management of water resources for sustainable social and economic development and for the maintenance of African ecosystems. To meet these objectives, AMCOW actively reviews the state of Africa's water and promotes actions of common African interest by all stakeholders. It also facilitates regional and international cooperation through the coordination of water resources policies and actions among African countries.

AMCOW consists of a Council of Ministers and an Executive Committee (ExCom). The ExCom is composed of three water ministers or representatives from each of the African subregions, namely, Western Africa, Eastern Africa,

Central Africa, Northern Africa and Southern Africa. The ExCom ensures that decisions of the Council of Ministers are implemented, develops work programmes and budgets for approval by the Council of Ministers, and mobilizes the necessary financing for, and supervises the work of, the AMCOW Secretariat. The ExCom is advised in its activities by the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).

INAUGURAL MEETING OF AMCOW: The inaugural AMCOW meeting was held in Abuja, Nigeria, on 30 April 2002. At this meeting, ministers adopted the "Abuja Ministerial Declaration on Water: A Key to Sustainable Development in Africa," which includes the resolution that establishes AMCOW and sets out its vision, objectives, institutional arrangements, and other aspects.

G8 KANANASKIS SUMMIT: The 2002 G8 Summit was held in Kananaskis, Canada, from 26-27 June 2002. In response to an invitation from African leaders, the Summit adopted the G8 Africa Action Plan, which includes provisions supporting African efforts to improve water resources development and management.

WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (WSSD): The WSSD was held from 26 August to 4 September 2002, in Johannesburg, South Africa. In the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), governments reaffirmed their commitment to the safe drinking water and human settlements goals agreed to in the Millennium Declaration, and further committed to halve by 2015 the proportion of people without access to basic sanitation. Governments also agreed to develop integrated water resources management (IWRM) and water efficiency plans by 2005. The international community also agreed to support Africa's efforts to promote IWRM, optimize the upstream and downstream benefits from the further development and effective management of water resources, and protect water quality and aquatic ecosystems.

FIRST MEETING OF THE AMCOW STEERING COMMITTEE: The first meeting of the AMCOW Steering Committee was held from 23-24 May 2003, in Dakar, Senegal. The meeting emphasized that the supply and quality of freshwater in Africa remains one of the most critical issues of the twenty-first century. The meeting adopted the "NEPAD Statement on International Solidarity with Africa for the achievement of the water-related targets in the Millennium Development Goals and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development."

G8 EVIAN SUMMIT: The 2003 G8 Summit was held from 1-3 June 2003, in Evian, France. At the Summit, G8 leaders adopted a water-related action plan focusing on promoting good governance, utilizing financial resources, building infrastructure by empowering local authorities

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and communities, strengthening monitoring, assessment and research, and reinforcing engagement of international organizations. They agreed to support the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) through two initiatives in the field of transboundary water management, which focus on strengthening cooperation among river basin organizations and seek to map donor support by developing an overview of the current activities of G8 member states in this field.

PAN-AFRICAN CONFERENCE ON WATER: The Pan-African Implementation and Partnership Conference on Water (PANAFCON), met from 8-12 December 2003, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Ministers agreed to establish national task forces on water and sanitation and to create national plans with service delivery targets for achieving water and sanitation goals by 2015. They signed a joint declaration with the European Commission on the implementation of the African-EU Strategic Partnership on Water Affairs and Sanitation. Ministers also launched a number of initiatives, including: the African Water Facility (AWF), the African Water Journal, the Phase II of the Water for African Cities Programme, and the G8 Action Plan on Water for Africa.

FOURTH ORDINARY SESSION OF AMCOW: The fourth Ordinary Session of AMCOW took place on 10 December 2003, during PANAFCON in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Ministers endorsed the outcome of the African Regional Implementation Meeting for presentation as Africa's contribution to the twelfth session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-12). They also agreed to present the PANAFCON recommendations to the second Extraordinary Session of the African Union (AU) Assembly, held in February 2004, in Libya.

SECOND EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF THE AU ASSEMBLY: The second Extraordinary Session of the AU Assembly, took place from 27-28 February 2004, in Sirte, Libya, and adopted the Sirte Declaration on the Challenges of Implementing Integrated and Sustainable Development of Agriculture and Water in Africa. In the declaration, leaders agreed to: promote the strengthening and establishment of centers of excellence and/or networks on crops, animals, forestry, fisheries, range management, water management, desertification, drought, floods and environmental management; support AMCOW in its role of preparing plans and policies related to water resources management on the continent; encourage bilateral agreements on shared water resources and enjoin regional economic communities to develop appropriate regional protocols to guide IWRM; strengthen existing river and lake water basin organizations and establish new ones wherever appropriate; and adopt the AWF and acknowledge the African Water Vision 2025. Leaders also declared support for AMCOW and its role in developing plans and policies related to the management of all water resources in Africa and recommended integrating AMCOW into the AU as one of its Specialized Technical Committees.

FIFTH ORDINARY SESSION OF AMCOW: The fifth Ordinary Session of AMCOW was held from 4-6 November 2004, in Entebbe, Uganda, and addressed various water policy challenges in Africa, including meeting the goals of the AU and NEPAD, financing, and strategies to achieve international water and sanitation targets. Outcomes from the session included agreement on: a Memorandum of Understanding on institutional arrangements; the AMCOW Rules of Procedure; the AMCOW 2005-2007 work programme; modalities for establishing the AMCOW Trust Fund and its hosting within UNEP; a regional position for CSD-13 on implementing

the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and related targets on water; and a concept proposal on the German G8 transboundary water initiative.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

THIRTEENTH SESSION OF THE UN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: CSD-13 took place from 11-22 April 2005, in New York, USA. CSD-13 focused on policies and options to expedite the implementation of commitments in the areas of water, sanitation and human settlements. Its main outcome document identified the need to, *inter alia*, provide additional resources, as appropriate, for regional and subregional initiatives, and support African initiatives in the area of water, within the framework of AMCOW.

SEVENTH MEETING OF THE AMCOW EXCOM: The seventh AMCOW ExCom and TAC meetings were held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 27-30 June 2005. Participants at the ExCom meeting focused on the AMCOW 2005-2007 work programme, the AMCOW Trust Fund and strengthening AMCOW's work at the national and subregional levels.

2005 WORLD SUMMIT: The 2005 World Summit was held in New York, USA, from 14-16 September 2005. In the Summit's Outcome Document, world leaders resolved to assist developing countries' efforts to prepare IWRM and water efficiency plans as part of their national development strategies, and to provide access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation in accordance with the Millennium Declaration and the JPOI.

CONFERENCE ON AFRICAN RIVER AND LAKE BASIN ORGANIZATIONS: The AMCOW Conference of African River and Lake Basin Organizations took place in Kampala, Uganda, from 19-20 October 2006, to chart the way forward for a continent-wide effort to address Africa's water crisis. The conference brought together senior-level African decision makers on water to agree on the establishment and support for new river and lake basin organizations while rejuvenating existing ones within the framework of a region-wide mechanism under the auspices of AMCOW.

TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL/GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM: The twenty-fourth session of UNEP's Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC-24/GMEF) took place from 5-9 February 2007, in Nairobi, Kenya. Decisions adopted by the GC/GMEF included those on issues relating to UNEP's updated water policy and strategy, and support to Africa in environmental management and protection. The GC/GMEF called upon African countries to take primary action for sustainable development; requested the UNEP Executive Director to work closely with partners to support African countries in implementing NEPAD; and invited the UNEP Executive Director to work closely with the AU Commission, AMCOW, NEPAD, and others to undertake a policy-oriented assessment using available means.

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND/WORLD BANK SPRING MEETINGS: At an event held during the International Monetary Fund/World Bank Spring meetings, held in Washington DC, USA, from 14-15 April 2007, it was agreed among donors, international development institutions and developing countries that they would take on new commitments to tackle the world's water and sanitation crisis. Several donors committed to increase and improve support to countries to expand water and sanitation services, including: helping countries without water and sanitation plans to prepare them; and renewing the commitment to the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Initiative.