



African Civil Society Network on Water and Sanitation (ANEW)

Summary report of the First African Water Week in Tunis.

Introduction

The First African Water Week (AWW) took place in Tunis, Tunisia, from 26th -28th March 2008. It brought together 540 participants, including 30 ministers responsible for water resources from different African countries, participants from governments and state-run institutions, bilateral and multilateral institutions, Development partners, the private sector, service providers and civil society, represented by ANEW members among others.

AWW-1 was a great opportunity for ANEW and its' ten members who represented others. A CSO consultation meeting took place on March 25th prior to the AWW meeting. The CSO meeting was also attended by some regional WaterAid and Tearfund staff and partners. ANEW organised side meetings with AfDB staff, AMCOW TAC Chair and WSP (reports on that are being prepared) as a way of strengthening our relationship. The negative issues we noticed were the limited participation of CSO and we think one reason for that is the lack of sponsorship among others, the lack of enough time to discuss issues in the plenary session and the limited CSO voices in the presenters.

The theme of the conference was "Accelerating Water Security for the Socio-Economic Development of Africa" and the main objectives were to:

1. Create a forum for African water sector professionals, stakeholders and partners to discuss the opportunities and challenges of achieving water security for the socio-economic development of Africa and formulate concrete policies, strategies and actions to accelerate water resources development.
2. Take stock of the status of achievement of the MDG in Africa, review the key achievements and challenges and propose strategies and actions for accelerating achievement of the Water and sanitation targets.
3. Build consensus and provide recommendations for consideration at the proposed 2008 AU Summit that will focus on water and sanitation and inputs for the 5th World Water Forum in Istanbul, Turkey on March 2009.

Participants discussed diverse topics in plenary and parallel working groups as outlined by the programme. Five themes were identified which are:

1. The Infrastructure Platform for Achieving Water Security in Africa
2. Assessment of status of meeting the water and sanitation MDG targets
3. Infrastructure Investment requirements and financing to achieve desired water security
4. Meeting the challenges of environmental and social impacts for ensuring water security
5. The roles of main stakeholders and the development of appropriate partnerships.

After the opening session, AWW-1 participants attended two morning and two afternoon sessions each day, meeting either in plenary or in the parallel working group.

Opening session

In total seven speakers opened the AWW-1 and all of them stressed the need for partnerships to enable Africa to realize its full potential on water and sanitation. "There is no time to waste" said His Royal Highness, Wilhelm Alexander, Prince of Orange (The Netherlands) and Chair of the UN Secretary General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation. He further urged participants to build on the

commitments made at the African+5 meeting held in Durban in February 2008. He also told AMCOW that it should take advantage of forthcoming high profile events: AU summit, G8 summit and the 5th World Water Forum, to make the case for more support to water and sanitation in Africa. DONALD Kaberuka, President of the African Development Bank Group, emphasized that Africa is facing the highest urban population growth rates in the world with enormous development challenges characterized by a proliferation of unplanned habitats, poor access to essential water and sanitation services and very high risk of water pollution. As Africa's Bank, Kaberuka said that they seek to help their member countries deal with old and new threats including climate change, growing populations and rapid urbanization, reduced food security, increased water stress, competition for natural resources, and higher risk of pollution and diseases and malnutrition.

Other speakers at the opening session included Honourable Mohammed Habib Haddad, Minister of Agriculture and Water Resources ; Mr Loic Fauchon, President of the World Water Council, among others.

The Infrastructure Platform for Achieving Water Security in Africa

One group of speakers focused on lessons learned at the global level while another group focused on regional experiences. In the first group, Fru Fonteh from GWP mentioned the low level of political will and commitment to place water at the centre of development policy; weak cross-sectoral coordination mechanism, and the ineffectiveness of the IWRM approach due to bureaucratic inertia, partial reforms to address governance issues, and the need to increase investments. For the other group, Martha Salomon, TAC, enumerated key lessons including the importance of involving various stakeholders. Some recommended actions on this theme have been enumerated:

1. Embark on a major expansion of Africa's water infrastructure, and rehabilitation of existing assets that are justified by their contributions to economic and social development, without compromising environmental integrity and social justice.
2. Continue to develop and apply IWRM and develop the means for taking decisions on trade-offs among development opportunities where water stress presents a limit to new infrastructure.
3. Operationalise approaches that will reduce potential tensions over new infrastructure- including local conflicts, disadvantaged regions and regional equity.

Meeting the water and sanitation MDG targets

The speakers on this theme mentioned the increasing evidence that many countries may miss the achievement of the MDG targets for water and sanitation. Some reasons have been given: weak governance, weak institutional and policy arrangements, lack of commitment to policy undertakings, including a disconnect between national budgets and requirements for water and sanitation financing, etc...

James Winpenny highlighted the need to enhance political leadership and ownership, improve inter-linkages between water and sanitation, hygiene, health and poverty reduction strategies. He further mentioned that it is very important to improve engagement of all stakeholders.

Patrick Apoya from Ghana Coalition of NGOs in the water and sanitation sector and a member of ANEW said *"it's sad to hear people very much focusing on statistics in reporting MDG achievements"*. He urged them to consider the important equity and sustainability issues on the ground. Some of the recommended actions are:

1. Make the best use of existing resources, and mobilize financial and technical resources, from the public and private sectors, and users, for water and sanitation infrastructure as well as for building institutional, technical and managerial capacity at all levels.
2. Engage local funding in order to leverage more support from Development Partners.
3. Increase, systematically, resources allocated to local governments for the implementation of water and sanitation projects.

Financing infrastructure for water security

The aim of this theme was to assess what has been achieved so far and to propose concrete measures to deliver the needed financing to achieve Africa's water and sanitation targets. Christophe Prevost from the World Bank told authorities to emphasize maintaining and improving the performance of existing infrastructure before targeting new investments. To donors, he said they must be flexible and allow countries to find appropriate local solutions. It's in that way that a Rwandan experience in promoting low-cost ecologically sustainable toilet was presented by Bikoro Munyanganizi who told participants about the important public-private partnerships, demonstrating that the private sector is best placed to manage infrastructure with communities managing the project. Some of the recommendations are:

1. Promote the improving national investment climate that comes from greater water security. Support AMCOW Ministers in their engagement with private sector investors in market-oriented investments in the different water-use sectors
2. Use sector-wide approaches and national plans for drinking water and sanitation to target funds towards coverage improvements among poor and disadvantaged communities, especially slums, and small towns and municipalities.
3. Mobilise financial resources into existing African-led initiatives, such as AMCOW Trust Fund, The Rural Water Supply Sanitation Initiative (RWSSI), African Water Facility, Infrastructure Consortium for Africa (ICA), the Water for African Cities Program, as well as the EU-ACP Water Facility and others.

Meeting the environment and social challenges

The first presentation from Ibrahim Thiaw(UNEP) showed that rational and balanced water resource exploitation is possible with minimal social and environmental costs. Other presenters highlighted some adaptation measures such as efficient water use and recycling, rainwater harvesting, ground water development, among others. It has been said that Africa's groundwater resources are a resource that is vital to water security, over-exploited in some locations and massively underused in others. For rainwater, its improved management will help reduce risks and vulnerability to climate variability, helping in agricultural production and assisting a large number of poor people in rural areas. Some recommendations have been elaborated on this:

1. Build skills and capacity to share knowledge on rainwater and management strategies among farmers and other potential beneficiaries
2. Institutionalise dialogue on groundwater management in Africa
3. Put in place adaptation measures to ensure sustainable water security for the social, economic and environmental needs.

Stakeholders' roles and partnerships

All the presenters in this category noted that public-private partnerships can enhance water security by investing in more efficient technologies, lowering costs for consumers and promoting innovations in service delivery. This was strengthened by Monique le Genissel from European Commission who revealed that to qualify for funding from the EU's Water and Energy Facility, projects must fulfil partnership criteria. From **ENDA and member of ANEW, Malick Gaye** highlighted the importance of considering Civil Society and urged donors and governments to involve communities in gathering, using and disseminating information; governments to build enabling environment for all actors to engage in policy design, planning, implementation and assessment; every government to follow guidelines to achieve effective and meaningful partnerships. This has been considered as shown in recommendations from the conference:

1. Create platforms for the voices of the poor to be heard and to be influential upon the achievement of water security
2. Greater involvement of civil society to bring experiences from local levels to influence investments from the earliest stages through implementation to benefit achievement and beyond
3. Strengthen opportunities for Asian-Africa interactions on lesson and experience learning.

During the closing ceremony, a Ministerial Declaration was presented by Charles Ngangoué (President AMCOW-TAC), in which some measures were taken (**Strengthening collaboration with civil society by formalizing relations with the African Civil Society Network on Water and Sanitation (ANEW)**, strengthening collaboration with Africa River and Lake Basin Organizations (ANBO), among others.) Throughout the declaration, the Ministers extended their gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Tunisia for hosting the First African Water Week, to the President and Management of the African Development Bank for the hosting and organising the First African Water Week. They requested the Government of Kenya to initiate the necessary processes for hosting the second Africa Water Week. The conference was closed by AMCOW President who said AWW-1 was a success.

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