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Economic Commission for Africa

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AU/SARO-ADB-ECA/SA SEMINAR ON WATER AND SANITATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC): INNOVATIVE APPROACHES FOR RESOURCES MOBILIZATION AND POLICY IMPLEMENTATION, LUSAKA, ZAMBIA,

Water experts from government institutions and subregional bodies, the private sector, SADC institutions, civil society and development partners are set to meet in Lusaka, from 10 to 13 December 2008 in a seminar to discuss how best to mobilize resources and strengthen the awareness on water and sanitation (WASAT) in order to accelerate the attainment of MDGs and sustainable development commitments in Southern Africa.

The seminar is jointly convened by the African Union-Southern Africa Regional Office (AU-SARO), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and ECA Southern Africa Office (ECA-SA) and will focus on “*Water and Sanitation in Southern Africa Development Community (SADC): Innovative Approaches for Resource Mobilization and Policy Implementation*”.

The Heads of State and government of the AU at the 11th Ordinary Session in Sharm El-Sheikh, on the 30th June to 1st July 2008, underscored the importance of water and sanitation for sustainable development in Africa and emphasised the need to develop the related infrastructure and institutions. This commitment is in line with other major African engagements related to water including; the African Water Vision 2025, the Sirte Declaration on Agriculture and Water in Africa; the Declaration on Climate Change in Africa and the MDGs. SADC countries have made

considerable progress towards improving access to basic water supply. However, less has been done towards improvement in sanitation.

WASAT plans, programmes and policies in Southern Africa face many challenges related to the lack of attention to maintenance and sustainability; the uncertainty about the government's ability to sustain funding to support the sector, the highly variable service quality, sketchy data and knowledge on the sector, WASAT capacity constraints in the context of current decentralization process, fragmented responsibilities allocated to a mosaic of central and local institutions and the weak top-level political support for the sector at countries' level.

The seminar is expected to facilitate consultation among stakeholders on the strategic role of WASAT in the attainment of national, sub-regional, regional and global sustainable development commitments, especially those of the African Union and United Nations, to assess the progress accomplished in promoting access to safe WASAT, identify issues and challenges, increase awareness and define a strategy to accelerate the attainment of the related MDGs through an effective resource mobilization. The seminar will also serve as a consultative and preparatory meeting for Africa's participation at the 5th World Water Forum towards a wider ownership of the regional day at the Forum.

A press conference on the seminar will be presented by the organizers on the 10th December 2008 from 10:15 - 11: 15 at the Venue of the meeting. This serves to invite the media to attend.

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