



**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE 3RD AFRICA WATER WEEK

Address

by

**Abdoulie Janneh
UN Under-Secretary-General and
Executive Secretary of ECA**

**UNCC, Addis Ababa
26 November 2010**

Your Excellency Ms. Edna Molewa, President of AMCOW and Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs of South Africa,

Your Excellency, Ato Alemayehu Legema, Minister of Water Resources of Ethiopia,

Your Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, Chairperson, African Union Commission,
Honourable Ministers,

Excellencies,

Mr. Bai Mass Taal, AMCOW Executive Secretary,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted by the opportunity to address this august Assembly and the 3rd Africa Water Week on the theme “Implementing the Africa Water Vision and Meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Targets: Challenges and opportunities in water and sanitation”. This event is highly significant and ECA is especially pleased to be a co-sponsor with the African Ministerial Council on Water (AMCOW). We are proud to be one of AMCOW’s key partners and the Secretariat of UN-Water/Africa because few issues are more important to human needs and biodiversity than water.

ECA has since 1992, hosted the Secretariat of UN-Water/Africa, a proactive platform for dialogue among UN agencies, partners and other stakeholders whose aim is to enhance coherence and cohesion in the United Nations response to the challenges of water development and management in Africa. The effectiveness of this coordination mechanism is evidenced by numerous achievements, including the successful delivery of many landmark policy forums, documents, the Africa Water Vision 2025; Africa subregional portfolio of water projects and programmes; Africa Water Journal; Water Dome, the first Pan-

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African Implementation and Partnership Conference on Water (PANAFCON), and the second Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State in Sirte, Libya, in 2004, on the Challenges of Implementing Integrated and Sustainable Development in Agriculture and Water in Africa.

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We also had the first Africa Water Week in Tunis in 2008; the 11th African Union Summit held in Sharm El Sheikh on Water and Sanitation; and the 2nd Africa Water Week and Pan-African Implementation and Partnership Conference in Johannesburg. ECA is proud to be part of these landmark achievements and of its role as a catalyst for action and progress in this vital sector.

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Africa's most pressing challenges in water and sanitation relate to meeting basic needs, which depend on economic activities, good governance and adequate infrastructure provided by entities such as Ministries of water, river basin organizations, water utilities and industries. Water needs for drinking, industrial uses, irrigation, and hydro-electric power generation necessitate the construction of reservoirs, canals, waterways, pipes and irrigation facilities. While tangible improvements have been made, many challenges still remain.

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According to the UNICEF/WHO Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP), although 245 million people gained access to improved drinking water source, and 146 million people gained access to sanitation in Africa from 1990 to 2006, these were not sufficient to keep up with Africa's population growth of over 300 million. As a result, the population without access to drinking water increased from 280 million in 1990 to 341 million in 2006, while the number of people without sanitation increased from 430 million in 1990 to 589 million in 2006. In order to meet the MDG target, an additional 294 million people need to gain

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access to improved sources of drinking water, while 762 million people need to gain access to improved sanitation before 2015.

This is a daunting challenge that will require all African governments, institutions, NGOs, Civil Society Organizations and development partners, to join forces to meet the MDG drinking water and sanitation targets in Africa.

The poverty / ill health cycle has inadequate water supply and sanitation as its underlying cause and outcome since those who lack adequate water and sanitation are often the poorest in the society. The World Water Development Report says that improved water supplies will reduce the disease burden of infectious diarrhoea by 17 percent annually while universal piped, well-regulated water supply and sanitation could reduce the burden by 70 percent.

Africa's pressing water and sanitation challenges need urgent attention. Measures to address these challenges include: reducing the proportion of people without access to safe water and adequate sanitation; increasing productivity of rainfed and irrigated agriculture to achieve food security; increasing access to energy through hydropower development; increasing the development of water resources potential to manage droughts, floods and desertification effectively; and pursuing conservation and restoration of the environment, biodiversity and ecosystems by allocating sufficient water for environmental sustainability. We must address all these challenges within the existing African frameworks, such as the Africa Water Vision 2025, the MDGs and the WSSD Implementation Plan.

The key to meeting these challenges is sustainable financing and better water governance. While African countries depend on donor funds for significant shares of their water development budgets, the largest funding sources are still local, including governments, local banks and users. Yet, the contributions of international aid, foreign banks and private companies are much more easily seen and better appreciated.

According to the African Development Bank, the finance requirement to meet the basic water supply and sanitation services across the continent is US\$ 12 billion per annum, representing about 1.5-2.0% of GDP. WHO's estimate of about US\$ 94 billion for new and existing water and sanitation infrastructure in Africa to meet the MDGs comprises US\$ 37 billion for water supplies and US\$ 57 billion for sanitation.

Other estimates include the NEPAD/CAADP programme of about US\$ 3.5 billion per annum up to 2015, for recurrent operation and maintenance in agricultural water management; the 2008 High Level Ministerial Conference on Water for Agriculture and Energy of US\$ 5 billion annually for investment in irrigation development over 50 years.

There is general agreement that Africa must improve its water infrastructure in order to promote productivity and growth. Indeed, there is a strong positive link between investment (in irrigation, for instance), poverty alleviation and food security, as observed in Asia, and which Africa should replicate.

There is no doubt about the strong profitability and developmental impact of investment in water and sanitation. Indeed, a study by WHO estimates cost-benefit ratios ranging between 9.8 and 14.8 for such investments in Africa.

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On these accounts, I urge this Assembly to give serious consideration to all these issues and come up with appropriate recommendations on actions to address the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities presented in this sector. This is important for Africa and should be the raison d'être of our Africa Water Week commemoration.

Let me reassure you of ECA's full commitment and undiminished support to Africa's water development agenda under the able leadership of AMCOW. Particularly in this regard, ECA will continue to provide the necessary resources to sustain the operation of the UN Water/Africa Secretariat that we hold dearly, as this inter-agency collaborative mechanism has proved to be a proactive and effective platform for dialogue and cooperation among UN agencies, partners and other stakeholders in enhancing coherence and cohesion in the United Nations System's response to the challenges of water development and management in Africa.

In conclusion, we stand ready to work with all partners and stakeholders to implement the recommendations of the 3rd Africa Water Week as well as the actions contained in the relevant policy and programme frameworks, in order to achieve the MDG targets on water and sanitation and the Africa Water Vision 2025.

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I thank for your attention.