

**Pan-African Implementation and Partnership
Conference on Water**

Opening Statement

by

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Honorable Ministers,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor and personal pleasure for me to welcome you all once again to this Pan-African Implementation and Partnership Conference on Water.

This Ministerial and Partners segment is the main part of our conference. Because, during the two days of our deliberations the stakeholders represented in this conference will make important decisions on the implementation of action programs and funding commitments that will help to achieve the regional and international targets on water and sanitation in Africa on the basis of integrated water resources management.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Water is one of the important natural resources that Africa has for the benefits of its people and socio-economic development of the continent.

African countries have made various efforts individually and with the support of development partners to make use of their water resources for the benefit of their people. However the achievements observed so far are behind the need of the continent.

Today, only 64 % of the continent's population has access to improved water supply, only 60% of the total population has sanitation facilities, only 3 % of renewable water is withdrawn for human use, only 6 % of its land is irrigated and only 5 % of its hydropower potential is used.

The picture of some countries is even much less than the aggregate figures of the continent. For instance in Ethiopia, only 34 % of the total population has access to safe drinking water and only about 17% of the total population has sanitation service, only 5 % of the 3.7 million ha. irrigable land is developed and only 1.6 % of the 161,000 Gwh/yr hydropower generation potential is harnessed.

With these trends of development and ever increasing population of Africa, meeting the Millennium Development Goals could be the major challenge, unless all stakeholders increase their efforts.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Although the current situation of the water sector in Africa is worse than any parts of the world, the ongoing initiatives and arrangements such as the NEPAD water agenda, the EU Water Initiative for Africa, the G8 Action Plan, and the establishments of AMCOW and African Water Facilities are important and encouraging measures.

We believe that, these initiatives and arrangements could provide remarkable contributions in the management of the water resources of the continent.

The people and governments of Africa must use these opportunities to change the situation through ensuring their commitments, mobilizing available resources and undertaking concrete actions at national, sub regional and regional levels.

We appreciate the supports that have been provided by our development partners for the management of the continent's water resources. Still Africa needs more support from donors and financial institutions to meet the international and regional commitments such as Millennium Development Goals, the World Summit's targets, the African Water Vision 2025 and the NEPAD water agenda.

African governments must ensure their absorption capacity and take immediate actions to tackle the critical problems of satisfying the basic human needs and enhancing economic growth of the continent.

Finally, I wish you a happy stay and fruitful deliberations in the Ministerial and Partners segment of this conference.

Thank you for your attention.