

**Pan-African Implementation and Partnership Conference
on Water
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, December 8-13, 2003**

Opening Remarks

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, good morning.

It's an honor to be here in such distinguished company, and during such a momentous occasion. I wish to share my colleagues in expressing our sincere appreciation for the Government of Ethiopia for excellent conference organization and the warm reception and hospitality we have encountered since we landed in Addis airport.

In the debate on managing the world's finite natural resources, few issues have achieved the pre-eminence that water has. As an issue, water plays a pivotal role in society. It is critical for long-term economic development; for human health and social welfare, especially of the poor; and for environmental sustainability

On the other hand and considering the paradox of our times, we live in a world of plenty, of stunning scientific innovation and technological advances. Yet, in many of our countries around the world and especially in Africa we still observe conflict, violence, economic uncertainty and tragic poverty. Additionally, and unfortunately, many rich nations are looking inward turning their backs on the poor.

lacking the necessary cooperative framework, spirit and proper institution

governments, non-governmental organizations, institutions and the private

sector from both donor and developing countries to work together towards poverty eradication through sustainable development.

An excellent example of such partnership is the New Partnership for Africa's Development, or NEPAD, as it focuses on partnerships – between African leaders and their people, among Africans, and between Africans and their global neighbors – and emphasizes good governance as a precondition for sustainable development. The NEPAD is based on the fundamental definition of partnerships-- mutual obligations.

Actions for the Future

Brothers and sisters of the African nations and friends who are gathered to debate water challenges and argue possible solutions.

I hope in our meetings within the next few days in the Pan-African Conference and the African Council of Ministers on Water we could address these issues and together craft actions for better future of the water resources management in Africa. Actions that are based on sound vision, political will and determination from both public and private partners for goals achievement.

With this regard we need to understand that comprehensive water resources management in the future will require significant complementary policy actions and investments in institutions and infrastructure. For instance, investment level of the agriculture sector alone between 2002 and 2015 is expected to be around US\$ 240 billion out of which US\$ 69 billion would for operation and maintenance.

treated with at least the same care as human and economic ones. Having safe water to drink and nutritious food to eat relies on sound water resource management, and productive agriculture. We need the support in our effort to do exactly this.

We need to overcome fragmentation that exists at various levels of water management. African countries have to work together following the natural unit of management which is the river basin. It is essential that policies, strategies, institutional and legal frameworks be developed, coordinated and harmonized at the global and regional levels, to deal with the promotion of peace and security of transboundary water and water sharing between regions and countries and provide safeguards for dispute prevention and create effective disputes settlement mechanisms. Experience gained from successful cases should be promoted and made known to many parts of the world, so that a common and better understanding of the issues can expedite solutions. The experience in the Nile Basin has yielded many good examples in this direction.

In Africa, increasing agricultural productivity is a key to poverty reduction. To increase benefits of irrigated agriculture to the poor, it is critical to understand the real social and economic benefits of irrigation development, the water environment where poor people live, their production preferences and what designs can allow poor people and small holders to make the most of their opportunities. Irrigated agriculture has been a strategy for poverty reduction and there is evidence that this strategy can be successful. The potential savings from irrigated water could easily contribute to meeting the demand of other sectors.

Knowledge sharing is an important component of overcoming these challenges. On the one hand, sharing our experiences can save

communities the cost of making the same mistakes, again and again; and on the other hand, sharing information gives people choices. A range of options for poverty reduction, with short- and long-term consequences considered, is necessary for sustainable development.

The promotion of good practice, capacity building and training programs of African Engineers, and operators is crucial for a successful water infrastructure O&M. Capacity building would enable the beneficiaries to plan, execute and manage the facilities. Additionally, development of indigenous knowledge base in the African countries is also essential to ensuring access of water to everyone. The appropriate technology is a pre-requisite to the avoidance of costly solutions and ensures the durability of the infrastructure in meeting the local requirements.