

**STATEMENT BY PROFESSOR WISEMAN NKUHLU, CHAIRPERSON OF THE
NEPAD STEERING COMMITTEE, AT THE PAN-AFRICAN
IMPLEMENTATION AND PARTNERSHIP CONFERENCE ON WATER IN
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA ON 9 DECEMBER 2003**

Honourable Chairperson
Honourable Ministers
Your Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates

It is a privilege and a pleasure to be invited to make a contribution at this extremely important event. Allow me to thank and congratulate the African Ministerial Council on Water (AMCOW), the Government of Ethiopia and the UN-ECA for making this event possible.

At the outset, I would like to acknowledge with appreciation the important role played by the Ministers of Water under AMCOW in championing and giving direction to the development of strategies for water and sanitation and engaging the international community. Our experience in other sectors shows us that the role of Ministers is critical to the strengthening of political leadership and the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee appreciates what the African Ministers of Water have done in this regard.

Ladies and Gentlemen

As you are all well aware, there is a major transformation that is taking place on the African continent. It is a fundamental reform and renewal process that is anchored on key principles of African ownership and leadership, self-reliance, and a new partnership with the developed world that is based on mutual respect, responsibility and accountability.

During the last four years the African leaders have been engaged in a process of laying a foundation for this renewal of the continent. The process started in 1999 with the decision to transform the Organization of African Unity (OAU) into the African Union (AU). The drafting and negotiation of the legal framework establishing the AU generated a process of intense discussion about the challenges facing the continent and what needs to be done to address them. The result was the adoption of the Constitutive Act of the AU that provides for greater political unity and integration and commits African countries to principles of democracy, human rights, good governance, gender equality and people-centred development.

At the same time as the move from the OAU to the AU, the discussions around Africa's challenges that I have mentioned resulted in the development of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. NEPAD was adopted at the 2001 OAU Summit in Lusaka as the socio-economic development programme of the OAU/AU. It is based on the same principles and values as the Constitutive Act and is designed to complement the Act and

to ensure that its objectives and principles are pursued within the context of a holistic integrated strategy for development and growth.

The NEPAD sectoral programmes give content to the key principles of the Constitutive Act and provide the AU with the means to promote these principles in a coordinated manner. The thrust of the work under NEPAD during the last year, therefore, has concentrated on facilitating, coordinating, supporting and expediting the implementation of programmes and projects in the various identified priority areas.

One of those priority areas has always been the issue of water and sanitation. Water is fundamental to life itself. It plays a pivotal role in so many fields – health, energy, industry, the environment and agriculture – and has particular significance due to its importance and influence in and across a number of priority areas. The sustainable use of available and finite water resources is essential as much for human survival as it is for development and growth.

Some of the critical water and sanitation issues identified under NEPAD that need to be addressed include:

- (i) The adoption of effective national and regional policies and institutional frameworks based on the principles of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM);
- (ii) The establishment of collaborative frameworks and agreements to facilitate the management and development of shared water resources;
- (iii) Capacity building for increasing “water wisdom” in the regions;
- (iv) The resolution of the twin challenges of poor absorptive capacity and inadequate funding.

In response to the challenges facing Africa in the water sector, the African Water Vision for 2025 was developed to stimulate a shift in approach towards a more equitable and sustainable use and management of Africa’s water resources for poverty alleviation, socio-economic development, regional cooperation and the environment. The water and sanitation programmes and projects included in the NEPAD Initial Action Plan are fully in support of the Africa Water Vision and its Framework for Action.

In this regard, NEPAD has identified a number of projects and programmes under the Short Term Action Plan for Infrastructure, the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme, the Health initiative and the Environment initiative that are relevant to water and sanitation. This has been done in conjunction with AU member states, relevant Forums of African Ministers (such as AMCOW), the Regional Economic Communities, the ADB, the World Bank, and a number of key UN agencies

At national level, projects relating to rural development, health and small-scale water and irrigation supply are being pursued, with AMCOW taking the lead to achieve the relevant Millennium Development Goals.

In terms of shared water resources, the following serve as examples of the projects being pursued where NEPAD is playing a supportive role:

- The Nile Basin Initiative
- Support for River Basin Organizations and Integrated Water Resources Management in West Africa
- Water Resources Management Support in Central Africa
- Water Resource Assessment in the SADC region
- Implementation of the IGAD Hydrological Cycle Observation System
- Strengthening of the Niger River Basin Authority Interstate Forecast Centre
- Drought and Desertification Control in the Maghreb region
- The Mphanda Nkua Hydropower project, and
- The Grand Inga Hydropower project.

Distinguished delegates

There is no shortage of goals, plans, initiatives and commitments relating to the development and promotion of water and sanitation in Africa. These include the UN Millennium Declaration, the Johannesburg Declaration and Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the Kyoto Third World Water Forum, the G8 Action Plan for Water in support of NEPAD, the European Union Africa Strategic Partnership for Water signed between the President of the European Commission, Mr Prodi, and President Obasanjo of Nigeria during the WSSD and so on. The World Bank, the IMF, the ADB, the DBSA, the UN, the EU and others have all expressed support for a focus on water infrastructure and integrated water resource management in Africa.

This Conference provides an opportunity to discuss the practical and concrete implementation of the commitments made, goals set and support expressed at the various fora mentioned. We need to turn commitments into action. In this process, it is critical that these commitments and support are coordinated and focused and that linkages and synergies are established to a common African agenda and set of implementable actions, in order to secure maximum effectiveness in achieving our water and sanitation goals and objectives. This is particularly important in light of the Extraordinary Summit of the AU that will be held in Libya in the New Year to discuss water and agriculture.

At the conclusion of the Conference, therefore, a clear set of actions needs to be outlined, wherein there is a clear delineation of the specific roles that each of the major stakeholders has to pursue, including African states, Regional Economic Communities, NEPAD and AU structures, AMCOW, the African Water Task Force, UN-Water/Africa, the ADB and so on. There must be unequivocal support from all partners for the key initiatives and actions launched in Addis Ababa this week. These initiatives and actions can be grouped under three major thrusts.

Firstly, I believe that the time has come for us to emerge from this Conference with a clear plan for ensuring that each African country achieves the Millennium Development

Goal of reducing by 50% the number of persons with no sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015.

The international community has prioritized poverty as the challenge of the 21st Century. Yes, there are other policies and development initiatives that must be in place, but without access to reliable and safe water supply, Africa will not be able to resolve poverty, undernourishment and mortality arising from poor nutrition and diseases. The time has come therefore to harness water through small irrigation schemes to the benefit of the overall strategy for poverty reduction. Such an increase in small water schemes can easily be financed from national budgets and support from development partners. What is critical is political will. Prioritisation of water for household use by African governments in their national development plans and medium term expenditure frameworks is vital.

Concurrently, development partners should commit to contributing to a fund, such as the African Water Facility envisaged as a key initiative of this Conference under the ADB. This will ensure that no country that has prioritized water will be deprived of the opportunity to meet the water and sanitation MDG. This will also mean linking existing initiatives such as the European Water Facility and the G8 support to the African Water Facility to ensure a coordinated response to the problem. Such a facility will also need to have transparent governance procedures, flexible accessibility and the minimum of bureaucracy to ensure accelerated and scaled up delivery.

Secondly, there must be a clear plan for enabling African countries to harness water for food security through increased food production. We all know that a number of countries experience serious regular cyclical food shortages with devastating consequences in terms of human life. This happens because, unlike other regions of the world, Africa is over dependent on seasonal rainfalls for its food production. Less than 4% of arable land in Africa South of the Sahara is irrigated compared to approximately 40% in Asia. Countries are held hostage to climatic variability because of a lack of measures to mitigate against this variability, to store water and to manage water resources, particularly shared water resources.

Thirdly, therefore, we must decide upon a clear plan for advancing the development and management of the shared water basins/rivers. We must meet the target of developing integrated water resource management and water efficiency plans by 2005. The major water basin projects provide the long-term solution and are crucial to the medium and long-term development of the continent, but they are going to take time to negotiate, plan and implement. Therefore, there must be concrete plans, functioning institutions and resources to take them forward with a sense of urgency.

Knowledge and experience to do all of the above is available. What is needed is leadership and action. The Green revolution in India provides a clear example of what can be achieved when there is significant leadership and action. The Green Revolution was made possible by the World Bank, UN agencies, development partners and

foundations working with the Indian government to access appropriate technologies and to invest massively in irrigation.

Commitments have been made through the NEPAD process by African countries, the G8, the UN system, the OECD and the EU, and leading states in the South. Therefore, the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee, the Steering Committee and the Secretariat stand ready to facilitate and support implementation of the concrete plans and initiatives that emerge from this Conference. We will use the African Partnership Forum that has been established, involving all African and international stakeholders, to monitor and pursue progress in implementation on both sides.

Ladies and Gentlemen

In defining roles to be played, the individual countries need to:

- be efficient in the use of available limited resources;
- include water and sanitation in national development plans and PRSPs;
- increase budgetary allocations to water and sanitation;
- devise innovative ways to increase private sector participation and investment in water and sanitation to complement donor and domestic public funds;
- undertake essential policy reforms and introduce regulatory frameworks which create an enabling environment particularly for private sector investment;
- encourage all stakeholders, ie the private sector, civil society, local government and local communities, to play a role and make a contribution to water resource issues and pursue capacity building in all these sectors; and
- cooperate in dealing with trans-boundary water issues and integrated water resources management strategies through shared river basin institutions.

In conclusion, the particular role to be played by NEPAD in the context of water and sanitation will be in the form of mobilising political commitment, organizing regular reviews and monitoring, developing corrective and/or supplementary measures based on progress made by countries and regions in achieving selected targets, and facilitating the mobilization of funding required for programme and project implementation, as well as facilitating access to concrete support generated. NEPAD can play a coordinating role between governments, regional organizations and continental and international partners. NEPAD will work particularly closely with AMCOW as the political body responsible for policymaking and implementation at country level and will support AMCOW's activities at regional and international level.

A sound framework and set of commitments, goals and supportive measures have been built up over the years. It is incumbent on us to ensure that this is placed under one umbrella, that all our efforts are properly coordinated and targeted and that we single-mindedly pursue concrete implementation together in true partnership towards the ultimate goal of securing the sustainable delivery to all our peoples of a fundamental building block of life and progress – water! I thank you.