

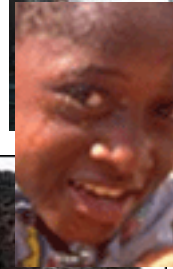


MARCH 19, 2006

Africa Water

A newsletter of UN-Water/Africa in support of the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW)

Africa: Images from the 4th World Water Forum



Photos by Mercy Wambui and courtesy Reuters

For the Record

Finally, *African Water Development Report* arrives World Water Forum in Mexico City

By Stephen Maxwell Donkor, Ph.D. Coordinator, UN Water/Africa

The biennial African Water Development Report (AWDR) is a comprehensive synthesis of 25 national and two sub-regional reports on the state of African water resources. The key points raised in the report are as follows:

- Any accelerated development in Africa would, to a very large extent, depend on how effectively African countries are able to harness their water resources for a sustainable socio-economic development and, above all, for the eradication of endemic poverty without impairing the environment.

- Never in the history of the tortuous efforts in Africa aimed at reversing decades of endemic poverty and pervasive underdevelopment has the realization of the cardinal role of water in socio-economic development been so high, as at present.

- The current positive trend has been achieved through decades of international and African concerted efforts at evolving policies and strategies for effective water resources development and management, culminating in the adoption of the Dublin Principles of Integrated Water Resources Management. These processes can generally be referred to as the “Water Journey from Rio to Johannesburg”.

It is within this process that the African Water Vision 2025 was launched at the 2nd World Water Forum at The Hague in 2000.

The objectives of the AWDR

are to:

- Provide a lasting and durable mechanism to monitor progress made in implementing the African Water Vision;
- Provide African decision makers with an authoritative basis for managing Africa’s water resources; and
- Serve as an integrative programme for the strengthening of UN-Water/Africa.

AWDR also contains many calls to action premised on the following realities:

- In spite of the low level of water withdrawals for various uses in Africa, access to freshwater resources seem to be decreasing due to various factors, including population growth that is incompatible with economic growth; uneven spatial and temporal distribution of rainfall in Africa; diminishing natural humidity due to climatic variability and possible climate change influences; depletion of groundwater aquifers due to uncontrolled use; and pollution of surface and groundwater bodies.

- There is a need to break the vicious spiral between lack of water and sanitation and the disease burden, which condemns Africa to the minor league of development and human productivity.

The African water sector must break the vicious cycle in which poor operation and systems maintenance lead to high leakages

and losses resulting in poor service performance and consequent lack of sustainability.

The AWDR process should be institutionalized as a monitoring and management tool for policy makers, planners and practitioners.

It is also crucial that all constituent members of UN-Water/Africa, national water-related institutions, scientific bodies and other stakeholders must collectively accept the AWDR process in order to initiate actions towards evolving a dynamic system of monitoring progress in the implementation of the African Water Vision 2025 and other international challenges such as the MDGs

On behalf Abdoulie Janneh, Under-Secretary General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the first advance copies of the AWDR were presented in Mexico City to Hon. Maria Mutagamba, Chairperson of African Ministers’ Council on Water (AMCOW) the ultimate owners of the AWDR process and Crown Prince Willem Alexander of the Netherlands in recognition of the sustained financial support of his Kingdom for the process.

Africa Water is an information service of UN-Water/Africa and African Development Bank in support of the African Ministers’ Council on Water (AMCOW).

For more information, please contact Yinka Adeyemi at yadeyemi@uneca.org