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PRESS RELEASE: AFRICA DAY AT THE 4th WORLD WATER FORUM AFRICAN WATER MINISTERS CALL FOR EARLY WARNING SYSTEM TO MITIGATE WATER-RELATED DISASTERS

Mexico City, 19 March 2006: African water ministers attending the World Water Forum in Mexico City today said they would promote cooperation on the development of effective early warning system for the prevention and mitigation of water-related disasters and called on development partners to support Africa's efforts in this regard.

In a seven-point declaration at the launching of three regional documents – the **African Water Development Report**, **African Regional Document - Water Resources Development in Africa** and the **Mexico Ministerial Declaration on Water**, the ministers acknowledged Africa's vulnerability to the global climate changes caused by green house emissions in the developed world and said early warning systems would help reduce the impact of these disasters on economic development, food security and poverty eradication.

The launch was attended, among others, by Mrs. Maria Mutagamba, President of the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) and Minister of water resources in Uganda, Mr. Francis Bougaire, Vice President of the AMCOW-TAC, Mr. Loïc Fauchon, President of the World Water Council, Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka, Executive Director of UN-Habitat and Mr. Kordje Bedoumra, Director of the African Water Facility, administered by the African Development Bank.

If Africa is to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) target of halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and sanitation by 2015, there must be an enormous amount of investment in water supply and sanitation. In this regard, the ministers endorsed the **Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Initiative** as the framework for sustainable and improved access to water supply and sanitation to the rural population in Africa.

They called on African riparian states to develop a *“cooperative framework and appropriate sub regional protocols”* for the shared management and use of transboundary water resources because such cooperation *“contributes to sustainable water management and mutual benefits.”*

To achieve a *“self-sustaining auto-induced growth”*, the ministers called for increased investment on water infrastructure and urged development partners to enhance their financial and technical support to Africa in order to achieve food and energy security as well as access to safe water supply and sanitation for all.

The ministers expressed pleasure on the successful establishment of the African Water Facility as a mechanism to support Africa's water resources development efforts and called on development partners to fulfill their financial pledges in support of the Facility.

However, the ministers said they would also explore “*new financing mechanisms, including effective public-private partnerships, while ensuring the necessary African ownership, public control and legal frameworks to protect the public interests, particularly those of the poor and vulnerable.*”

Following the launch during a press conference, AfDB and UN-HABITAT announced that a memorandum of understanding was signed for the release of about US\$ 550 million to speed-up Africa’s chances of reducing by half, the proportion of people without access to safe water and sanitation by 2015.

The fund will be used as grants and loans to Africa’s secondary towns, which are usually excluded in the provision of water by governments, said Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka, Executive Director of UN-Habitat. She said about US\$200 million would be used as grants and over \$250 million as loans for water projects in Africa.

Tibaijuka said Africa’s water and sanitation future was bright as plans were on ground to ensure that water taps begin to run, and added that time for talk was over.

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