

REPORT ON THE LAUNCHING OF AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY NETWORK ON WATER

On 9th December 2003 during the PANAFCON AMCOW meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the African Civil Society Network on Water (ANEW) was launched. The launching was held during side event and invitations were circulated widely amongst the delegates of the Conference. There was a good turn out of water and sanitation development stakeholders in Africa, including CSO representatives and networks, African civil servants, sector professionals and dignitaries, representative of the European Commission working with the European Water Initiative, donor agencies, multi laterals and Ethiopian nationals working in the sector.

The guest of honor was the Minister for Water and Forest Affairs, Hon. Ronnie Kasrils from South Africa. Other guests were Mr. Stephen Donkor - Senior Regional Advisor, Ethiopia, Economic Commission for Africa, Mr. Sekou Toure - Director, Regional Office for Africa UNEP, Nairobi, and Mr. Andre Dzikus - UN Habitat, Nairobi. The ANEW task force representatives were supported by Freshwater Action Network (FAN) to participate in the pre CSO conference (between 7 – 8 December 2003) and the main meeting from 8 – 13th December. They took the opportunity to join hands in mobilizing and facilitating the launching process. The task force consists of water sector civil society groups representing different parts of Africa and present during that day were Ms. Tracy Molefi - , Botswana 'Every River has its People' project representing Southern Africa, Mr. Malick Gaye - Senegal, ENDA, representing Western Africa, Mr. Essam Nada Egypt, Arab Office for Youth and Environment for Northern Africa, Ms. Rosemary Rop, Maji na Ufanisi, Kenya representing Eastern Africa and Alphonse Issi representing Central Africa.

The theme of the launching was *“The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Meeting the MDG’S.”* An introduction and background of ANEW was made by Rosemary Rop, the task force representative for Eastern Africa. In her introduction she outlined the history, vision and mission of ANEW. She further took some time to highlight key immediate priorities of ANEW such as wide CSO recruitment in the sub regions, sharing of best practices, capacity building of members, and shaping international water policy by enhancing participation of CSOs in the South in international policy formulation processes.

The introduction was followed by reflections from the Economic Commission of Africa representative Mr. Donkor, Mr. Sekou Toure of UNEP and Mr. Andre Dzikus of UN Habitat who deliberated on the importance of CSOs in Africa in ensuring an invigorated and professional sector delivery of MDGs. Ms. Tracy Molefi from Botswana then presented a case study titled ‘Every River Has Its People’ on how CSOs contributed to the alleviation of poverty in the Okavango River Basin in a presentation that highlighted the benefits of dialogue within and between African CSOs.

The key note address and official launching was then undertaken by Hon. Ronnie Kasrils, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, South Africa. He welcomed the development of ANEW because of its regional representation and its potential to engage on water issues at a regional level. He cautioned that CSOs partner constructively and emphasize dialogue over loud activism, which may not always

yield concrete benefits to the poor. He however urged that AMCOW build a relationship of trust and open exchange with civil society organizations such as ANEW, in order to strengthen the quality and not only the quantity of development in the MDGs by exploiting the comparative strengths of governments as represented in AMCOW and CSOs in ANEW. After these remarks he announced the African Civil Society Network on Water (ANEW) as officially launched.

The event was concluded with refreshments which gave the delegates an opportunity to socialize, find out more about ANEW and how linkages could be practically established both inside and outside the Africa region.