

BRIEFING NOTE

ON AMCOW'S ACTIVITIES AT THE UN 2023 WATER CONFERENCE



UN
2023 WATER
CONFERENCE

NEW YORK
22-24
MARCH
2023



ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AfDB	African Development Bank
AMCOW	African Ministers' Council on Water
AMU	Arab Maghreb Union
AUC	African Union Commission
BRGM	Bureau de Recherches Géologiques et Minières (French Geological Survey)
CEDARE	Center for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe
CeReGAS	Center for Regional and Global Earth System Monitoring and Assessment
DBSA	Development Bank of Southern Africa
Deltares	Institute for Water and Subsurface Management
EA	East African Community
EAWAG	Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GA	General Assembly
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEUS	Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland (Geologisk Institut)
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IAH	International Association of Hydrogeologists
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IGRAC	International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre
IHE Delft	Institute for Water Education, Delft
IWRA	International Water Resources Association

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

JWF	Japan Water Forum
KIGAM	Korea Institute of Geoscience and Mineral Resources
New Mexico WRRRI	New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute
ORASECOM	Orange-Senqu River Commission
OSS	Observatoire du Sahara et du Sahel (Sahel and Sahara Observatory)
RLBOs	River/Lake Basin Organizations
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADC-GMI	Southern African Development Community Groundwater Management Institute
SIWI	Stockholm International Water Institute
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCO GWYN	Groundwater Youth Network
UNESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UN-Water	United Nations Water
WfWP	Women for Water Partnership
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WB	World Bank
WREG	Water Resources Expert Group
WRRRC	Water Resources Research Center

FOREWORD

This briefing note presents an overview of the outcomes of activities that involved the participation of AMCOW during the UN 2023 Water Conference on 22 - 24 March 2023. Key among these were: i) the AMCOW/OSAA side event on Assuring sustainable water availability for all purposes; ii) the official launch of the Team Europe Initiative; iii) several side events organised by AMCOW partners and Member States; and iv) bilateral meetings.

Our achievements at the Conference were a result of the tremendous support and invaluable contributions from:

1. The Member States that availed the data used to prepare the knowledge and information materials shared during the events convened.
2. Excellences the Ministers; the leadership of partner institutions and their representatives; the speakers; and the participants whose engagement shaped the outcomes.
3. The African Union Commission; the European Commission, the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa; the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa; the African Development Bank; and the Government of Sweden – through SIDA. The financial, technical and material support provided by these institutions culminated in the success registered by AMCOW at the Conference.

AMCOW appreciates the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs for the opportunity to have participated in the Conference. The Conference created an opportunity to amplify Africa's voice, common position and commitment to assuring water security and sanitation for all. AMCOW looks forward to working with all stakeholders to implement the outcomes of the Conference.

DR RASHID MBAZIIRA
AMCOW Executive Secretary

DIGNITARIES AT AMCOW EVENTS AT THE UN 2023 WATER CONFERENCE



H.E. JOSEFA LEONEL CORREIA SACKO

*AUC Commissioner for Agriculture,
Rural Development, Blue Economy
and Sustainable Environment (ARBE)*



CRISTINA DUARTE

*UN Under-Secretary General
and Special Adviser on Africa*



H E PROF DR HANI SEWILAM

*Minister of Water Resources and
Irrigation, Arab Republic of Egypt*



H E CARL-HERMANN
GUSTAV SCHLETTWEIN

*Minister of Agriculture, Water
and Land Reform, Namibia*



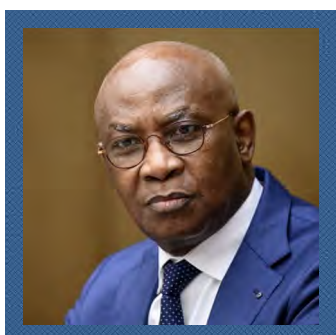
H E ENG SULEIMAN ADAMU

*Minister of Water Resources,
Federal Republic of Nigeria*



H E HABTAMU ITEFA

*Minister of Water and Energy,
Ethiopia*



S E SERIGNE MBAYE THIAM

*Minister of Water and Sanitation,
Senegal*



HON. CECILIA ABENA DAPAH

*Minister of Sanitation and Water
Resources, Ghana*



S E M. ALBERTO FORTES MESQUITA

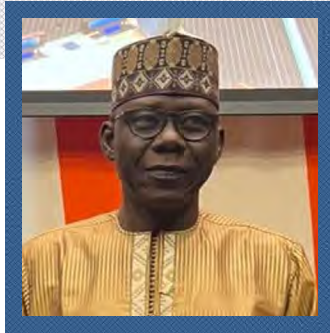
*Minister of Public Works, Housing
and Water Resources, Mozambique*

DIGNITARIES AT AMCOW EVENTS AT THE UN 2023 WATER CONFERENCE



HON SENZO MCHUNU

*Minister of Water and Sanitation,
South Africa*



ALHAJI MAHAMAN ADAMOU

*Ministère de l'Hydraulique et
de l'Assainissement, Republic
of the Niger*



H E EVE BAZAIBA MASUDI

*Minister and Minister of Environment,
Democratic Republic of Congo*



HON. ABIDA SIDIK MIA

*Minister of Water and Sanitation,
Republic of Malawi*



HON ANXIOUS JONGWE MASUKU

*Minister of Lands, Agriculture, Water,
Climate and Rural Resettlement,
Republic of Zimbabwe*



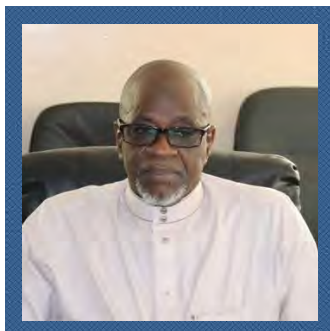
H E SIDI MOHAMED
TALEM AMAR

*Minister of Water and
Sanitation, Islamic Republic of
Mauritania*



HON. PHILIP KARIMU LANSANA

*Minister of Water Resources,
Republic of Sierra Leone*



HON MUSA S. DRAMMEH

*Minister of Fisheries, Water
Resources and National Assembly
Matters, Republic of the Gambia*



HON SAM CHEPTORIS

*Minister of Water and Environment,
Republic of Uganda*

DIGNITARIES AT AMCOW EVENTS AT THE UN 2023 WATER CONFERENCE



HON. ALICE MUTHONI WAHOME

*Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Water,
Sanitation and Irrigation, Republic of
Kenya*



HON. KEFENTSE MZWINI

*Minister of Land Management,
Water and Sanitation Services,
Republic of Botswana*



AMB BOBBY WHITFIELD

*Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
of the Liberia National Water,
Sanitation and Hygiene Commission*



HON. DAWALBEIT ABDALRAHMAN

*Minister of Irrigation and Water
Resources, Republic of the Sudan*



H.E. ALIO ABDOULAYE IBRAHIM

*Minister of Water and Sanitation,
Republic of Chad*



DR BETH DUNFORD

*Vice President, Agriculture, Human
and Social Development, African
Development Bank*



DR FRANK RUTABINGWA

*United Nations Economic
Commission for Africa*



OSWARD MULENGA CHANDA

*Director, Water and Sanitation
Development, African Development
Bank*



HARSEN NYAMBE

*Director of Sustainable Environment
and Blue Economy of the African
Union*

ABOUT THE UN 2023 WATER CONFERENCE [22-24 MARCH 2023]

The United Nations 2023 Water Conference was convened from 22-24 March 2023 at the UN Headquarters in New York USA. The conference kicked off on World Water Day, which was celebrated this year under the theme, “Accelerate Change.” During the Conference, delegates from across the world met throughout the day in plenaries and five interactive dialogue sessions focused on, among others, accelerating implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene; climate change; and cooperation. These were convened parallel to plenary sessions while the general debates continued in plenary into the night. <https://enb.iisd.org/un-2023-water-conference-summary>



*Co-convened by the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Republic of Tajikistan, the UN 2023 Water Conference sought voluntary commitments from participants to scale up **#WaterAction** and accelerate progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda.*

SUMMARY OF 2023 UNITED NATIONS WATER COUNCIL SESSION: GOALS OF THE AFRICAN MINISTERS' COUNCIL ON WATER (AMCOW)

Time	Title of Session	Organiser
MARCH 22 -----		
11:00 - 12:15	<u>Water, Peace, and Security in Africa</u>	Finland, African Union Commission, Switzerland, Senegal
12:30 - 13:45	<u>Launch of the International High-Level Panel Report on Water Investments in Africa: Pathways for Mobilisation of \$30 billion Annually by 2030</u>	African Union Commission, The Republic of Senegal, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Republic of Namibia, GWP Africa (all as Co-Chairs of the International High-Level Panel on Water Investments for Africa)
MARCH 23 -----		
08:00 - 09:15	<u>Assuring Sustainable Water Availability: An essential Element to Meet Vital Human Needs and A Success Factor for Africa's Social Stability; Economic Growth; Regional Integration; Trade; Peace and Security</u>	AMCOW, AUC, OSAA, Egypt, Namibia, Nigeria, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Mozambique, Senegal, Member States of the Africa Union, AfDB, DBSA, RLBOs, ECOWAS, EAC, SADC, IGAD, CEDARE, and AMU.
12:30 - 13:45	<u>Taking next steps for a water and climate resilient world through capacity development of people and organizations</u>	Panama, China, Dominica, Nigeria, Palestine, Spain, Sudan, Uganda, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), IHE Delft Institute for Water Education, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), UN-Water, AMCOW, UNDP CapNet, SIWI, GWP, ICOMOS-ISC Water, UNESCO Chair Water, Ports and Historic Cities, Waternet, Witteveen+Bos, UNESCO International Centre for Water Security and Sustainable Management (i-WSSM), Water Museums Network (WaMuNet), Green Climate Fund, UNESCO Dundee Centre for Water Law, Policy and Science (CWLPS), UNESCO Centre on Integrated and Multi-Disciplinary Water Resources Management (CIMWRM)
18:30 - 19:45	<u>Launch of the Team Europe Initiative (TEI) on Transboundary Water Resources Management in Africa</u>	Belgium, European Union, Government of Austria, Government of Czech Republic, Government of Denmark, Government of France, Government of Germany, Government of Slovenia, Government of Sweden, and Member States of the Africa Union

08:00 - 09:15	<u>Groundwater: An Invisible Cross-Sectoral Fundament for Implementation of the Water Action Agenda</u>	Namibia, AMCOW, Member States of the African Union, and Governments of: Austria, Bahamas, El Salvador, Finland, Germany, Rep. of Korea, Slovenia, Spain, St Kitts and Nevis, Switzerland, Uruguay; UN-Water, UNESCO, Aquafed, BRGM, CeReGAS, Deltares, Deltares, EAWAG, EuroGeoSurveys, WREG, FAO, GEF, GEUS, IAEA, IAH, IGRAC, IHE Delft, IWRA, Japan Water Forum (JWF), KIGAM Korea, New Mexico WRRI, ORASECOM, OSS, SADC-GMI, SIWI, The Water Institute, UNDP, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCO Groundwater Youth Network (GWYN), UNESCWA, UN-Habitat, University of Arizona WRRC, WMO, WfWP, and World Bank
11:00 - 12:15	<u>Catalysing the Circular Sanitation Economy to deliver on SDG Target 6.2: Partnering with countries to achieve climate resilience, gender equity and water security through innovative financing in sanitation</u>	The Federal Republic of Nigeria, The United Nations Sanitation and Hygiene Fund, and The World Toilet Organisation (founders of the World Toilet Day)
12:30 - 13:45	<u>Presentation and discussion of the Action on Water Adaptation and Resilience (AWARe) Initiative</u>	The Arab Republic of Egypt, Pan-African Center for Water Climate Adaptation, AMCOW, and Member States of the African Union
12:30 - 13:45	<u>Accelerating progress on safe sanitation and hygiene for all: Countdown to 2030</u>	United Nations Permanent Missions of: Tanzania, Nigeria, Tajikistan, United Kingdom, Namibia, and Finland; including key partners: AMCOW, UNICEF, WHO, BMGF, WaterAid, LIXIL, Unilever, and AMREF



WATER, PEACE, AND SECURITY IN AFRICA

MARCH 22 ----- 11:00 - 12:15



Finland, African Union Commission, Switzerland, Senegal

There was general consensus among the participants of the session, which took place at the beginning of the 2023 UN Water Conference, that water is a tool for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The interconnection between water, peace, and security is particularly relevant in the African Continent where 63 transboundary river basins cover 64% of Africa's land area.¹ These basins contain 93% of Africa's total surface water resources and are home to 77% of the population.² Managing shared water bodies is further complicated by climate change and an increasing demand of a wealthier and growing population, especially in urban areas. In the session, prominent speakers from several African countries provided examples of opportunities, challenges, and models related to the harnessing of water as a conduit for peace, security, and shared prosperity.

The meeting began with a call for preventative action to mitigate water conflict becoming a *"phenomenon of our African continent,"* as stated by H.E. Amb. Bankole Adeoye of the African Union. The path to doing so was presented as three-fold: First, continuing investment in transboundary cooperation. Second, framing the strategic importance of water in economics and regional stability. Third, prioritising the capacity of water management across Africa. These steps will leverage water as a tool for peace and security.

Efforts related to the Niger River Basin, Lake Chad Commission, and the Orange River Basin in Southern Africa were highlighted as examples of successful cooperation. The Lake Chad Commission was highlighted as a joint effort to address the confluence of environmental policy and growing populations. Lake Chad provides invaluable resources to the 50 million people living around it, but its volume has decreased by over 90 percent between 1963 to 2013. The African Union's efforts in addressing related concerns as well as Niger joining the UN Water Convention in early March 2023 highlight the multi-stakeholder investment in finding solutions.

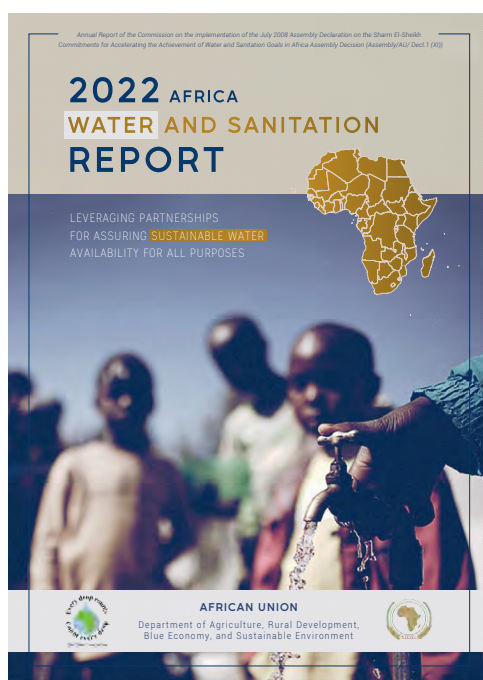
¹ UNEP. (2010). "Africa Water Atlas". Division of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA). United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Nairobi, Kenya.

² Ibid.

³ Mariama Sow. (2017). *Figure of the week: The shrinking Lake Chad*. Brookings.



African key actors of water and sanitation launch the 2022 WASSMO Report at the AMCOW/OSAA Side Event. (from L-R) Oswald Chanda - AfDB Director of Water and Sanitation Development Department, H E Eng Suleiman Adamu – Nigeria Minister of Water Resources, Amb Josefa sacko – AUC Commissioner for ARBE, H E Prof Hani Sewilam – AMCOW President and Egypt Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation, Cristina Duarte – UN Special Adviser on Africa, H E Hon Senzo Mchunu – South Africa Minister of Water and Sanitation, Alcino Nhacume - Representative of Mozambique Minister of Public Works, Housing and Water Resources, AMCOW Executive Secretary Dr Rashid Mbaziira



2022 Africa Water and Sanitation Report: Leveraging Partnerships for Assuring Sustainable Water Availability for all Purposes



Watch the video abstract of the report

LAUNCH OF THE INTERNATIONAL HIGH-LEVEL PANEL REPORT ON WATER INVESTMENTS IN AFRICA

MARCH 22 ----- 12:30 - 13:45



AUC, the Republic of Senegal, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Republic of Namibia, Global Water Partnership Africa, Co-Chairs of the International High-Level Panel on Water Investments for Africa

The International High-Level Panel on Water Investments for Africa released its High-Level Report on the second day of the UN 2023 Water Conference. This body includes representatives from current and former Heads of State as well as other global leaders. H.E. Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko of the African Union began the launch with a reminder of water's centrality for the development of Africa, the realisation of the aspiration of Agenda 2063, and the sustainable development goals. The actionable pathways proposed by the report will mobilise USD\$ 30 billion in investments annually by 2030.

Investment in water infrastructure generates significant returns –USD\$7 for every \$1 invested. It also mitigates the innumerable cost of inaction. *"Over 400 million Africans lack access to clean drinking water,"* said President of the African Ministers Council on Water Prof. Dr Hani Sewilam, *"nearly double that number when it comes to clean sanitation."* Inadequate funding and lacking political will have long protracted the systems change necessary for accelerated sustainable development of Africa.

Increased rates of droughts, cyclones, and floods on the African continent as well as increased debt burdens for several states create a precarious situation for the financing of new water infrastructure. The African Union, national leaders, non-governmental leaders and experts have assisted efforts to close this gap in investment. The High-Level Panel on Water was instituted to address this financing gap in 2018, and now produced a roadmap of actionable items.

Both human and financial capital are essential in ensuring universal access to water for all Africans. The High-Level Panel on Water called upon leaders, global investment personalities, and philanthropies to increase their donations. *"Any investment in water is investment in our future,"* Sewilam said.



ASSURING SUSTAINABLE WATER AVAILABILITY

MARCH 23 ----- 08:00 - 09:15



AMCOW, AUC, OSAA, Egypt, Namibia, Nigeria, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Mozambique, Senegal, Member States of the Africa Union, AfDB, DBSA, RLBOs, ECOWAS, EAC, SADC, IGAD, CEDARE, and AMU.

Assuring safe, resilient, and sustainable access to water for all is essential for Africa's social transformation and economic growth. But these issues were often overlooked by intergovernmental processes and more initiatives by international institutions across the continent are needed to achieve the goals of [the Africa Water Vision 2025](#), UN SDGs, and [African Union Agenda 63](#)⁴. Recognizing that accelerated progress is necessary to reach these goals, stakeholders joined the 'Assuring Sustainable Water Availability Meeting' on the first day of the UN 2023 Water conference to discuss challenges and opportunities.

The story of water in Africa contains a confluence of challenges across the continent. Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser of the UN Secretary-General on Africa Cristina Duarte called for joint efforts between her office and the African Union on issues of energy and food systems transformation: Eight to 85 percent of water resources across Africa are used in farming;⁵ making sufficient water availability pivotal to ensuring food security. At the same time, access to electricity is essential for the implementation of water management resources. Simultaneously many cities depend on hydropower for their electricity. A status quo with increasingly uncertain prospects as extended dry spells are already impacting reservoir levels and the respective hydro-electricity generation.

President of AMCOW Prof. Dr Hani Sewilam echoed these concerns about protecting food and energy security through water management. Sewilam stressed the background of increased incidence of droughts, floods, and environmental degradation that menace progress made and result in tragic loss of life. Sewilam highlighted the 2022 WASSMO report, COP 22 discussions, and fellow African Union member states as resources to assist the pursuit of the goals of Agenda 63. This will require centering water in new discussions and future cooperations.

"*Making water everyone's business*" appeared to be the consensus shared by honourable ministers and other stakeholders. Upon a foundational framework and resource structure provided by national governments, incentivizing structures could foster involvement from private stakeholders and individuals. Minister of Water and Sanitation Mr Edward Senzo Mchunu of South Africa applauded the clear and time-sensitive agenda items for SDG 6. Rather than shifting deadlines participants should harness motivation from the urgency to address oncoming milestones.

⁴ UN Water/Africa. (2000). "The Africa Water Vision for 2025: Equitable and Sustainable Use of Water for Socioeconomic Development." United Nations Water. Presented in The Hague, The Netherlands. ; UNEP. (2015). "Agenda 2063: the Africa we want; first ten-year implementation plan, 2013-2023". United Nations Environment Program.

⁵ UN Water/Africa. (2000). "The Africa Water Vision for 2025: Equitable and Sustainable Use of Water for Socioeconomic Development." United Nations Water. Presented in The Hague, The Netherlands.

TAKING NEXT STEPS FOR A WATER AND CLIMATE RESILIENT WORLD THROUGH CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS

MARCH 23 ----- 12:30 - 13:45



Panama, China, Dominica, Nigeria, Palestine, Spain, Sudan, Uganda, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), IHE Delft Institute for Water Education, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), UN-Water, AMCOW, UNDP CapNet, SIWI, GWP, ICOMOS-ISC Water, UNESCO Chair Water, Ports and Historic Cities, Waternet, Witteveen+Bos, UNESCO International Centre for Water Security and Sustainable Management (i-WSSM), Water Museums Network (WaMuNet), Green Climate Fund, UNESCO Dundee Centre for Water Law, Policy and Science (CWLPS), UNESCO Centre on Integrated and Multi-Disciplinary Water Resources Management (CIMWRM)

Representatives and supporting parties convened on the second day of the UN 2023 Water Conference to create a roadmap for capacity development in water management in response to climate-change related challenges. The [UN Water Capacity Development Initiative](#) that was launched in 2020 by UN DES and UNESCO in cooperation with 35 UN-Water Members and Partners provided a basis for these discussions.

Demand for water will outstrip supply by 40 percent by 2030.⁶ Director General of International Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands Kitty van der Heijden stressed the cascading effects of this imbalance: especially in food, health, and energy sectors. Financial innovation, rethinking today's water infrastructure, driving institutional change, and promoting private sector participation and systemic adaptation will all be required to address this issue. This includes incorporating the next generation in multigenerational, equitable, and sustainable capacity building efforts.

Valentina Uribe Jaramillo, a Colombian Master student of groundwater studies, stressed the need to connect informed and motivated individuals and countries with the resources necessary to produce change. Representatives from Cap-Net, the Stockholm International Water Institute, the Green Climate Fund, and UNESCO shared lessons and challenges encountered in their work.

Providing the life and dignity as promised in SDG 6 requires ongoing cooperation and urgent action. Member states expressed their commitment to water capacity improvement and their willingness to support UNESCO's mission.

AMCOW Executive Secretary, Dr. Rashid Mbaziira presenting the progress report



⁶ UNEP. (2016). "Half the World to Face Severe Water Stress by 2030 unless Water Use is "Decoupled" from Economic Growth, Says International Resource Panel" Press Release. United Nations Environment Programme.



Enhancing Capacity Development for Improved Reporting on Water and Sanitation in Africa

General need for capacity development:



Inability to have access to complete information for informed decision-making: an average 49% of required information was availed by Member States between 2016 and 2022.



Insufficient information availed by Member States to report on progress under the themes on water resources management; and climate change and disaster risk reduction.



Inter-sector coordination mechanisms inadequately operationalised to ensure access to vital information from water related sectors outside the mandate of water ministries.



Low prioritisation of research, knowledge creation and development to improve water wisdom.



Systemic and institutional challenges that underlie: i) the inadequacy of primary data collection networks; ii) the insufficiency of material and human resources, especially funding; and iii) the capacity constraints to analyse and utilise the information for decision-making.

Proposed Game-Changers:



Improvements in information sharing and operational linkages among institutions mandated to report on the various continental and global commitments.



Operationalise the National Coordination Platforms, drawing inputs from the water and related sectors.



Targeted and incremental interventions that tackle the fundamental issues of the capacity gap, including primary data collection; information generation; knowledge creation; and application of both the information and knowledge.



Mobilising funding commensurate to the task of providing comprehensive decision support and policy advocacy.

LAUNCH OF THE TEAM EUROPE INITIATIVE (TEI) ON TRANSBOUNDARY WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA

MARCH 23 ----- 18:30 - 19:45



Belgium, European Union, Government of Austria, Government of Czech Republic, Government of Denmark, Government of France, Government of Germany, Government of Slovenia, Government of Sweden, and Member States of the Africa Union

The launch of the Team Europe Initiative (TEI) on transboundary water resources management in Africa at the 2023 UN Water Conference was a cumulation of effort following its initial discussion in 2022. TEI was nascent in discussions during the [2022 World Water Forum in Dakar](#) and was developed – in a display of effort and commitment – in almost exactly a year's time. President of the African Ministers Council on Water Prof. Dr Hani Sewilam welcomed the audience. Among them were Excellences, ministers, delegates of the African Union (AU) and UN member states, and representatives of development partners. He called on all to utilise the opportunity of the Conference to discuss necessary actions to drive cooperation on transboundary water management. He made special mention of the Action on Water Adaptation and Resilience (AWARe) led by Egypt, as one of the initiatives aimed at strengthening cooperation on water as a key climate adaptation resource.

TEI's contribution to multinational cooperation is in coordinating action between AU and UN member states. TEI will engage at a continental level with the AU Commission, African Ministers' Council on Water, and African Network of Basin Organizations to promote the water security agenda. At the regional level, the Initiative will support the aims of regional economic communities related to water management.⁷ Accelerated action on transboundary water management will require mobilisation at many levels -- from the countries to regions to continents.

The TEI will work in tandem with other ongoing initiatives. These include those related to the AU Agenda 2063, the Action on Water Adaptation and Resilience, the Green Deal, and the Commitments of the Paris Agreement. These overlapping goals may introduce more comprehensive solutions to transboundary water management.

The Initiative also introduces financial investment in Africa's evolving water infrastructure in the face of climate change. It falls within the EU-Africa Global Gateway Investment Package that – in 2021 – mobilised up to €150 billion in investment to accelerate green transition, digital transition, sustainable economic growth, job creation, health system strengthening, and education and training.

⁷ [EU NEIGHBOURS South. \(2023\). "EU-Africa, Global Gateway investment package." The European Union.](#)



(From L-R) Bérangère Couillard - Minister for Ecological Transition and Territorial Cohesion of France, H E Prof Hani Sewilam – AMCOW President and Egypt Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation, Amb Josefa Sacko - AUC Commissioner for ARBE Zuhail Demir - Flemish Minister for Justice and Enforcement, Environment, Energy and Tourism Belgium, , Dr Rashid Mbaziira – AMCOW Executive Secretary, Arnaud de Vanssay, Water team leader, DG INTPA/European commission



(From L-R) Karin Poulsen, Director for the Department of Green Diplomacy and Climate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Dr Tania Vorwerk - Dep. Director General Global Health, Resilience, Equality of Opportunity BMZ, Lionel Goujon - Head of the Water and Sanitation Division French Development Agency, Didier Cadelli - Intervention Manager Lake Tanganyika Water Management Authority / Belgian Development Agency, H E Eng Suleiman Adamu – Nigeria Minister of Water Resources, Bérangère Couillard - Minister for Ecological Transition and Territorial Cohesion of France, H E Prof Hani Sewilam – AMCOW President and Egypt Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation, Amb Josefa Sacko - AUC Commissioner for ARBE, S E Serigne Mbaye Thiam – Senegal Minister of Water and Sanitation, Zuhail Demir - Flemish Minister for Justice and Enforcement, Environment, Energy and Tourism Belgium, Ambroise Fayolle – Vice President of the European Investment Bank, Marjeta Jager, Deputy Director General Directorate-General for International Partnerships, Luc Jacobs - Special Envoy for Climate and Environment, Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation Belgium, Dr Rashid Mbaziira – AMCOW Executive Secretary, David Lymer - Deputy head of unit / Senior Policy specialist on water and oceans, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Arnaud de Vanssay - Water team leader, DG INTPA/ European commission, Harsen Nyambe – Director of Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment at the Africa Union

GROUNDWATER: AN INVISIBLE CROSS-SECTORAL FUNDAMENTAL FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WATER ACTION AGENDA

MARCH 24 ----- 08:00 - 09:15



Namibia, AMCOW, Member States of the African Union, and Governments of: Austria, Bahamas, El Salvador, Finland, Germany, Rep. of Korea, Slovenia, Spain, St Kitts and Nevis, Switzerland, Uruguay; UN-Water, UNESCO, Aquafed, BRGM, CeReGAS, Deltares, Deltares, EAWAG, EuroGeoSurveys, WREG, FAO, GEF, GEUS, IAEA, IAH, IGRAC, IHE Delft, IWRA, Japan Water Forum (JWF), KIGAM Korea, New Mexico WRRI, ORASECOM, OSS, SADC-GMI, SIWI, The Water Institute, UNDP, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCO Groundwater Youth Network (GWYN), UNESCWA, UN-Habitat, University of Arizona WRRRC, WMO, WfWP, and World Bank

Groundwater, despite being unseen, has a significant and wide-reaching impact on the achievement of SDG goals across various sectors. This groundwater event followed a [UNESCO event in December 2022](#) in Paris. Namibia, Botswana, and South Africa were awarded at this previous summit for their work on the Stampriet Transboundary Aquifer System. Ministers of these three countries joined the groundwater side-event discussion as champions of the cause for cooperation and management of this invaluable resource.

Political will generates cooperation. Minister of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform of Namibia, the Honourable C.H.G. Schlettwein stressed that cooperation is not only a national interest but is the national interest concerning groundwater. Minister of Land Management, Water and Sanitation Services of Botswana, the Honourable M. Kefentse noted that groundwater's lack of respect to national boundaries makes it an important topic in Botswana's foreign policy. Minister of Water and Sanitation of South Africa, the Honourable H. E.S. Mchunu recommended maintaining focus on (1) enhancing awareness of water literacy and groundwater; (2) enhancing capacity and increasing training relating to groundwater; (3) increase in search and innovation relating to groundwater; (4) increasing knowledge sharing between transboundary organisations.

Groundwater becomes visible -- and manageable -- through data. A country must be aware of the state of its groundwater resources in order to manage and protect them. The first panel of the event focused on data and information sharing in a dynamic context. The demands of groundwater users', levels of contamination, and rate of recharge are three essential factors in groundwater policy. Panellists described public sharing of data, artificial intelligence, and machine learning. Other panels advocated for technological innovation and a reevaluation of values to accelerate protection of groundwater resources.

Panellists and Ministers expressed a commitment to water protection and further cooperation. "Now that you've given us an award [for work on the Stampriet Transboundary Aquifer System]," Kefentse said. "We want another one."

AMCOW Bilateral meeting with the UN Special Adviser on Africa (from L-R) Dr Azzika Tanko – AMCOW SPO Governance and Partnerships, Cristina Duarte, UN Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa, Dr Rashid Mbaziira – AMCOW Executive Secretary and Emmanuel Uguru – AMCOW Monitoring Support Officer



AMCOW Bilateral meeting with the UN Special Adviser on Africa. Cristina Duarte, UN Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa and Dr Rashid Mbaziira, AMCOW Executive Secretary



A bilateral meeting of the African Union Commission with a delegation from the Arab Republic of Egypt, led by the AMCOW President. (From central left to right) H E Prof Dr Hani Sewilam, Minister of Water and Irrigation, Arab Republic of Egypt and AMCOW President. Ambassador Josefa Sacko, AUC Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development Blue Economy and Sustainable Development, African Union Commission (ARBE). Others include members of the high-level delegation from the Arab Republic of Egypt.



AMCOW Bilateral meeting with the Pan-African Association of Sanitation Actors (PASA). (from L-R) Eva Muhia, Deputy President of PASA, Ibra Sow President of PASA, Dr Rashid Mbaziira, AMCOW Executive Secretary, Mr Mamadou Ndiour Programme Coordinator of PASA and Ousseynou Diop Programme Coordinator of PASA

CATALYSING THE CIRCULAR SANITATION ECONOMY TO DELIVER ON SDG TARGET 6.2

MARCH 24 ----- 11:00 - 12:15



The Federal Republic of Nigeria, The United Nations Sanitation and Hygiene Fund, and The World Toilet Organisation

The current market failure in sanitation economies presents a significant opportunity for future growth. The World Bank estimates that an annual budget of US \$30 billion is needed to achieve the targets set by SDG 6.⁸ However, the current investment falls short, reaching only one- to two-thirds of this amount. Bridging this funding gap is crucial in accelerating investment and ensuring access to clean water and sanitation, thereby fulfilling the promise of improved health and human dignity.

The need for reimagining financing in the field of sanitation is pressing, and during the final morning of the 2023 UN Water Conference, representatives and stakeholders gathered with a sense of collegiality and excitement. There is a shared recognition of the urgent action required to achieve the UN sanitation goals, and many view this challenge as an opportunity for innovation. In five countries alone, the estimated economic potential of the sanitation economy is valued at 22 billion USD.

A “*radical, transformative*” shift is needed in economies of sanitation. An estimated 1.9 billion people are without access to basic sanitation services, globally.⁹ This lack of access is apparent in practices of open defecation, lack of handwashing facilities, and inability to safely manage menstruation. Basic sanitation is critical to health and its absence creates costs both in human life and dignity. It also impacts nature, tourism and the economy as a whole.

Highlighting the potential benefits of circular sanitation economies is a strategy of “*making it a charismatic agenda*.”¹⁰ Director General for International Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands Ms. Kitty van der Heijden said, “*the buzz here is ‘water is a human right,’ we must start ‘wastewater is a human right.’*” Initiatives such as off-grid toilets, wastewater as a form of carbon sequestration, land-leasing contingent on water standards, and standardisation of infrastructure were raised.

Closing the sanitation access gap goes beyond financing infrastructure alone. It also requires addressing behaviour change and societal norms. Education campaigns and initiatives promoting gender equity are equally important in these endeavours. It is crucial to involve both men and women in ensuring that girls and women are not hindered by insufficient sanitary support, such as in menstruation. This can be achieved by actively involving them in the design and development of sanitation hardware and solutions. By considering the perspectives and needs of all stakeholders, we can work towards creating inclusive and effective sanitation solutions.

⁸ UN DSDG. (2023). “*International High-Level Panel on Water Investments for Africa*.” *United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs*.

⁹ CDC. (2022). “*Global WASH Fast Facts*.” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*.

¹⁰ Quote from Mr. Jack Sim Founder of World Toilet Day

ACCELERATING PROGRESS ON SAFE SANITATION AND HYGIENE FOR ALL: COUNTDOWN TO 2030

MARCH 24 ----- 12:30 - 13:45



United Nations Permanent Missions of: Tanzania, Nigeria, Tajikistan, United Kingdom, Namibia, and Finland; including key partners: AMCOW, UNICEF, WHO, BMGF, WaterAid, LIXIL, Unilever, and AMREF.

Between 2015 and 2020, 107 million people gained access to drinking water at home and 115 million gained access to improved sanitation.¹¹ That said, 2 people lack access to safe drinking water at home and another 3.6 billion lack access to basic sanitation at home.¹²

"Good sanitation and hygiene provide critical barriers to disease," Minister for Overseas Territories, Commonwealth, Energy, Climate and Environment at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, Rt Hon Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park noted. These critical barriers include those to diarrhoea, early childhood mortality, and antimicrobial-resistant disease. Addressing poor sanitation and hygiene as a cause of global disease burdens could enable workforce productivity, children -- notably girls' -- attendance at schools, and mitigation of preventable disease. These enormous gains could be encouraged by relatively inexpensive commitments.

Honourable Ministers from Zimbabwe, Niger, Cambodia, India, Namibia, and Tanzania shared news of the efforts put forth by their respective governments toward improved water sanitation and hygiene. Minister of Lands for the Republic of Zimbabwe Hon Dr. A. J. Masuka noted that framing water infrastructure as an issue central to development -- rather than human rights -- facilitates funding and progress. Communities *"will remain spectators ... not participants, until they have water,"* he said. Investment in sanitation improvements in schools, climate-adaptive solutions, grey water disposal, and holistic development-oriented projects were all mentioned.

National governments and non-governmental bodies committed to accelerated investment in sanitation and hygiene efforts. Stakeholders agreed that finance, governance, and cooperation will be central pillars in this effort.

"The subtext to [the sanitation economy] is to realise the potential of private sector participation in the delivery of water, sanitation, and hygiene services for all as a profitable business," Executive Secretary of AMCOW Dr. Rashid Mbaziira said. *"Of particular urgency is the need to address the sanitation failures associated with the disease burden constraining productivity of the labour force, and degrading the environment."*

¹¹ CDC. (2022). "Global WASH Fast Facts." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

¹² CDC. (2022). "Global WASH Fast Facts." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



KEY OUTCOMES

Interactive Dialogues on Water for Health and Water for Sustainable Development:

1. At the plenary session during the general debate, H.E Nataša Pirc Musar, President of Slovenia, called for selection of a UN Special Envoy for Water, and for regular high-level UN meetings on water for stocktaking and to catalyze action. Luxembourg and many other delegates proposed regular conferences on water at the highest level and further advocated for a UN Special Envoy for Water.

Interactive Dialogue on Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment:

2. During the ensuing discussion, delegates highlighted various policy issues and ideas for how the UN system might address water issues in the future. On the UN's response to WASH, some speakers urged the appointment of a UN Special Envoy for Water. Several suggested an "inter-COP" process on water. Other topics raised included technology transfer, financing, climate-smart agriculture, nature-based solutions, and innovative approaches such as desalinization using renewable energy sources.

Interactive Dialogue on Water for Cooperation:

3. Delegates delivered statements during the plenary and shared national plans, policies, priorities, commitments, and ideas to advance sustainability and fairness with respect to water resources and services. On the United Nation's future role, Finland supported annual gatherings on the sidelines of the High-Level Political Forum, a meeting in 2028 to review progress and appointment of a UN Special Envoy for Water, suggesting that "solving the global water crisis is exactly the sort of purpose the UN was created for." Nigeria also announced its accession to the Water Convention.

4. During the interactive dialogue co-chaired by Serigne Mbaye Thiam, Minister of Water and Sanitation, Senegal, H.E Thiam, referred to the Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition as an important signal of progress. Ms. Olga Algayerova, Executive Secretary, UNECE, called on all UN Member States who have not yet acceded to the Water Convention to do so, applauding Nigeria for its recent accession. She outlined various benefits, including provision of a sound and flexible legal framework to support development and policy integration; capacity building opportunities to mobilize financial resources; and prevention of water-related conflicts.

5. Despite some misgivings, delegates called for creating an intergovernmental structure for water and sanitation, as well as recommendations for a UN Special Envoy for Water, received a lot of support. Some delegates added that it's about time water has its own flagship, drawing comparison with processes on climate change, biodiversity, and disaster risk reduction. Supporters of a Special Envoy for Water said it would give WASH an adequate – and needed – vessel to navigate along with the other big topics in the UN system.

6. Delegates adopted the conference's rules of procedure (A/CONF.240/2023/2), agenda (A/CONF.240/2023/1) and organization of work (A/CONF.240/2023/3/Rev.1). They elected the Republics of Burundi, Egypt, and Ethiopia as Vice-Presidents for Africa.

Summary Reports for: [Interactive Dialogues on 22 March](#); and Interactive [Dialogues on 23 March](#).

VOLUNTARY COMMITMENTS

In the lead-up to the 2023 Conference, governments decided there would be no political declaration. Instead, voluntary commitments would be strongly encouraged from all stakeholders. Together, these commitments – known collectively as the “Water Action Agenda” – represent a major outcome of the conference. Several Member States announced their commitments to the Water Action Agenda, including:

BOTSWANA reported undertaking improvement of water resource infrastructure for sustainable water supply, investment in smart water approaches and technology, promotion of reuse and protection of forests, wetlands, rivers and lakes;

KENYA shared plans to build 100 mega, large and medium dams in the next five years;

SIERRA LEONE outlined plans to build three new dams in the next five years, as well as plans for other projects, including for the protection of water catchment areas;

ALGERIA reported plans to build dams and water sources in rural areas, create wells for agricultural use, and construct water treatment plants;

LIBERIA reported launching several projects for WASH services for their entire population.

MAURITIUS shared multi-prong strategy measures to enable access to water and sanitation, such as afforestation programmes, to increase possibility of rainfall and to strengthen resilience to natural disasters.

DENMARK noted its commitment to provide more than USD 400 million to enhance trans-boundary water management and development in Africa;

Full details of the 712 Commitments <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/action-networks/water>

CONCLUSION

The UN 2023 Water Conference reflected the need to consider water as global common good and radically change how we value water, and thus how we manage it. The conference underscored the importance of adopting an inclusive and equitable water-food-energy nexus approach to achieve sustainable and just development, catalyze ecosystem and water health, and mitigate risk. Innovative finance and public-private partnerships were noted as crucial requirements for successful implementation of water-related goals and targets, and the need for water-related actions to include a human rights-based approach. At the closing plenary, *ex officio* Conference President H.E Evelyn Wever-Croes announced that a Special UN Envoy on Water would be appointed by the UN Secretary-General, and that this meeting will have an inclusive follow-up at the 2023 SDG Summit, the 2024 Summit of the Future, the 2025 World Social Summit, and the Conferences of the Parties of all relevant UN processes.

NOTE OF THANKS

AMCOW expresses their profound gratitude to the Heads of State and Governments, Ministers of the African Union, the African Union Commission, the Regional Economic Communities, and our mandated institutions at all levels and development partners. Your commitment and prioritisation of AMCOW initiatives, and the leadership you provided in the proffering of solutions to the challenges facing Africa's water and sanitation sector are essential to assuring water security and safely managed sanitation for the continent.

We extend our sincere appreciation to Team Europe and the European Commission, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA), the UN Economic Commission for Africa, and the African Development Bank for your invaluable contributions to the success of AMCOW engagements at the UN 2023 Water Conference, the first of its kind since 1977. We look forward to working with you to implement the proposed solutions and recommendations from the Conference.

OUR SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Amb Josefa Sacko - AUC Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment

H E Prof Dr Hani Sewilam - Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation, Arab Republic of Egypt.

Cristina Duarte - UN Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa

H E Carl-Hermann Gustav Schlettwein - Minister of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform, Namibia

Hon Senzo MCHUNU - Minister of Water and Sanitation, South Africa

Hon. Philip Karimu Lansana - Minister of Water Resources, Sierra Leone

Alhaji Mahaman Adamou - Ministère de l'Hydraulique et de l' Assainissement, Niger

S E M. Alberto Fortes Mesquita - Minister of Public Works, Housing and Water Resources, Mozambique

Hon. Kefentse Mzwinila - Minister of Land Management, Water and Sanitation Services, Botswana

H E Eve Bazaiba Masudi - Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Environment, Democratic Republic of Congo

Hon Musa S. Drammeh - Minister of Fisheries, Water Resources and National Assembly Matters, The Gambia

Amb Bobby Whitfield - Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Liberia National Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Commission

H E Eng. Suleiman Adamu - Minister of Water Resources, Nigeria and AMCOW Vice President West Africa

H E Habtamu Itefa - Minister of Water and Energy, Ethiopia

Hon. Cecilia Abena Dapah - Minister of Sanitation and Water Resources, Ghana

S E Serigne Mbaye Thiam - Minister of Water and Sanitation, Senegal

Zuhal Demir - Flemish Minister for Justice and Enforcement, Environment, Energy and Tourism Belgium

Didier Cadelli - Intervention Manager Lake Tanganyika Water Management Authority / Belgian Development Agency

Ambroise Fayolle – Vice President of the European Investment Bank

David Lymer - Deputy head of unit / Senior Policy specialist on water and oceans, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

Osward Chanda - AfDB Director of Water and Sanitation Development Department,

Hon. Abida Sidik Mia - Minister of Water and Sanitation, Malawi

H E Sidi Mohamed Taleb Amar - Minister of Water and Sanitation, Mauritania

Hon Jumaa Hamidu Aweso (MP) - Minister of Water and Irrigation, Tanzania

Dr Beth Dunford - Vice President, Agriculture, Human and Social Development, African Development Bank

Karin Poulsen - Director for the Department of Green Diplomacy and Climate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark,

Lionel Goujon - Head of the Water and Sanitation Division French Development Agency

Marjeta Jager - Deputy Director General Directorate-General for International Partnerships

Arnaud de Vanssay - Water team leader, DG INTPA/European commission

Alcino Nhacume - Representative of Mozambique Minister of Public Works, Housing and Water Resources

Hon. Alice Muthoni Wahome - Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Water, Sanitation and Irrigation, Kenya

Hon Sam Cheptoris - Ministry of Water and Environment, Uganda

Hon Anxious Jongwe Masuku - Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, Climate and Rural Resettlement

Dr Frank Rutabingwa - United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

Dr Tania Vorwerk - Dep. Director General Global Health, Resilience, Equality of Opportunity BMZ

Bérangère Couillard - Minister for Ecological Transition and Territorial Cohesion of France

Luc Jacobs - Special Envoy for Climate and Environment, Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation Belgium

Harsen Nyambe - Director of Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment at the Africa Union

HOST AND PARTNERS

