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AFRICAN UNION

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ASSEMBLY OF THE AFRICAN UNION
Eleventh Ordinary Session
30 June – 1 July 2008
Sharm El-Sheikh, EGYPT

**DECISIONS, DECLARATIONS, TRIBUTE
AND RESOLUTION**

**SHARM EL-SHEIKH COMMITMENTS FOR ACCELERATING THE
ACHIEVEMENT OF WATER AND SANITATION GOALS IN AFRICA**

WE, the Heads of State and Government of the African Union, meeting at the 11th Ordinary Session of our Assembly in Sharm El-Sheikh, Arab Republic of Egypt, from 30 June to 1 July 2008,

Recognizing the importance of water and sanitation for social, economic and environmental development of our countries and Continent;

Reaffirming our commitment to the principles and objectives, stipulated in the Constitutive Act of the African Union aimed at promoting cooperation and integration between our countries in all fields with a view to raising the living standards of our peoples and the wellbeing of future generations;

Recognizing that water is and must remain a key to sustainable development in Africa, and that water supply and sanitation are prerequisites for Africa's human capital development;

Concerned that there is an underutilization and uneven sharing of water resources in Africa, and that remains a growing challenge in the achievement of food and energy securities;

Reaffirming our commitment to the African Water Vision 2025, the Sirte Declaration on Agriculture and Water in Africa; the Declaration on Climate Change in Africa; and the Millennium Development Goal on water supply and sanitation;

Mindful that our Summit is taking place mid way to the 2015 water, sanitation and other MDGs targets and aware that not much progress has been made in Africa compared to the rest of the world to achieve the MDGs target, and that based on current trends, Africa needs to accelerate its efforts;

Welcoming the Declaration by the international community of 2008 as the year of action on the MDGs, and the Declaration by the United Nations of 2008 as the "International Year of Sanitation" which, for Africa, provides an opportunity for accelerating its regional action plans and implementation strategies by adopting concrete decisions at our Heads of State and Government Summit;

Aware of the need to make progress on the challenges of water and sanitation infrastructure financing, water conservation and equitable distribution, closing the sanitation gap, breaking the silence on sanitation and hygiene, adapting to climate change, integrated management of national and transboundary surface and ground water, investing in information, knowledge and monitoring and institutional development as well capacity building;

Aware also of the urgent need to develop our water and sanitation infrastructure and institutions in order to provide sufficient and sustainable quantity and quality for all types of services and provide acceptable level of protection from risks of water related disasters and impact of climate change as key for the transformation and socio-economic development, and for public health in Africa;

Recognizing the progress that the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) and other institutions and organizations and their development partners have made in the area of water resource management and in the provision of safe drinking water and adequate sanitation to the urban and rural populations of our countries albeit the inadequacies;

Welcoming the Ministerial Declaration and outcomes of the first Africa Water Week convened by AMCOW and hosted by the African Development Bank (AfDB) in Tunis, Tunisia from 26 to 28 March 2008; and further welcoming the eThekweni Declaration on Sanitation and its accompanying actions adopted in South Africa in February 2008, and the Africa-EU Statement on Sanitation of March 2008;

Acknowledging the work done by AMCOW in mobilizing action towards sustainable and integrated water resource management and in providing policy guidance for coordination of water resources management and for water supply and sanitation initiatives as well as the funding mechanisms put in place for these initiatives;

WE COMMIT OURSELVES TO:

- (a) **Increase** our efforts to implement our past declarations related to water and sanitation.
- (b) **Raise** the profile of sanitation by addressing the gaps in the context of the 2008 eThekweni Ministerial Declaration on sanitation in Africa adopted by AMCOW.
- (c) **Address** issues pertaining to agricultural water use for food security as provided for in the Ministerial Declaration and outcomes of the first African Water Week.

And particularly;

- (d) **Develop and/or update** national water management policies, regulatory frameworks, and programmes, and prepare national strategies and action plans for achieving the MDG targets for water and sanitation over the next seven (7) years;
- (e) **Create** conducive environment to enhance the effective engagement of local authorities and the private sector;
- (f) **Ensure** the equitable and sustainable use, as well as promote integrated management and development, of national and shared water resources in Africa;
- (g) **Build** institutional and human resources capacity at all levels including the decentralized local government level for programme implementation, enhance information and knowledge management as well as strengthen monitoring and evaluation;

- (h) **Put in place** adaptation measures to improve the resilience of our countries to the increasing threat of climate change and variability to our water resources and our capacity to meet the water and sanitation targets;
- (i) **Significantly increase** domestic financial resources allocated for implementing national and regional water and sanitation development activities and **Call upon** Ministers of water and finance to develop appropriate investment plans;
- (j) **Develop** local financial instruments and markets for investments in the water and sanitation sectors;
- (k) **Mobilize** increased donor and other financing for the water and sanitation initiatives including national projects and Rural Water and Sanitation Initiatives, the African Water Facility; Water for African Cities programme and the NEPAD Infrastructure Project Preparation Facility, as committed in the G8 Initiatives on water and sanitation;
- (l) **Promote** effective engagement of African civil society and public participation in water and sanitation activities and programmes;
- (m) **Promote** programming that addresses the role and interests of youth and women, given that the burden of poor water and sanitation falls disproportionately on women and children;
- (n) **Strengthen** AMCOW as a key regional mechanism, and other regional stakeholders, as relevant, for promoting cooperation on water and sanitation;
- (o) **Strengthen** AMCOW's initiative on sustainable management of water resources, to implement its roadmap for the African Groundwater Commission;
- (p) **Strengthen** partnership at all levels in our countries and between Regional Economic Communities as well as with the international development agencies and promote public-private partnerships with the view to fast tracking actions towards meeting the MDG on water and sanitation in our continent;
- (q) **Request** AMCOW to annually report on progress made in the implementation of our commitment on water and sanitation with support from regional partners, and to submit these reports for our consideration;
- (r) **Call on** African Ministers in charge of water and finance in collaboration with the African Development Bank and development partners, to hold a meeting of Ministers of Water and Finance to develop appropriate financing policies;
- (s) **Request** the Regional Economic Communities and the Rivers and Lake Basin Organizations to initiate regional dialogues on climate change and its impacts on the water sector with the aim of designing appropriate adaptation measures;
- (t) **Call upon** the G8 to reaffirm at its next Summit in Japan its commitment to fully implement the G8 initiatives on water in Africa, notably the 2003 Evian Plan on Water, to step up their engagement in the sanitation sector and to enter into a strengthened partnership with the AU Member States, through AMCOW, for achieving the Water and Sanitation MDGs.

Done in Sharm El-Sheikh on 1 July, 2008