



## **Commemorating World Water Day 2019**

### **Message from the AMCOW President**

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**“Water for all” should be our top priority.**

Water is life, and perhaps Africa’s greatest need at this moment.

Indeed, water is linked to every facet of everyday life – including food, energy, production of goods, health, sanitation and hygiene, security, among other human needs and rights.

Africa is the second driest continent on earth with only nine percent of globally available freshwater. About 66 percent of the continent is arid or semi-arid and 300 million of Africans live in water scarce environment, with less than 1,000m<sup>3</sup> of water per capita and per year. In addition, and specifically in Sub-Saharan Africa, the continent suffers from chronically overburdened water systems that are under increasing pressure from fast-growing urbanization and growing economies exacerbated by the effects of climate change. The latter is experienced through changes in the hydrological cycle, such as overall water variability and frequency of extreme weather events such as floods and droughts.

Across the continent, both man-made and nature-induced disruptions or contamination of water supply continue to impact negatively on people's health, economic development, peace and stability. The water crisis in Africa is compounded by weak governance systems, crumbling or non-existent infrastructure, poor management of resources, inadequate long-term investment and paucity of evidence-based data to inform decision-making. Improved water supply and improved water resources management are critical for countries' sustainable economic growth and poverty eradication. This state of affairs points to a crisis and underscores why water must be a top priority on national, regional and continental development agendas.

Africa's target is to ensure water for all by 2030. This is quite ambitious especially when considering that the population of Africa is predicted to reach 1.7 billion by 2030. To achieve the 2030 agenda on water, Africa will need to put water high on its development agenda. This will include effective monitoring and assessment of water resources, build adequate institutional and individual capacity for sustainable water resources management and development, and increase significantly investment in infrastructure development. Africa's economies are vulnerable to water variability. Every year, African countries register losses of human lives, livestock and crops, infrastructure, valued at several billions of dollars. Climate change resilient infrastructure will help reduce risks due to floods and drought, ensure reliable and predictable water supply and spur economic growth. Moreover, Africa's success in meeting the sustainable development goals on water and sanitation will require elimination of inequalities in access to water and sanitation services. African governments and stakeholders must commit to implementing urgent actions towards a more sustainable and resilient path that leaves no one behind.

'Leaving no one behind' means that the focus should be on the majority population who do not have equal access to water, that are often overlooked, or face discrimination, as they try to access and manage the water they need. It also calls for effective pro-poor policies and strategies to ensure that no one is left behind

A new paradigm is needed to address how the water sector is financed. Bridging the finance gap will require substantial increases in public investment and innovative financing approaches for the water sector as well as improving the efficiency of existing financial resources. There is also need to improve the enabling environment to create room for more effective stakeholder involvement and participation including attracting private sector investment. Introducing good water governance systems will provide the political, institutional and administrative rules, practices and processes for taking decisions and implementing them. More and better data are required for national, regional and global monitoring, to enable policymakers to identify disadvantaged groups and to tailor support to their specific needs and priorities. From a technical perspective, innovations and local adaptation of technology and sharing of knowledge can be supported through collaborative partnerships to improve all aspects of water resources and WASH management and service delivery.

While African countries have made some effort to undertake these actions, there is not enough progress to guarantee access to safe water to everyone by 2030. A lot more work needs to be done.

On this occasion to commemorate World Water Day 2019, the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) calls upon Member States to prioritize universal access to safe and affordable drinking water in their national development agendas. Particular focus should be placed on addressing the needs and rights to water for populations currently left behind, including vulnerable and marginalized communities.

AMCOW further calls for greater synergy through better collaboration among the diverse stakeholders in the water sector to harness the potential for sharing, accessing and adapting knowledge so as to generate new solutions.

For Africa to demonstrate its commitment to tackle the water crisis from the highest political levels, AMCOW urges the Africa Union Commission to urgently convene a summit of African Head of States and Governments to focus attention on how to accelerate the continent's progress towards achieving water and water-related goals.

AMCOW further calls on the African Union to designate 2021 as the year for water and sanitation, as resolved in the 2018 Libreville Multi-stakeholders' Declaration on Achieving Water

Security and Safely Managed Sanitation for Africa.