

**Welcome remarks by Hon. Norbert Emmanuel Tony ONDO MBA,**

**AMCOW President**

**Minister for Water, Energy and Mines, Republic of Gabon**

- The Honorable Minister for Water and Sanitation in the Republic of South Africa
- Honorable Ministers from AMCOW member states
- Distinguished delegates from member states, development agencies, civil society and the broader

AfricaSan community

- Distinguished FSM experts and participants
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good day to you all.



I am here today to read the speech of the President of AMCOW, Hon. Norbert Emmanuel Tony Ondo Mba, Minister for Water, Energy and Mines, Republic of Gabon, who also asked me to convey his sincere regrets for not being able to be here with us today.

On behalf of the African Ministers' Council on Water and the AfricaSan International Task Force, it is a great honor and pleasure to welcome you all to the joint 5th AfricaSan Conference on Sanitation and Hygiene and the Fifth Faecal Sludge Management Conference here in Cape Town, South Africa.

I wish to recognize the distinguished Ministers and deputy Ministers from AMCOW member states present here today: They are from the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia; the Republic of Ghana; the Kingdom of Lesotho; the Republic of Madagascar, the Republic of Namibia and the Republic of Somalia.

***Ladies and gentlemen,***

This Fifth AfricaSan Conference is a key milestone for a long journey that African countries embarked on almost twenty years ago to prioritize sanitation and hygiene in global and national development agendas.

Indeed, the AfricaSan process can be traced to 2002 when the first AfricaSan Conference was held here in South Africa.

Its biggest achievement was to successfully lobby the global development community, through the UN, to adopt a specific development target for sanitation, which was captured in the

Millenium Development Goals.

Since then, the AfricaSan process has developed into a continent-wide platform to generate political momentum for sanitation and hygiene.

It also serves as a pan-African forum for thought-leaders and other diverse actors in the sanitation space to showcase best practices, exchange knowledge and support problem solving.

***Ladies and gentlemen,***

I am proud to say that our very own AfricaSan movement is a trend-setter and has inspired the birth of other regional sanitation conferences in Asia, East Asia and Pacific, and Latin America.

Here in Africa, the AfricaSan process was the driver behind the eThekweni Declaration and AfricaSan Plan of Action on sanitation and hygiene that was adopted by African Ministers at the 2<sup>nd</sup> AfricaSan Conference in 2008.

It also developed the agenda for the African Union Summit on Water and Sanitation held in Sharm el Sheikh the same year.

In 2011, the 3rd AfricaSan conference in Kigali gave impetus to the launch of the UN five-year Drive for Sustainable Sanitation in Africa.

And in 2015, the 4<sup>th</sup> AfricaSan Conference, in Dakar concluded with the Ngor Declaration on

Sanitation and Hygiene, in which African countries and partners committed to accelerate access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all, and end open defecation in Africa by 2030.

As we meet in this beautiful clean city of Cape Town, in the 5<sup>th</sup> Africasan conference, I wish to remind you that 60 percent of Africans have no access to basic sanitation.

I also wish to remind this congregation that while open defecation is steadily declining in other world regions, it is rising in Africa, increasing from 204 million people practicing it in 2000 to more than 250 million people today, mostly in rural areas.

Indeed UNICEF and the WHO have referred to poor sanitation and open defecation as Africa's "greatest nightmare" — that kills more children every year than AIDS, malaria and measles combined.

Poor sanitation has also contributed to the spread of bacterial diseases such as cholera, diarrhoea and polio infections.

***Ladies and gentlemen,***

The theme for this 5th AfricaSan conference is: "Transforming Sanitation in Africa: Accelerating progress towards the Ngor Commitments".

This theme builds on the tradition and successes of the previous conference and is aligned to the Sustainable Development Goal number 6.2.

The 5th AfricaSan conference therefore aims to take stock of the status of sanitation and hygiene initiatives in Africa, and also review the progress by countries in implementing the Ngor vision and commitments.

What is different about this conference is that AfricaSan5 is partnering with the 5th International Faecal Sludge Management (FSM) Conference to deliver a uniquely rich blend of political dialogues and knowledge exchanges.

Specifically, the AfricaSan5 conference will feature country and multi-sector dialogues, interactive technical sessions, exhibition fairs, and the AMCOW AfricaSan Awards.

I invite you to participate in the interactive dialogues and technical sessions offered by both AfricaSan5 and FSM5.

I also invite you join us at the AMCOW AfricaSan Awards event ceremony today afternoon during lunch time at the Ballroom, where we will be celebrating the outstanding efforts of individuals and institutions to improve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all in Africa.

At the awards event we will also be honoring the late Piers Cross, who passed on two years ago, but whose dedication and vision continues to inspire the AfricaSan movement.

***Ladies and gentlemen,***

Many of you are aware that consequent to the 4<sup>th</sup> AfricaSan conference, AMCOW was mandated by the Africa Union to support member states to implement their commitments to address challenges facing the sanitation and hygiene sector.

Indeed, AMCOW was accorded official recognition under the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment.

This is an important development to strengthen the link for partners — such as development agencies, civil society and the private sector — to forge closer relationships with governments to improve access to sanitation.

AMCOW has since been working with multiple-stakeholders to track and monitor the progress made by African countries towards achieving the Ngor commitments and SDGs on sanitation and hygiene.

In this regard I am pleased to formally announce the release today of an important knowledge contribution to the 5<sup>th</sup> AfricaSan conference.

The report by AMCOW and partners is titled: *“Is Africa on Track to Achieve the SDGs on Sanitation? A review of progress on the Ngor Declaration on Sanitation and Hygiene”*.

This report provides a baseline to check against countries’ progress towards the Ngor vision and commitments.

More importantly, the report defines a clear message for Africa; that more effort is needed to get countries on track to meet the SDG 6.2 target.

Africa also needs to strengthen the enabling environment to ensure better delivery of sanitation and hygiene services.

While the report indicates some progress in the areas of leadership and coordination, more effort is needed to increase financing for the sector.

There should also be increased focus on eliminating untreated waste, and encouraging its productive reuse, which is an area with immense potential to create job creation and

improvement of livelihoods.

I encourage you to get a copy of the report, which is now freely available for circulation during the conference and also online.

***Ladies and gentlemen,***

The conference format of AfricaSan5 is designed to focus on consolidating multi-stakeholder inputs through country and partner dialogues, as well as technical sessions.

A key output from AfricaSan5 will be a Multi-Stakeholder Declaration, which will feed into a ministerial dialogue on sanitation and hygiene planned for later this year.

It is my hope that this conference will deliver a strong and declarative statement from stakeholders in sanitation and hygiene to increase investment, and implement effective interventions, policies, programs and partnerships in the sanitation and hygiene sector.

On the policy and decision making side, AMCOW is working towards establishing a multi-sectoral platform that will include the water and sanitation sector ministers and their counterparts in charge of finance.

It is my expectation that this conference will join us to call upon the African Union to organise another Summit of Heads of States and Governments on water and sanitation.

These high level forums will reenergize member states to recommit themselves towards accelerating progress towards achieving SDG 6 and other related SDGs.

***Ladies and gentlemen,***

As I conclude, I wish to take this opportunity to thank the Government of the Republic of South Africa for her hospitality and support, and the development partners, the wider AfricaSan fraternity, as well as all in-country teams and partners for their goodwill, financial, technical and knowledge support to ensure the success of the AfricaSan 5 process.

I trust that your participation at this conference will be both stimulating and rewarding.

Thank you.