

AFRICA WATER VISION 2063 AND POLICY

**A water secure and resilient Africa
with safe sanitation for all**



**Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation
Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063**



AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK
BANQUE AFRICAINE DE DEVELOPPEMENT
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DE DEVELOPPEMENT



Mobilising Resources for Water in Africa



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AFRICA WATER VISION 2063 AND POLICY

A water secure and resilient Africa with safe sanitation for all

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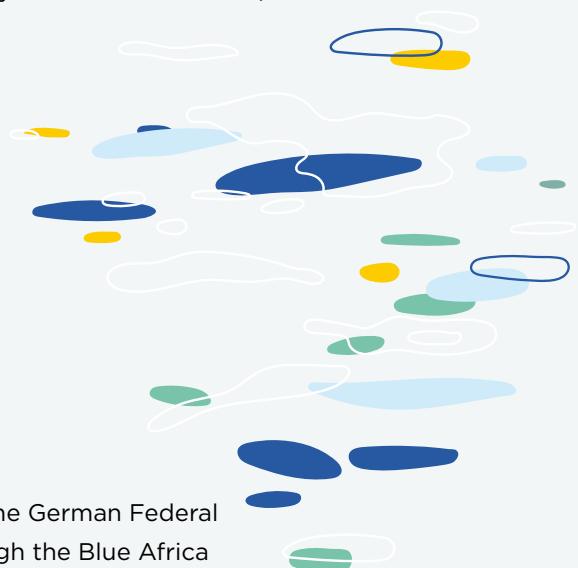
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AFRICA WATER VISION 2063 AND POLICY

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**Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe
Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063**





FOREWORD

Water is Africa's most vital strategic resource. It sustains lives, powers economies and binds our nations together. Yet, climate change, population growth and infrastructure gaps threaten our shared future. The Africa Water Vision 2063 and Policy confronts these challenges head-on.

This Vision and Policy – of a water-secure and resilient Africa with safe sanitation for all – is not merely aspirational. It is a blueprint for action within the context of assuring water security in pursuit of the goals of Agenda 2063. By prioritising universal access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene services, climate-resilient resource management and transboundary cooperation, we strengthen the foundation for the Africa We Want: prosperous, integrated and peaceful.

Agenda 2063 demands nothing less. Sustainable availability of water for all purposes and safe sanitation systems underpin labour productivity, food and

energy security, industrialisation, climate resilience, ecological balance and social equity. Without it, our collective ambitions for growth and stability will remain unrealised.

We call on every African leader, nation, community and partner to embrace this Vision and Policy. Let us invest boldly, govern inclusively, innovate relentlessly and act collectively. Together, we will transform this fundamental resource – water – into an engine of inclusive growth and sustainable development, and a catalyst for continental unity and prosperity.



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on Water, 2025 – 2027



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Host of the third African Implementation
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(PANAFCON-3)



**The time to act; to expand
economic opportunities;
and to create jobs is now.**



KEY MESSAGES: A CALL TO ACTION

The Africa Water Vision 2063 and Policy positions water as a catalyst for achieving Agenda 2063's goals: from poverty eradication, food security and industrialisation to climate resilience and regional integration. The impacts of climate change and climate variability are upon us now. With 90% of surface water crossing borders and 40% of Africa's population dependent on shared aquifers, cooperation is no longer optional – it is existential.



**The Africa Water Vision 2063 and Policy shall
be our compass, our common voice, and our
commitment to future generations.**

This Vision and Policy embrace paradigm shifts, valuing water as a strategic asset; deploying digital innovation; empowering women and youth; and embracing circularity.

The cost of inaction will be catastrophic: drought-induced GDP losses, forced migration and displacements – not to mention the resulting conflict, instability and ecosystem collapse. But with decisive steps, we can assure the requisite sustainable water availability and safe sanitation systems to achieve our aspirations for economic growth and social transformation. This call to action distils its urgency into seven imperatives:

1. **Water is life; sanitation is dignity.** Accelerate universal access to sustainably and safely managed water, sanitation and hygiene services. This is non-negotiable for health, social inclusion and human development
2. **Unlock water's economic power.** Integrate water productivity into national economic planning. Position water as a strategic asset for industrialisation, agriculture and energy, and an indispensable enabler of primary national development objectives. Raise water's profile within core economic planning to:
 - a. foster cooperation
 - b. mobilise public-private investments in the sector
 - c. de-risk water infrastructure
 - d. unlock climate-resilient financing
3. **Make water a continental security priority.** Integrate water into the African Peace and Security Architecture to prevent conflict and foster peace
4. **Drive a sanitation economy revolution.** Shift from waste disposal to resource recovery. Unlock the circular sanitation economy through innovation and regulation
5. **Cooperate or perish.** Strengthen transboundary governance. Shared basins must become engines of regional integration, peace and shared prosperity

6. **Innovate for resilience.** Invest in circular economies, digital water intelligence and nature-based solutions. Bridge the gap between data and action
7. **Leave no one behind.** Empower women, youth and marginalised communities as stewards of water security. Their inclusion is imperative



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

3R	Reduce, Reuse, Recycle	NbS	Nature-based Solutions
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area	NCWR	Non-Conventional Water Resources
AfDB	African Development Bank	PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services
AI	Artificial Intelligence	PIDA-PAP	Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa Priority Action Plan
AMCOW	African Ministers' Council on Water	PPP	Public-Private Partnership
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture	R&D	Research and Development
ARBE	Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment	RECs	Regional Economic Communities
AU	African Union	SADC	Southern African Development Community
AUC	African Union Commission	SBEZs	Special Blue Economic Zones
AWF	Africa Water Facility	SEZs	Special Economic Zones
BOs	Basin Organisations	SIDS	Small Island Developing States
CBNRM	Community-Based Natural Resource Management	STC-ARBWE	AU Specialised Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, Water and Environment
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations	STI	Science, Technology and Innovation
EbA	Ecosystem-based Adaptation	TBAs	Transboundary Aquifers
EPR	Extended Producer Responsibility	WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	WASSMO	Africa Water and Sanitation Sector Monitoring and Reporting System
HLPW	UN High-Level Panel on Water	WEFE	Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem Nexus
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology		
IoT	Internet of Things		
MAR	Managed Aquifer Recharge		



THE AFRICA WATER VISION 2063 AND POLICY

‘A water-secure and resilient Africa with safe sanitation for all’

Assuring Sustainable
Water Availability and
Safe Sanitation Systems
to Achieve the Goals of
Agenda 2063

The Africa Water Vision 2063 seeks to deliver on
a set of eight vision statements, as set out below



ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

Water enabling economic growth and inclusive social transformation.

Vision Statement 1

Universal access to safely
managed water, sanitation
and hygiene services

Vision Statement 2

Sustainable water availability
for transformed economies and
growing, prosperous populations
facing greater climate uncertainty

Vision Statement 3

A thriving blue economy sustainably
leverages Africa’s marine resources
to drive prosperity, climate resilience,
ecosystem protection and well-being



DIPLOMACY, PEACE AND SECURITY

Water catalysing regional cooperation and integration.

Vision Statement 4

Water governance systems, institutions and
transformative leadership grounded in international
water law and the principles of subsidiarity,
accountability and transparency

Vision Statement 5

Water basins recognise as shared natural assets for
enhancing regional integration, peace, social inclusion
and political stability



SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

Water for environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient economies and communities.

Vision Statement 6

People, economies, and ecosystems are resilient and adequately protected
from risks of natural and man-made water-related disasters



INNOVATION, CAPACITY AND INFORMATION

Vision Statement 7

Human capital development, technological
empowerment and adaptive learning meet
the requirements for effective management
of Africa’s natural resources base.

Vision Statement 8

Investment into legitimised and integrated water information
systems supporting science-based decision making for
climate resilience and raising the profile of water management
and sanitation in national systems for economic planning,
investment and financial allocation.



INTRODUCTION



Africa's shared vision for inclusive prosperity and improved livelihoods

Africa's aspirations for economic growth, social transformation, regional integration, trade, peace and security are dependent on assuring sustainable water availability for all purposes. The political agenda of the Member States of the African Union is currently dominated by the urgent need to industrialise as a first step to alleviating persistent poverty.

The ambition is to:

1. build robust, competitive and climate resilient economies
2. accelerate employment and labour productivity growth; and, as a result
3. deliver inclusive socio-economic development and livelihoods improvement.

Achievement of this ambition is premised on planning, developing, utilising and managing Africa's natural resources base to actualise the African Union's Vision of:

“an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena”.

The African Union Agenda 2063 of “The Africa We Want” provides the framework and roadmap to achieve the African Union Vision by 2063 through assuring self-reliance, regional integration, industrialisation and enhanced partnerships.

The political consensus is that facilitating investments in clean renewable energy, climate-smart agriculture and sustainable water resources management, among others, underlie strategic approaches to achieve commitments to:

1. end hunger in Africa
2. alleviate poverty
3. boost intra-African trade
4. enhance resilience of livelihoods and production systems to climate variability and other related risks
5. address both the environmental factors and the general lack of economic opportunities, and poor service delivery at the local level, which lead to community displacement and migration within Africa and across the Mediterranean.

Hence the focus of the theme of the African Union for 2026 on **“Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063”**.

Africa's water resources are under growing pressure from population growth, rapid urbanisation and economic development.

The continent's population of 1.5 billion in 2024 is projected to reach 2.5 billion by 2050 and 3.2 billion by 2070. At the very minimum, food production would need to almost double to feed the growing population. This means the projected water withdrawal for agricultural production will need to increase from 160-180km³/year in 2020 to 400-450km³/year by 2070.

Our aspirations for modern economies and social progress as espoused by the AU Agenda 2063 will require a tenfold increase in water just for energy production. Water requirements for energy production could potentially rise from less than 12-15km³/year to 60-70km³/year or more.

Both rapid urbanisation and industrialisation will increase water demand. The current trajectory is that the pace of population growth and urbanisation exceeds the rate of expansion of sanitation and hygiene services provision. A continuation of this trend poses the risk of increased environmental degradation and pollution of water bodies due to urbanisation and industrialisation.

The impacts of climate change are expected to magnify these stresses, altering rainfall patterns and water availability; increasing the frequency and severity of floods, droughts and other water-related disasters; and forcing a rethink of both supply and demand management.

The implications for Africa's water security are profound and so are the risks to development, peace and stability.

Similarly, the importance of mobilising adequate sector capacity cannot be overemphasised, in terms of management arrangements, administrative measures, economic incentives, budgetary resources and instruments to adjust to water scarcity and prepare for the adverse impacts of climate change.



Additionally, the challenges to the attainment of sustainable development by Africa's Small Island Developing States (SIDS). SIDS face high risks due to their exposure to both environmental disasters and global environmental issues. Many SIDS are faced with rising sea levels and coastal erosion, which threaten their territorial integrity and, in some cases, their very existence. In addition, they are faced with the challenge of energy insecurity caused by dependence on costly fossil fuels. Climate change is a risk multiplier: exacerbating existing security and development challenges. Rising sea levels, dying coral reefs and the increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters exacerbate the conditions leading to community displacement, migration and fragility.

Indeed, in general, migration within Africa and across the Mediterranean to southern Europe has reached crisis levels. This is partly driven by political instability in some African regions and fuelled by a general lack of economic opportunities and poor service delivery at the local level. Furthermore, migration threatens to increase tensions over resources and affect domestic and regional stability.

Key to tackling these challenges is strengthening water governance systems and management structures at all levels.

The unifying factor for all the challenges and opportunities in the foregoing are access, utilisation and management of Africa's water and related resources.

Governments, societies and the private sector need to take deliberate action to change the way we use and manage water to achieve the African Union Vision of: **"An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena"**.

In order to achieve rapid, sustained growth in a climate change context:

1. Member States must urgently put in place coordinated water infrastructure and institutional measures to strengthen resilience to the shocks caused by climate risks
2. Vulnerable people, especially women and youth, need social, environmental and development systems that are resilient to climate change
3. Resilient systems will support and sustain Africa's growth leading to improved livelihoods and sustainable growth. This is particularly vital for SIDS, where building resilience is integral to deriving the full benefits from often limited resources.

Advancing gender equality and empowering women and girls are critical for effectively reducing poverty; sustaining growth; and building a more inclusive, peaceful and prosperous Africa. This directly applies to the pursuit of the goals of Agenda 2063 through creating jobs, promoting industrialisation and unlocking climate-resilient development. Purposefully inclusive approaches with regard to roles and responsibilities in managing water and related resources are essential to Africa achieving its full development potential.

The time to act, expand economic opportunities, create jobs and build a climate-resilient future is now. Water and sanitation are strategic levers for transformation.



2. THE AFRICA WATER VISION 2063 AND POLICY

Our vision is a water-secure and resilient Africa with safe sanitation for all.

It is thus our commitment to develop “the capacity to safeguard sustainable access to adequate quantities of acceptable quality water for sustaining livelihoods, human well-being, and socio-economic development, for ensuring protection against water-borne pollution and water-related disasters, and for preserving ecosystems in a climate of peace and political stability” (UN Water, 2013).

2.1 Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063

The Africa Water Vision 2063 seeks to deliver on a set of eight vision statements each with its own set of policy goals. Achieving these policy goals will release Africa’s development potential and sustain economic growth and social transformation as agreed in Agenda 2063. The vision statements and policy goals are premised on lessons from efforts to actualise – by

2063 – the vision of an Africa where there is equitable and sustainable utilisation of our water resources for socio-economic development. In particular, there is a need to inject new approaches into strategies to attract commensurate financial resources to the sector. Traditional approaches have proven insufficient in the face of growing demand and complexity.

A paradigm shift is required to highlight the economic contribution of water to all productive sectors, and the contribution to livelihoods improvement, regional trade and integration, peace and security. The principles of valuing water hold promise for delivering on this commitment. And mobilising buy-in at the highest level of political leadership is recognised as a necessary condition to translate that promise into reality.

At the same time, due cognisance is taken of the fact that efficient water data management at all levels is a political issue. Information is power. Therefore, an enabling environment to share data freely to build trust

is a prerequisite to realise efficient water information management. Hence, the emphasis placed on building strong and capable intermediary institutions to strengthen information management systems.

Ultimately, the vision and policy are a call to action to achieve the goals set for Aspiration 1¹ of AU Agenda 2063 through assuring water security and safely managed sanitation and hygiene service delivery, among others. Table 1 shows the critical role of water in achieving the goals of the seven Aspirations of Agenda 2063.

¹ A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development

Table 1: Goals and priority areas of the Aspirations of Agenda 2063

Goal	Priority Areas
Aspiration 1: A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development.	
1. A high standard of living, quality of life and well-being for all citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incomes, jobs and decent work • Poverty, inequality and hunger • Social security and protection, including for persons with disabilities • Modern and liveable habitats and basic quality services
2. Well-educated citizens and skills revolution underpinned by science, technology and innovation	Education and STI skills driven revolution
3. Healthy and well-nourished citizens	Health and nutrition
4. Transformed economies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable and inclusive economic growth • Science-, technology- and innovation-driven manufacturing/ industrialisation and value addition • Economic diversification and resilience • Hospitality/tourism
5. Modern agriculture for increased productivity and production	Agricultural productivity and production
6. Blue/ ocean economy for accelerated economic growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marine resources and energy • Ports operations and marine transport
7. Environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient economies and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable natural resource management and biodiversity conservation • Sustainable consumption and production patterns • Water security • Climate resilience and natural disasters preparedness and prevention • Renewable energy

Goal	Priority Areas
Aspiration 2: An integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance	
8. United Africa (federal or confederate)	Framework and institutions for a united Africa
9. Continental financial and monetary institutions are established and functional	Financial and monetary institutions
10. World class infrastructure criss-crosses Africa	Communications and infrastructure connectivity
Aspiration 3: An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law.	
11. Democratic values, practices, universal principles of human rights, justice and the rule of law entrenched	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democracy and good governance • Human rights, justice and the rule of law
12. Capable institutions and transformative leadership in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutions and leadership • Participatory development and local governance
Aspiration 4: A peaceful and secure Africa.	
13. Peace security and stability is preserved	Maintenance and preservation of peace and security
14. A stable and peaceful Africa	Institutional structure for AU instruments on peace and security
15. A fully functional and operational APSA	Fully operational and functional APSA pillars
Aspiration 5: An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics.	
16. African cultural renaissance is pre- eminent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values and ideals of Pan-Africanism • Cultural values and African Renaissance • Cultural heritage, creative arts and businesses
Aspiration 6: An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children.	
17. Full gender equality in all spheres of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women and girls' empowerment • Violence and discrimination against women and girls
18. Engaged and empowered youth and children	Youth empowerment and children
Aspiration 7: Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner.	
19. Africa as a major partner in global affairs and peaceful co-existence	Africa's place in global affairs. Partnership
20. Africa takes full responsibility for financing her development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • African capital market • Fiscal system and public sector revenues • Development assistance

Source: (AUC, 2014a)



THE EIGHT VISION STATEMENTS

The eight Vision Statements collectively represent the transformative levers that will unlock Africa's water-secure future. Together, they define the continent's long-term aspirations and the policy actions needed to achieve them.

VISION STATEMENT 1

There is universal access to safely managed water, sanitation and hygiene services including in emergency situations

Access to water, sanitation and hygiene services plays an important role in the pursuit of Africa's development aspirations, given their direct bearing on all basic social and economic indicators. Providing adequate water, sanitation and hygiene services for all will reduce the overall disease burden and promote dignity, inclusion and equity. Hence, this will establish an important foundation for attaining and sustaining Africa's development goals.

Policy Goals

Only about half of Africa's population has access to safe water, and just 45% of the population has basic sanitation and hygiene services. Moreover, the rate of growth in service provision is outstripped by rapid population growth and urbanisation and exacerbated by the impacts of climate change.

Political buy-in; private-sector engagement; good governance; deliberate investment in innovation, human capital development and monitoring systems; and application of circular economy approaches are imperative to realising the vision.

The policy goals are to:

1. Ensure reliable availability of water of a safe quality for all household needs;
2. Provide inclusive, sustainable and resilient delivery systems for safely managed sanitation and hygiene services delivery; and,
3. Reduce the health and environmental risks associated with waste and pollution.

VISION STATEMENT 2

There is sustainable water availability for transformed economies and growing, prosperous populations facing greater climate uncertainty

Water underpins all sectors of the economy. The direct use of water in the extraction and production sectors results in demand for services such as finance, insurance, real estate, public administration, information, communication and technology (ICT), transportation and trade. Economic activity in the primary and services sectors creates jobs, labour productivity, prosperity, improved well-being, peace

and security. It, therefore, follows that effectiveness of both water management and water, sanitation and hygiene services provision should benefit economic growth and social transformation.

In essence, success in assuring water security is a key influencing factor on the performance of other economic sectors.

Policy Goals

The negative impacts of climate change and increasing climate variability have major implications for Africa's growth ambitions. Projections of a general increase in average temperatures for Africa are predicted to result in increased rainfall variability and incidences of extreme weather conditions. This presents a far greater challenge than water scarcity alone in that both extremes – too little water and too much – must be managed under uncertain conditions.

While there may be uncertainties over the exact nature of the impacts of climate variability and climate change, the general consensus is that they will have

an impact on the hydrological cycle. This will change water resources distribution and accessibility. Risks and uncertainties related to economic productivity and political stability are increasing, along with instances of drought, flooding and other water-related disasters.

Water is a primary medium through which climate change will have an impact on development. Water resources management should, therefore, be the linchpin for adaptation and mitigation to climate change in Africa. Measures and mechanisms are required to strengthen water security and ensure reliability of supplies.

The policy goals are to:

1. Manage water demand and quality, and improve efficiency in the production, supply and utilisation of water in all sectors
2. Increase the productivity of water use in all sectors
3. Enhance water-related disaster risk management capabilities through both natural storage and agreed water infrastructure solutions
4. Anticipate and respond to increases in water demand:
 - a. To produce more food
 - b. For energy production to support modernisation of economies and social progress
 - c. Due to a rapidly growing population, increased urbanisation and sanitation deficiencies

VISION STATEMENT 3

A thriving blue economy sustainably leverages Africa's aquatic resources to drive prosperity, climate resilience, ecosystem protection and well-being

Africa's coastal, marine and inland aquatic ecosystems offer immense and largely untapped potential to:

1. Drive inclusive growth
2. Unlock regional value chains
3. Generate employment
4. Enhance food and energy security
5. Build climate resilience

Policy Goals

To realise this potential, Africa must balance economic utilisation with ecosystem preservation and social equity. This includes investing in research, innovation, infrastructure and governance systems that ensure the long-term health of marine environments and the communities that depend on them.

The policy goals are to:

1. Develop and manage blue economy eco-system services and sectors sustainably for inclusive societal progress in a diverse Africa
2. Invest in research, innovation, infrastructure and facilities to support ocean-related activities
3. Develop infrastructure and operationalise institutional measures to build the resilience of Africa's Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to the shocks caused by climate risks
4. Manage marine fisheries and prevent illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, which undermine economies and contribute to insecurity, particularly in SIDS
5. Prevent and reduce pollution of marine environments, including through plastic waste and industrial discharge



VISION STATEMENT 4

Good water governance systems, management institutions and transformative leadership are in place and grounded in international water law and the principles of subsidiarity, accountability and transparency

Lasting solutions to Africa's efforts to eradicate poverty and eliminate hunger are those that will tackle the governance and institutional capacity constraints that underlie water insecurity. Of particular importance is the need to attract investments to the water sector that are commensurate with its vitality to Africa's development ambitions. This includes improving

the investment outlook for water infrastructure development, as well as improving water governance and management capacities at all levels. In addition, strong water leadership must build trust and ensure water services reach all, especially women, youth and marginalised groups. The urgency to mobilise adequate sector capacity cannot, therefore, be overemphasised.

Policy Goals

Improvements in management arrangements, administrative measures, economic incentives, budgetary resources and instruments are required to adjust to water scarcity and prepare for the adverse impacts of climate change. The policy goals are to

strengthen governance systems to reduce water insecurity and curtail the economic and social factors underlying unemployment, migration, displacement and regional insecurity.

The policy goals are to:

1. Create an environment supportive of trust- and confidence-building by encouraging:
 - a. Accountability and transparency
 - b. Data and information sharing and exchange
 - c. Collaboration in resources mobilisation to finance investments
2. Ensure broad, inclusive and active stakeholder engagement and participation with clear gender objectives, and opportunities for public-private sector engagement
3. Mobilise political commitment and informing related decision-making processes
4. Support the standardisation of processes to generate and apply knowledge to improve effectiveness of resource management arrangements

**Strengthening
governance systems can
reduce water insecurity.**



VISION STATEMENT 5

Water basins are recognised as shared natural assets that drive peace, trade, regional integration, social inclusion and political stability

Water basins are the unit of management of water and related resources. They are vital to delivering improvements in water functions² at all levels and, over time, meeting increasing demands on the resource. While impending water scarcity and the double threat of climate change and climate variability can support cooperation, purposefully agreed water governance arrangements are necessary to assure:

1. Equitable access to water and related services by all social and economic groups, and realisation of the benefits thereof for society
2. Efficiency of water use for economic growth and poverty reduction
3. Ecosystem functions and services
4. Equal rights and opportunities for stakeholders to take part in decision-making processes

² Comprising Water Resources Management (WRM); Water Supply and Sanitation (WSS); and water related disaster risk reduction (DRR).

Policy Goals

To maintain economic and social prosperity, it is imperative that water basins are protected, managed and developed in a manner that anchors their integrity and ability to sustain water availability. Ensuring intergenerational security will require trade-offs between different water uses with ecosystems protections.

The policy goals are to:

1. Pursue investment-led transboundary management and governance of water and environmental resources
2. Ensure equitable access to benefits of shared water resources, fostering regional integration and peace, and driving shared prosperity and ecological health across all riparian states
3. Mainstream source water protection for maintaining water quality and quantity
4. Address pollution, contamination and other threats to water quality within water bodies
5. Manage water-related risks and hazards such as floods and droughts
6. Operationalise integrated approaches – including the water-energy-food-ecosystem nexus – building on the foundations of integrated water resources management.

VISION STATEMENT 6

People, economies and ecosystems are resilient and adequately protected from water-related disaster risks

The environment and natural resources, particularly freshwater, are critical to the productivity of such sectors as agriculture, industry and fisheries and, therefore, the release of Africa's development potential. Specifically, key relationships between water, people and ecosystems include:

1. Access to clean water that is essential for healthy human communities. Freshwater availability is a key determining factor in efforts to ensure food and energy security, as well as for increasing industrial production. The quality of freshwater ecosystems has a direct impact on the well-being and productivity of the population and, therefore, on the sustainability of economic growth and development
2. Land that constitutes the most important factor of production and survival for the people of Africa. About 70% of Africa's labour force is involved in agriculture, which in turn contributes to over 25% of GDP, and a substantially higher percentage in some countries
3. Forests, woodlands and wetlands that are valued for the services they provide. They are important catchments for Africa's freshwater resource systems. They regulate climatic conditions and sustain ecosystems and biodiversity
4. Biotic resources that allow Africa to expand its fishing, aquaculture and mariculture sectors and foster the emergence of vibrant pharmaceutical, chemical and cosmetics industries. They offer new industrialisation pathways linked to nature-based assets
5. The extraction of mineral resources and generation of new energy resources that provide the feedstock to resource-based industrialisation. They place Africa at the centre of global trade in value-added products, no longer a supplier of unprocessed raw materials (UNECA, 2016)

However, Africa's population is growing at a rate that is much higher than the global average, while at the same time rapid urbanisation is observed across the continent. Africa's environmental and natural resources – and particularly freshwater resources –

face severe degradation. This stems primarily from sanitation and hygiene failures, especially inadequate services provision and unsafe practices; raw sewerage discharge; disposal of solid waste into rivers and storm drainage systems; leachate from refuse dumps; and mining and industrial effluent pollution.

Policy Goals

To build resilience and protect people, economies and ecosystems from water-related disaster risks, the following policy goals are proposed.

The policy goals are to:

1. Maintain integrity and function of aquatic ecosystems from source to sea
2. Develop policy and regulatory frameworks that ensure that freshwater, marine and related resource use is appropriately situated to maximise production without undermining or degrading biodiversity. In this regard, the Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) approach adopted by the ocean community serves as a good guide
3. Improve and change production practices to reduce effluent pollution from water and biodiversity-impacting sectors, particularly agriculture, forestry, fisheries, tourism and natural resources extraction
4. Ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits from ecosystem services, especially at community and local levels
5. Ensure inclusive investments in information, institutions and natural and built infrastructure that reduce vulnerability and support climate-resilient communities, livelihoods, production systems, economies, and social, environmental and development systems



VISION STATEMENT 7

Human capital development, technological empowerment and adaptive learning meet the requirements for effective management of Africa's natural resources base

The demand for human capacity development in the water sector is defined by the role water plays in Africa's ambitions for socio-economic development as espoused by the African Union Agenda 2063. The express need to invest in human capital is key to continental aspirations to assure self-reliance, regional integration, industrialisation and enhanced partnerships. Investing in developing skilled professionals, researchers, youth and institutions is essential for innovation, resilience and adaptive water governance.

Policy Goals

In light of the above, the human capital development policy goals to meet the requirements for assuring water security as a priority area of Agenda 2063 are as outlined below.

The policy goals are to:

1. Advance locally led research on water and sanitation science and technology directions in Africa, including green technology research
2. Promote science, technology, innovation and skills development for knowledge generation and application to assure water security
3. Apply digital tools and smart systems – including big data and Internet of Things (IoT) solutions – for water efficiency and early warning
4. Develop and implement policy framework and strategies for:
 - a. Investment in science-based decision-making and policy support through data gathering; information and knowledge generation; application; sharing; networking; and brokering
 - b. Green technology research in the water sector
 - c. Blue economy/ocean economy for accelerated economic growth
 - d. Financing innovation, research and youth-led entrepreneurship



VISION STATEMENT 8

There is investment into legitimised and integrated water information systems supporting science-based decision-making for climate resilience and raising the prioritisation of water management and sanitation in national systems for economic planning, investment and financial allocation

There is urgent need to invest in institutional and human capacity development focusing on integrated information systems to support science-based decision-making for climate resilience in the water and sanitation sector.

Impact-oriented decision-making must be data driven and supported by innovation and technological systems that improve efficiency through integration of different functions.

Credible and legitimised water information systems offer opportunities for shared understanding and, therefore, provide the bases for building trust.

Policy Goals

The policy goals are to:

1. Institutionalise the application of the principles of valuing water and the circular economy to make the economic case for:
 - a. Better prioritisation of water resources management and safely managed hygiene and sanitation services provision in domestic economic planning and financial allocation
 - b. Cross-sector financing and investment to assure the viability of investments in water-dependent productive sectors
2. Strengthen information systems for:
 - a. Identifying and accounting for the multiple diverse values of water to different groups and interests in all decisions affecting water
- b. Reconciling values of water in ways that are equitable, transparent and inclusive
- c. Articulating the sanitation economy, waste as a resource and waste-to-value innovations
- d. Sensitisation and public awareness about the intrinsic value of water and its essential role in all aspects of life, as well as the circular sanitation economy
3. Enhance the enabling environment and provide assurances to boost investor confidence, and overcome political and non-commercial risks associated with investments in the water and sanitation sector



3. ACTION FRAMEWORK

We intend to meet basic water, sanitation and hygiene needs; secure food supplies; protect ecosystems; share water resources; manage risks; value water; and govern water wisely through four pillars:

1. **Economy and Society:** utilising Africa's water resources to enable economic growth and inclusive social transformation
2. **Diplomacy, Peace and Security:** tapping into the potential of Africa's shared water resources to catalyse regional cooperation and integration
3. **Sustainability and Resilience:** water for environmentally sustainable and climate resilient economies and communities
4. **Innovation, Capacity and Information:** developing capacity and efficient decision-making support systems for trust at all levels

3.1 Economy and Society: Water enabling economic growth and inclusive social transformation

Water and sanitation play an important role in the pursuit of Africa's development aspirations given their direct bearing on all basic social and economic indicators. Every sector in any economy is influenced by water.

Direct use of water in the extraction and production sectors results in demand for services such as finance, insurance, real estate, public administration, ICT, transportation and trade. Economic activity in the primary and services sectors creates jobs, and enhances

labour productivity, prosperity, well-being, peace and security. Thus, effective water management – alongside the provision of safe water, sanitation and hygiene services – is indispensable to achieving inclusive economic growth and social transformation. Success in assuring water security is a key influencing factor on the performance of the other sectors of the economy.

This pillar directly supports Aspiration 1 of AU Agenda 2063: "A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth

and sustainable development.” The policy responses under this pillar are guided by an approach that positions water as a strategic asset for sustainable continental development. Effective governance and mobilisation are therefore advanced through integrated action on four core dimensions:

1. Overcoming water scarcity
2. The time utility
3. The quantity
4. Appropriate water quality for different water uses

3.1.1 Overcoming water scarcity

Water resources in Africa are not always located where they are most needed, creating a spatial mismatch between availability and demand. Bridging this gap will involve cooperation to develop infrastructure; the mobilisation of financing; and the prioritisation of water on the political agenda to ensure water availability.

Focus will be placed on two key areas: firstly, solutions that demonstrate a viable path to overcoming water scarcity and, secondly, building robust confidence in their investment potential. By proving the effectiveness of these solutions and their financial returns, we can build the political confidence needed to attract capital.

This will be achieved by strengthening institutions, mobilising sustainable finance and creating policy instruments that foster cooperation. In turn, we will pave the way for scaling up more resilient and inclusive water security solutions.

3.1.1.1 Integrate water valuation into core economic priorities and high-impact sectors

It is essential to position water security as an enabler of primary national development objectives. This should provide a compelling rationale for political commitment and, by extension, prioritisation in domestic budgetary allocations and private sector engagement. Raising water’s profile within central planning will ensure that it transitions from a sectoral concern to a recognised foundation for national growth and competitiveness.

A key focus area will be to quantify and communicate how securing reliable water access enables specific, politically compelling outcomes, including:

1. Powering industrial clusters to create jobs
2. Supporting high-value agricultural exports

3. Supporting social progress and ambitions for development
4. Promoting peace, security and quality livelihoods to prevent forced displacement and migration

More importantly, these concrete water dependencies should be explicitly embedded into national development plans. The implementation of this approach should be prioritised through targeted, inclusive infrastructure initiatives that link water sources to areas targeted for development. This approach should deliver immediate socioeconomic benefits such as job creation, productivity gains and economic expansion, which will, in turn, build the political capital necessary for broader scaling.

3.1.1.2 Prioritise IWRM for development interventions

Considering the above, the entry point should be to launch a number of strategically vital, politically feasible strategic IWRM for development hubs. These hubs will apply integrated water resources management principles to connect available water sources with specific areas prioritised for development within a medium-term timeframe. To maximise efficiencies, these IWRM for development projects should combine:

1. Optimised water supply systems that minimise losses
2. Tailored source development, including appropriate treatment for surface water sources; solar-powered pumping for groundwater and particularly deep aquifers; and modular desalination with brine management near coasts
3. Secured water off-take agreements from anchor utilities, industries, farming, mining or other interests

The short-term economic returns from these strategic water-economy integration initiatives, in terms of jobs, productivity boost and contribution to broader economic growth, will:

1. Reduce perceived investment risk
2. Provide the demonstrated success and stakeholder buy-in to scale these solutions to overcome water scarcity.

3.1.1.3 Deploy robust de-risking and blended finance mechanisms

There is an urgent need to directly address the primary barriers to investment, namely:

1. Political risk
2. Revenue uncertainty
3. High upfront capital requirements

Removing these barriers necessitates the development of standardised, Africa-wide de-risking instruments specifically for assuring water security. These should include:

1. Partial credit guarantees from the African Development Bank and related continental and regional financial institutions to cover sovereign risks
2. Results-based financing mechanisms where public funds subsidise payments only upon verified water management and/or water supply, sanitation and hygiene services delivery milestones
3. Pooling projects to achieve scale and diversify risk, thereby enhancing their appeal to institutional investors and pension funds
4. Establishing clear, long-term tariff frameworks that reflect the true value of water services to provide revenue certainty. These frameworks must ensure cost recovery for sustainable operation while offering targeted subsidies for basic human needs and productive smallholders. A critical success factor will be securing water off-take agreements from anchor tenants such as utilities, industries and commercial farms to guarantee revenue streams and de-risk upfront investment.

3.1.1.4 Leverage continental frameworks for political buy-in and legitimacy

Investments to assure a water-secure and resilient Africa with safe sanitation for all should be framed as underpinning achievement of the goals of Agenda 2063, the AfCFTA agreement and aspirations for shared prosperity. Operationalising this commitment involves anchoring related initiatives within established continental programmes, such as the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) Priority Action Programme, which provides a proven framework for action. This is best advanced through structured regional agreements that, guided by applicable principles of international law, provide the necessary clarity and confidence for regional engagement.

Elevating water security to a continental political imperative is necessary to legitimise multipurpose projects and, in turn, provide the basis for committing national resources to finance transboundary water cooperation. The demonstrable short-term returns from such initiatives are essential to reduce perceived investment risk and justify the sustained political commitment required for scaling up solutions across the continent.

3.1.2 The time utility dimension: enhancing the reliability and predictability of Africa's water supplies across seasons and years

Africa's water systems are increasingly subject to high temporal variability, with more frequent droughts, erratic rainfall patterns and more intense flooding. Strategic interventions are required to optimise the temporal availability and reliability of water resources. Focus is placed on mitigating the impacts of variability between wet and dry periods and building long-term resilience through the strategies below.

3.1.2.1 Scale integrated water-storage strategies

There is great opportunity in significantly expanding capacity to capture and store water during high rainfall periods for use during scarcity. A combined approach that leverages built infrastructure and natural solutions offers the most sustainable path. Jointly agreed strategic construction and rehabilitation of multipurpose dams and reservoirs will increase surface storage capacity, mitigate the impacts of droughts and provide flood attenuation benefits.

Concurrently, major investments are required to improve soil moisture retention and restore and protect natural water storage ecosystems, including wetlands and floodplains. Effectively managing these natural systems will enhance their function as buffers, slowly releasing stored water, recharging groundwater and reducing flood peaks. In turn, economic disruption from droughts should be reduced and communities and infrastructure safeguarded from flood damage, thereby underpinning economic stability and growth. Storage should be established as a cross-sectoral public good, supporting agriculture, urban supply, energy and disaster mitigation.

3.1.2.2 Prioritise groundwater as a strategic climate-resilient reserve

Groundwater resources are Africa's most climate-resilient water source. Inherently less vulnerable to short-term climate variability, they must be managed as a cornerstone of Africa's water security and drought resilience strategy. This requires concerted efforts to map aquifer systems across the continent, establish sustainable extraction limits based on recharge rates, and implement managed aquifer recharge (MAR) programmes. Protecting recharge zones from pollution and encroachment is equally critical. Functioning groundwater infrastructure will provide a reliable lifeline during prolonged droughts, particularly in arid and semi-arid regions. Strategic management will transform groundwater into a predictable buffer, directly contributing to rural resilience, social stability, maintaining livelihoods during dry spells, and enabling continuous economic activity.

3.1.2.3 Implement comprehensive flood-drought risk-management systems

Building resilience to hydrological extremes will require moving beyond reactive responses to proactive, integrated risk management. Robust early-warning systems for floods and droughts, leveraging advanced meteorological data and information technology, must be universally accessible to help communities, farmers and businesses prepare and adapt.

Spatial planning policy and regulations must rigorously enforce restrictions on construction in high-risk flood zones and promote water-sensitive urban design incorporating permeable surfaces, green infrastructure and stormwater retention ponds.

Coordinated watershed management programmes targeting derivation of trans-boundary benefits are a necessary response to minimise flood risks and enhance infiltration for groundwater recharge. At basin scale, their value lies in managing flow regimes, enhancing groundwater recharge and reducing downstream flood peaks.

Widespread adoption of water-efficient technologies and practices – such as drip irrigation in agriculture; water reuse and recycling in municipalities and industries; and leak detection and reduction in municipal systems – will reduce overall water demand and extend available supplies during droughts.

3.1.3 The quantity dimension: enhancing sustainable resource development and increasing water supply in response to demands

Enhancing water availability requires a fundamental shift towards integrated resource development and efficiency across all sources. Sustainable augmentation hinges on maximising the efficiency and productivity of conventional sources such as rivers and aquifers while strategically developing non-conventional resources.

A key requirement is coordinated investment in natural and built infrastructure solutions – protecting watersheds, wetlands and recharge zones – to safeguard water yield and quality at the source. Simultaneously, systematic demand management through technological innovation, economic incentives and regulatory measures is essential to optimise the use of every drop extracted, moving beyond supply-side solutions alone.

A multipronged approach is required to both increase supply availability and improve water-use efficiency across sectors.

3.1.3.1 Expand rainwater harvesting

Significant potential exists in vastly expanding rainwater harvesting beyond its current minimal contribution to municipal supplies³. In urban areas, it can simultaneously augment supplies and mitigate stormwater challenges. Policy must mandate and incentivise integrated rainwater harvesting systems in new developments, while supporting retrofits and drawing lessons from past shortfalls against targets.

3.1.3.2 Maximising green water productivity in agriculture

Green water – soil moisture from rainfall – plays a central role in rainfed agriculture, which dominates food production in Africa. Augmenting the productive use of green water in agriculture through improved land management, drought-resistant crops and soil moisture conservation techniques is equally vital. These measures will directly increase available water for food production and ecosystems and, in turn, support rural livelihoods and food security.

³ The contribution of rainwater to total municipal water consumption accounted for only 1.49% in 2013, compared to the target of 10% by 2015.

3.1.3.3 Ensure sustainable development of groundwater resources

Furthermore, sustainable development of groundwater resources is essential, particularly in regions with heavy reliance on groundwater but limited data. This requires urgent investment in comprehensive groundwater mapping, monitoring networks and recharge studies to understand availability and ensure long-term sustainability. In addition, improving knowledge of groundwater resources characteristics and use will prevent resource depletion that risks undermining rural economies and urban water security. Improved knowledge and oversight will reduce vulnerability, especially in regions with limited surface water or seasonal variability.

3.1.3.4 Conjunctive management of surface and groundwater

Optimising the integrated management of surface water and groundwater systems must be institutionalised to build resilience. Conjunctive use strategies, informed by robust data, will allow for balancing withdrawals between rivers, lakes and aquifers. MAR using surplus surface water or safely treated wastewater during wet periods will enhance groundwater availability as a strategic drought buffer. This integrated approach will strengthen water security for both rural communities and growing urban centres and foster stable livelihoods and social protection.

3.1.3.5 Accelerate non-conventional water resources development

Policy interventions to accelerate the development and utilisation of non-conventional water resources (NCWR) will serve to augment supplies. Investing in cost-effective, energy-efficient wastewater treatment for safe reuse in industry, agriculture and urban greening is crucial. Strategic deployment of renewable energy-powered desalination offers solutions for coastal cities and arid regions facing absolute scarcity. Expanding non-conventional water sources will diversify the water portfolio and reduce pressure on freshwater ecosystems, towards enhancing economic activity. A key requirement will be to establish clear regulatory standards and economic models to make these sources viable and mitigate the negative environmental side-effects.

3.1.3.6 Demand management and improving water use efficiency

Assuring sustainable water availability for all purposes will rely greatly on engendering demand management and radically improving water productivity across all sectors. Policy interventions should focus on:

1. Rigorous water audits; enforcing efficiency standards, especially in agriculture; and applying wastage-reducing technologies in irrigation
2. Employing economic instruments that create incentives for water conservation and improvements in water productivity
3. Optimising the operation of water infrastructure, including coordinated reservoir management to minimise evaporation and deploying SMART technologies for real-time monitoring and control of harvesting, storage and conveyance
4. Enforcing reduce, reuse and recycle (3R) principles universally, especially in industry and municipalities to maximise the utility of every drop

The resultant efficiency gains should translate directly into economic benefits and free up water for productive sectors; reduce treatment costs; and enhance the competitiveness of Africa's industries and agriculture.

3.1.4 The quality dimension: safeguarding water security through pollution control, sustainable management and fit-for-use allocation

Assuring sustainable water availability for all purposes requires an equally fundamental shift towards proactive water-quality management and pollution prevention, integrated with the quantity framework (see section 3.1.3).

Sustainable availability hinges on sufficient volume and on water meeting the specific quality requirements for its intended use – from drinking water to industrial processes, agriculture and ecosystem health. It will be necessary to establish and/or consolidate clear protocols, closing the water cycle through reuse, harnessing the value in waste, and intelligently allocating water based on quality. Overcoming the political and practical challenges of enforcement in a transboundary context requires robust, transparent institutions, graduated implementation, economic incentives and leveraging technology for accountability.

3.1.4.1 Establish and enforce continental water quality standards and regulations

A critical foundation is the continent-wide development, adoption and – crucially – enforcement of minimum effluent quality standards and harmonised regulations for wastewater treatment, environmental flows and overall water-quality management. A key first step will be to define science-based, risk-proportionate standards, adaptable to regional basin contexts. Concurrently, national regulatory capacity must be strengthened, including consolidating the establishment and operationalisation of independent environmental management agencies with adequate funding and legal authority in all Member States.

Enforcement must leverage credible monitoring that incorporates independent verification and peer-review mechanisms for sharing and exchanging water quality information, as well as sanctions for non-compliance to overcome free-riding. Regulatory certainty is a prerequisite for attracting commensurate investment to assure sustainable water availability and safeguard public health and aquatic ecosystems.

3.1.4.2 Promoting sustainable wastewater management and reuse

Wastewater should be recognised and managed as a valuable resource, not merely a pollutant. Policy must actively drive the transition from viewing wastewater as a pollutant to valuing it as a resource, closing the water loop. This will necessitate integrated legal, policy and institutional frameworks that mandate wastewater collection and treatment to defined minimum quality standards before discharge or reuse. Standards must be fit for purpose, ensuring safety for water's intended use – for instance, for irrigation or potable water – without imposing unnecessarily high costs that discourage treatment.

Significant investment, supported by blended finance and performance-based subsidies, is required to expand and upgrade treatment infrastructure, particularly in rapidly urbanising areas.

Crucially, water allocation policies must explicitly incorporate water quality. Lower-quality safely treated water should be directed towards suitable uses such as industrial cooling or non-food crop irrigation, while high-quality sources are preserved for drinking and sensitive ecosystems.

Systematic reuse will maximise the utility of every drop extracted; reduce pressure on freshwater sources; mitigate pollution; and enhance overall water security for cities and industries.

3.1.4.3 Promote productive safely managed sanitation within a circular economy

Sanitation systems must evolve beyond mere waste disposal to resource recovery hubs. Policy should incentivise and regulate the safe recovery of value from organic waste and wastewater. This includes instituting mandates and supporting technologies for:

1. Biogas production from sludge and faecal sludge
2. Providing renewable energy for communities and subsidising energy requirements for wastewater treatment plants
3. Promoting safe bio-slurry processing into organic fertilisers for agriculture

Simultaneously, frameworks must enable and strictly regulate the safe use of appropriately reclaimed wastewater in urban and peri-urban agriculture, incorporating robust safety protocols and farmer training.

De-risking investments through guarantees for energy and fertiliser offtake and clear safety protocols is key.

Releasing the full potential of the sanitation economy to benefit business and society in Africa requires a new narrative that transforms sanitation from being only a cost centre. Of particular urgency is the need to close the loop through promoting sanitation as:

1. A source of energy, nutrients and water
2. Having the potential to improve farm productivity, reducing synthetic fertiliser dependence and creating green jobs
3. Enhancing urban food security within a circular economy model

3.1.4.4 Tackling pollution and degradation

The new frontier lies in enabling cooperative action through transparency, shared capacity and peer accountability. It is imperative to strengthen

the mandate and capacity of basin management organisations as the primary vehicles for transboundary water-quality management and dispute resolution.

By systematically implementing the water quality-focused strategies mentioned above, along with quantity measures, Member States can assure the sustainable availability of safe water appropriate for all uses by 2063. This will directly enable economic growth by reducing health costs, enhancing agricultural and industrial productivity, and protecting fisheries and tourism assets.

In addition, it will foster innovation in the water and circular sanitation economy sectors, while driving inclusive social transformation through improved public health, food security and environmental justice.

3.1.5 Operationalising social equity and grassroots agency in water governance

Securing water's economic and social benefits requires the systematic inclusion of women, youth and marginalised communities in decision-making, resource access and enterprise development. Africa's demographic dividend and cultural diversity remain underleveraged because of persistent barriers.

Turning commitments to gender equality and social inclusion into tangible outcomes requires embedding equity into the core of water governance and service delivery systems. Systemic change must redistribute power, access and benefits to women, youth, grassroots organisations and marginalised communities. It must similarly create economic agency and leadership opportunities at community level.

3.1.5.1 Hydro-social contracts for intergenerational equity

Water governance must reflect a contract of trust and responsibility between generations. Reform of national frameworks is thus required to enforce accountability and create direct pathways for economic agency.

Water trusteeship mechanisms by which communities will hold legal rights to protect aquatic ecosystems must be institutionalised. An enabling environment is required for water systems to be recognised as living entities. In addition, it should operationalise guardian structures to enforce measures to align economic growth with intergenerational justice. Youth, women

and marginalised groups should be empowered to play an active part in the shift towards water and related resources being protected global commons. Such measures will strengthen social cohesion, promote shared stewardship and anchor water governance in cultural values, resilience and justice.

3.1.6 Balancing blue growth with ecosystem resilience

Africa's aquatic ecosystems can drive prosperity for all only if their economic use is structurally linked to ecological regeneration. Policy must prioritise spatial planning, science-led innovation and transboundary enforcement to transform coastal and marine resources into engines of climate-resilient development. Key focus areas are highlighted in the sub-sections that follow.

3.1.6.1 Water as an asset on national balance sheets

A water-secure Africa with safe sanitation begins with a change in perspective: from water being seen as a subsidised public good to a valued asset that drives inclusive growth and transformation.

In this context, Africa's water and aquatic ecosystems will be managed as strategic assets. This will unlock opportunities for the development of innovative financing mechanisms, such as hydro-resilience bonds backed by revenues from licensing ecosystem services. The establishment and implementation of a continental water trust are proposed to manage water as a core component of the public sector balance sheet.

3.1.6.2 Implement zoned blue-economy development with ecological safeguards

Deliberate action is required to establish strategically designated areas for economic activities suited to circular resource use. Targeting coastal regions with high development potential and major lake regions, these blue economy development areas should cluster aquaculture, renewable energy and sustainable tourism.

Localised value chains, linking export revenues directly to habitat protection, should be created and sustained. Indeed, a key principle in developing these areas should be to bind investors to regenerative practices.

The scope of functions of mandated institutions at all levels should be broadened to include oversight to ensure enforcement of "net-positive biodiversity" covenants, revoking licences for violations.

3.1.6.3 Mandate levies for circular transition and related research and development

Africa's blue economy transformation must be underpinned by a new research and innovation financing architecture that leverages natural capital revenue streams.

To tap into opportunities, including charging levies on seabed mining and shipping lanes, Member States should pool resources to establish and finance an endowment for Africa-led research and development. Of particular interest should be research on climate-resilient mariculture, low-impact desalination and ocean carbon capture, as well as topics relevant to assuring environmental security of the continent's Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Member States should also develop patent-sharing agreements to fund the establishment and operation of innovation hubs at national and regional levels. Technological advancement based on Africa's unique circumstances is key to success for the advent of Africa's industrial revolution.

In addition, extended producer responsibility (EPR) laws requiring industry to pay pollution levies for waste collection and treatment are the next frontier in Africa's efforts to assure pollution control and environmental integrity.

In relation to this, it is imperative for all Member States to ratify and implement the African Marine Waste Convention resolutions, banning single-use plastics and subsidising circular alternatives.

Together, these measures will position Africa as a global leader in blue-economy innovation, resilience and circularity.

3.1.7 Unlocking Investment through Valuing Water

Strategies to fund the interventions related to the action framework in the previous sections hinge on applying the United Nations High-Level Panel on Water (HLPW) principles for valuing water. Demonstrating water's full economic, social and environmental value is fundamental to strengthening the business case for water investments in Africa. Quantifying the costs of inaction, such as drought-related GDP contraction or flood damage, further strengthens the argument for proactive funding.

Robust economic valuation must quantify water's contribution to GDP; job creation across dependent sectors; public health savings; and ecosystem services. This compelling evidence will make water infrastructure projects more attractive to financiers by clearly articulating their multidimensional returns. Embedding this comprehensive water valuation within national economic planning and accounting systems is a prerequisite for raising water's profile.

When national budgets and development plans explicitly recognise water's central economic role, prioritisation for domestic budget allocations and public investment will naturally follow.

Integrating comprehensive water valuation will elevate water's profile beyond a sectoral issue to a cross-cutting national priority, thus ensuring that water security is treated as a core economic driver of resilience and competitiveness.

Furthermore, application of the principles of valuing water will empower governments to strategically attract private sector funding. Transparent water valuation will de-risk investments and clarify revenue streams. Governments must create clear, stable policy and regulatory frameworks that reduce investment risk. Targeted instruments such as partial risk guarantees, viability gap funding and streamlined permitting processes will incentivise private investment.

Demonstrating bankable projects based on sound valuation, coupled with de-risking mechanisms, will facilitate the application of blended-finance models. Combining public capital, private investment, concessional finance and climate finance is required to make large-scale water infrastructure and efficiency programmes financially viable and sustainable.

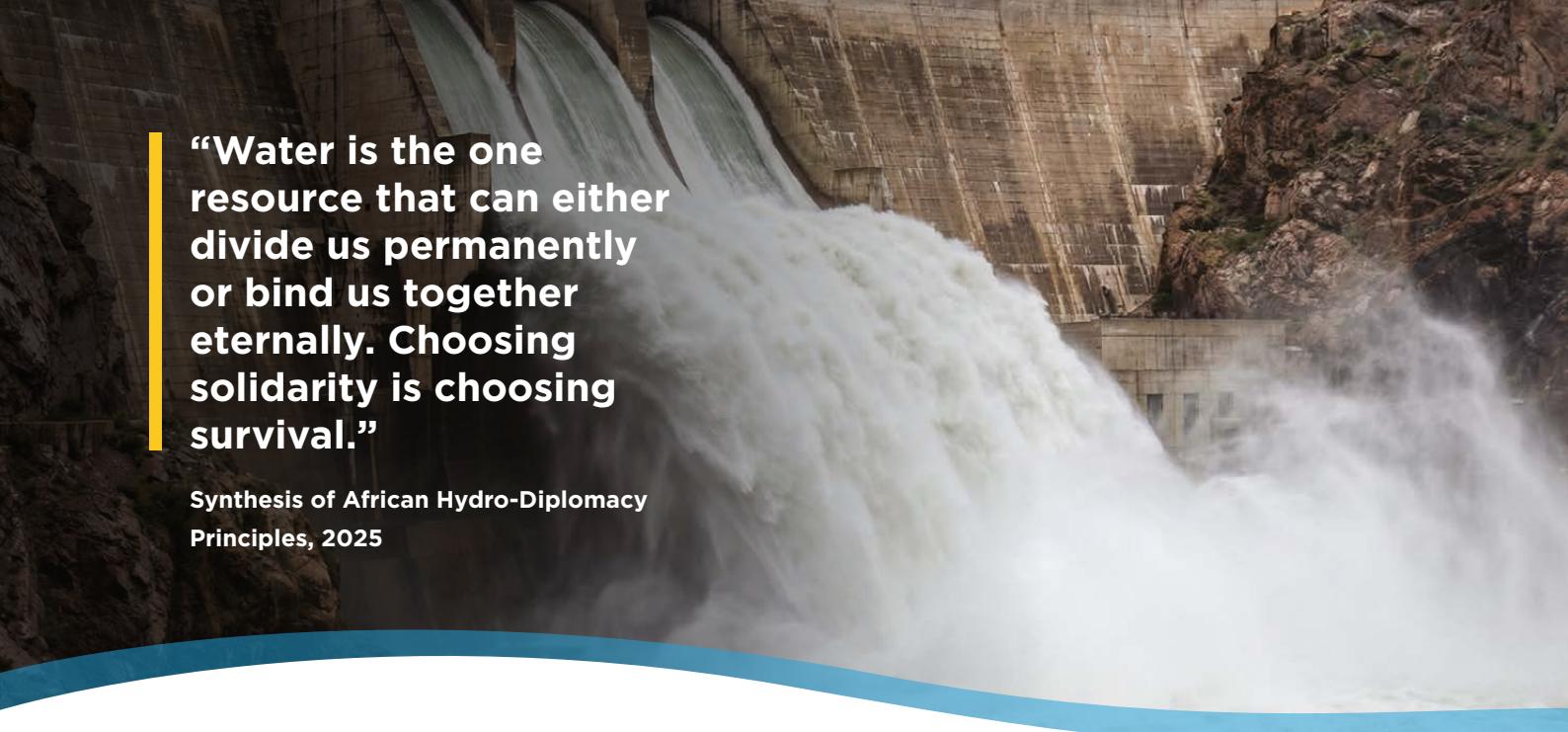
Prioritising these actions will unlock diverse funding sources essential for achieving scale and sustainability in water resource development.



Table 2: Water enabling economic growth and inclusive social transformation – action framework, targets and milestones

2063 Target	2033 Milestone	2043 Milestone	2053 Milestone
Vision Statement 1: There is universal access to safely managed water, sanitation and hygiene services, including in emergency situations			
Core focus: Safe household water access			
All populations can access safe water meeting continental quality standards.	50% of Member States adopt/enforce continental water quality standards.	80% of urban and 60% of rural populations can access safely managed water.	100% coverage; real-time water quality monitoring in all major supply systems.
Core focus: Inclusive sanitation systems			
Resilient, inclusive sanitation and hygiene services operational for all communities.	Gender-balanced sanitation governance protocols adopted by 40% of Member States.	70% of cities implement circular sanitation (biogas, nutrient recovery).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal access • Sanitation-linked green jobs increase by 60% from 2033
Core focus: Pollution and health risk reduction			
Health and environmental risks from waste reduced by 90% from 2025 baseline.	Baseline pollution monitoring established in all transboundary basins.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Untreated industrial discharge into water bodies reduced by 50% • Plastic waste pollution brought under control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zero untreated wastewater discharge • Preventable diseases related to water pollution eliminated.
Vision Statement 2: There is sustainable water availability for transformed economies and growing, prosperous populations facing greater climate uncertainty			
Core focus: Water demand and efficiency			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water productivity doubled in agriculture and industry • Non-revenue water and losses minimised to an agreed standard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National water audits completed for all Member States • Continent-wide minimum water efficiency standards agreed and launched 	70% of irrigation modernised (drip/smart systems); industrial recycling mainstreamed.	Water-use productivity metrics integrated into all national economic planning.
Core focus: Water supply augmentation			
Non-conventional sources – reuse, desalination – meet 40% of demand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five strategic IWRM for development hubs operational • Rainwater harvesting contributes 10% to municipal supply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wastewater reuse provides 25% of industrial and agricultural water • Desalination expands in SIDS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-conventional water resources (NCWR) fully institutionalised • Conjunctive surface-groundwater management universal
Core focus: Disaster risk management			
Economic losses from floods/droughts reduced by 75% from 2025 baseline.	AI-driven flood/drought early warning systems cover 50% of vulnerable basins.	Multipurpose water control infrastructure and natural storage solutions (wetlands) buffer 80% of climate shocks.	Climate-resilient infrastructure frameworks adopted continent-wide.
Core focus: Water Valuation and investment			
Water's full value integrated into national accounting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN HLPW principles on valuing water applied by 20 Member States • AfDB de-risking facility for water projects launched 	National budgets of at least 33 Member States reflect water's economic value.	Water infrastructure bonds attract continent-wide investment capital, reflecting secure and bankable status

2063 Target	2033 Milestone	2043 Milestone	2053 Milestone
Core focus: Demand response			
Spatial water mismatches resolved to ensure reliable supplies for all demands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Groundwater mapping completed Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR) programmes piloted in 10 arid regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water-smart agriculture boosts yields by 30% 60% of energy is hydropower optimised Mechanisms that create incentives for water conservation and improvements in water productivity established, reduce agricultural water losses by 40% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food and energy water demand fully met 100% of cities have climate-adaptive water plans 100% water supply for industrial and urban demands
Vision Statement 3: A thriving blue economy sustainably leverages Africa's aquatic resources to drive prosperity, climate resilience, ecosystem protection and well-being			
Core focus: Sustainable blue economy			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All designated sustainable blue economy areas are certified regenerative, and marine biodiversity is restored Growth in blue sectors - fisheries, tourism, etc. - is tripled, ecosystems regenerated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ten zoned blue-economy development areas established “Net-positive biodiversity” covenants launched 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50% of coastal economies adopt circular models (e.g. zero-waste aquaculture) 20 zoned blue economy development areas operational; 50% enforce habitat value chains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All blue economy activities are ecosystem-positive; marine biodiversity restored 100% of zoned blue economy development areas certified regenerative
Core focus: Research and infrastructure			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vibrant African ocean-tech innovation Member States-led research and development investment triples from 2025 baseline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> African Marine Waste Convention ratified Ocean levies fund five innovation hubs African Aquatic Commons Reserve established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low-impact desalination and mariculture R&D scaled 30% of patents shared continentally Blue carbon credits traded 	Africa-owned blue tech deployed in 90% of coastal states.
Core focus: SIDS resilience			
SIDS fully resilient to sea-level rise and extreme weather events. Water security assured.	Climate-resilient infrastructure funding initiative launched for all SIDS.	Renewable energy-powered desalination has capacity to meet 100% of SIDS' water needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SIDS achieve zero climate-induced displacement Blue bonds finance long-term resilience
Core focus: Marine pollution control			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) policy, legal and institutional framework in place and enforced by all Member States Marine plastic waste reduced by 95% from 2025 baseline 	Single-use plastics banned by all Member States.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plastic waste leakage into oceans halved Circular alternatives subsidised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zero untreated wastewater discharge 100% marine ecosystems meet health standards



“Water is the one resource that can either divide us permanently or bind us together eternally. Choosing solidarity is choosing survival.”

Synthesis of African Hydro-Diplomacy Principles, 2025

3.2 Diplomacy, Peace and Security: Water catalysing regional cooperation and integration

Africa's shared waters present one of the greatest opportunities for unity. As a strategic unifier, water is central to promoting peace, reducing conflict and building transboundary cooperation.

3.2.1 Water as Africa's strategic unifier: key facts and figures

1. 90% of Africa's surface water is transboundary, supporting the lives and livelihoods of at least 75% of the population
2. 40% of Africa's population depends on Transboundary Aquifers (TBAs), particularly in arid and drought-prone regions
3. According to the Africa Water and Sanitation Sector Monitoring and Reporting (WASSMO) system, up to 22 Member States participate in some form of transboundary water collaboration. This ranges from data sharing to joint basin development and investment plans
4. 29% of the 63 international transboundary river basins have cooperative frameworks
5. Less than 10% of transboundary aquifers have joint management arrangements
6. About 19% of Africa's transboundary basins have joint groundwater-surface water management clauses in agreements

The foundation exists – and must urgently expand – to transform Africa's shared waters into springboards for continent-wide unity, peace and security by 2063. An action framework emphasising interdependence among

stakeholders and the need for shared responsibility in water management is imperative for an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa.

3.2.2 Transforming Water Governance: water basins as catalysts for economic development, social progress and political stability

Shared water resources present a unique opportunity for Africa to overcome geographic and structural divides. Transboundary water basins can serve as platforms for regional integration, economic cooperation and peacebuilding. To unlock this potential, four foundational action areas are identified as the bedrock of successful integration. They are:

3.2.2.1 Respecting the rights of others

Shared water resources can provide a foundation for cooperation, economic ties and conflict resilience. Effective resource management arrangements to realise these benefits require a recognition of shared rights to security, resources and inclusive, representative participation. In the context of subsidiarity-driven water governance, structured, rights-based water diplomacy serves as a powerful catalyst for regional cooperation, integration, trade, peace and security. In future, it is vital to intensify efforts to foster fair and inclusive approaches that account for differing national circumstances and capacities at all levels. This will consolidate and strengthen the foundation for

assuring inclusive water security and ensuring peace and prosperity for all. By embedding these principles in basin governance, and ensuring alignment with established international agreements and frameworks, Member States can transform water from a source of division into a symbol of solidarity.

3.2.2.2 Advance free flow of information and transparency

There is an urgent need to integrate open water-data platforms as a trust-building tool towards data-driven cooperation. Information from most of the Member States points to inadequacies of physical infrastructure networks to effectively monitor the quantity and quality of Africa's water resources. Deploying virtual monitoring networks powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI), can represent a paradigm shift in transboundary water management.

Utilising satellite data, Internet of Things (IoT) sensors and weather radars, digital twins of entire watersheds should complement existing networks of hydro-meteorological, river-gauging and water-quality stations. This will enable near real-time, open-access hydrological monitoring, and the generation of forecasts of river flows, water quality and hazards across basins. Predictive analytics and generative AI applications are vital for early-warning systems and should be used with the aforementioned monitoring systems to help prevent disasters and enhance anticipatory action.

Overall, digital water-intelligence tools support science-based decision-making and policy, helping to build trust and sustained cooperation.

To implement open hydro-data platforms, it is necessary to:

1. Develop and apply interoperability standards for enabling seamless data sharing. This will build on and incentivise the application of existing arrangements for data and information sharing and exchange in some basins
2. Institute open-access and open-source frameworks to democratise access to hydrological intelligence
3. Foster equitable data transparency and measures for multistakeholder inclusion. The measures should tap into traditional knowledge systems and ensure the empowerment and systematic engagement of vulnerable groups in decision-making processes

4. Legitimise digital water intelligence approaches and tools to overcome sovereignty concerns
5. Address digital data disparities, particularly in African regions that lack granular sensor networks and data infrastructure

3.2.2.3 Integrate economic, social and ecological values into transboundary water governance

Encoding equity and resilience into legal and financial arrangements for water governance at transboundary level transforms water into a powerful engine for cooperation, trade and security. Reinforcing balanced approaches through continental frameworks will therefore advance collaborative stability that is built upon fair sharing of common-pool resources.

When Member States guarantee fair access and share benefits, they develop interdependence that transcends conflict. Water becomes the conduit for trade corridors, energy grids and joint climate adaptation, proving that equity is not merely ethical but also strategic.

Promoting the valuing of all water needs and applying dynamic rules reflecting economic, social and ecological priorities will foster trust and integrative solutions. The protection of ecosystems will be assured through environmental flows provisions.

Establishing systems for incentivising conservation and improvements in water productivity will institute water use efficiency. In addition, it will boost production and productivity of water use particularly in agriculture while maintaining environmental flows.

Operationalising these mechanisms will enable inclusive benefit-sharing and forge shared economic stakes. The ripple effects of this water cooperation will be to strengthen regional partnerships through shared gains; enhance security; and accelerate integration through interdependent water-energy-food-environment systems.

3.2.2.4 Align water cooperation with economic and security frameworks

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement provides a transformative framework for Africa's economic integration. While primarily focused on trade liberalisation, good water governance is a key factor in its implementation. The requisite regional value chains to achieve the targets set for boosting

agricultural trade, industrial growth, and energy trade – among others – rely on predictable water supply for production.

Infrastructure deficits are primary trade barriers, costing up to 40% of goods' value in logistics expenses. Integrating agricultural water use, energy generation and transport networks will foster a sound business environment and strengthen international relations.

Collaborative approaches to modernise and manage Africa's navigable waterways have the potential to increase the cargo volumes currently handled 20-fold, with major reductions in freight costs.

The Priority Action Plans of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA-PAP) identify, among others, agreed strategic water infrastructure of transboundary importance. Joint investments to put this in place, as well as infrastructure for irrigation, hydropower and flood control, will boost agricultural exports and stabilise energy grids.

Integrating ways to settle water conflicts into the AfCFTA agreement's dispute resolution mechanisms on non-tariff barrier reporting will reflect and embed water's value to regional trade, integration and cooperation into enforceable rules. With less than 25% of shared water systems having protocols and legal frameworks providing conflict mitigation mechanisms, it is imperative that relations are stabilised through:

1. Rapidly increasing binding agreements ensuring that all transboundary basins and aquifers have protocols for the prevention, management and resolution of water disputes
2. Integrating the institution and management of shared water systems as components of the African Peace and Security Architecture
3. Scaling water-peace clauses into regional security frameworks that mandate default triggering of diplomatic mediation for disputes over water

In the context of transforming water governance, and water basins as drivers of integration, an action framework and targets to achieve the related policy goals by 2063 is summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Transforming Water Governance: water basins as catalysts for economic development, social progress and political stability – Action Framework, targets and milestones

2063 Target	2033 Milestone	2043 Milestone	2053 Milestone
Vision Statement 4: Good water governance systems, management institutions and transformative leadership are in place and grounded in international water law and the principles of subsidiarity, accountability and transparency			
Core focus: Trust and transparency			
Continent-wide integrated, interoperable open water-related data platforms fully operational, democratising access and underpinning all decisions	10% of transboundary basins have functional open water-related data platforms with agreed interoperability standards and open-access frameworks.	50% of transboundary basins have advanced integrated, interoperable and open water-related data platforms integrating AI/IoT/satellite data for real-time monitoring and forecasting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% coverage. Platforms fully integrated into national/sub-national decision-making • Traditional knowledge systematically incorporated and vulnerable groups empowered users
Core focus: Inclusive engagement			
All major water decisions involve broad, structured and gender-balanced multistakeholder engagement.	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) principles are formally integrated into 60% of national water policies and 50% of transboundary basin agreements, with inclusive stakeholder engagement protocols adopted.	GESI-balanced representation is achieved in 80% of basin institutions, with at least 30% of leadership roles held by representatives of marginalised groups.	GESI is fully institutionalised as a standard for water governance across Africa, with inclusive engagement, equitable representation, and accountability in all national and basin-level decision-making processes.

2063 Target	2033 Milestone	2043 Milestone	2053 Milestone
Core focus: Political Commitment and knowledge			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-level political champions actively drive a water security agenda Standardised knowledge generation and application systems are fully functional 	<p>Continental water governance reporting using the WASSMO system and the PIDA Water Scorecard strengthened at national level in 40% of Member States.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge generation and application standards harmonised across 80% of AU Member States Water security metrics integrated into national development planning in 70% of Member States 	<p>Water governance performance (transparency, efficiency, equity) is a key metric in continental and national political accountability frameworks.</p>
Core focus: Investment mobilisation			
<p>The water and sanitation sector attracts investments commensurate with its strategic role, with diversified and sustainable financing mechanisms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continental Water Investment Framework adopted Member States have developed national climate-resilient water investment programmes and up-to-date investment project pipelines Innovative financing (e.g. green bonds, blended finance) piloted in five major basins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water infrastructure investment gap reduced by 50% compared to 2025 baseline Fit-for-purpose national water funds established/strengthened in 80% of Member States 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustained investment flows meeting sector needs Fit-for-purpose basin trust funds operational for major shared systems, leveraging PES and benefit-sharing mechanisms Dynamic PPP models driving significant investment and innovation across the sector
<p>Vision Statement 5: Water basins are recognised as shared natural assets that drive peace, trade, regional integration, social inclusion and political stability</p>			
Core focus: Cooperative management			
<p>100% of transboundary basins and major aquifers have fully operational management structures mandated by binding agreements with dispute resolution mechanisms.</p>	<p>60% of river basins and 30% of major TBAs have cooperative frameworks ratified by at least 25% of the riparian states.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 85% of river basins and 60% of major TBAs have functional commissions. 70% have enforceable conflict prevention/resolution protocols linked to APSA A/R/LBOs integrated as components of the African Peace and Security Architecture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% coverage with fully empowered, financially sustainable basin institutions Universal adherence to binding dispute mechanisms
Core focus: Equitable benefit-sharing and trade			
<p>Thriving regional value chains and trade underpinned by sustainable water management and inclusive benefit-sharing mechanisms at all levels.</p>	<p>Joint investment plans developed for five major basins aligned with PIDA-PAP and AfCFTA. Benefit-sharing principles agreed in 30% of basins.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zoned hydrological optimisation operational in three major regions, strengthening agriculture-energy commerce Mechanisms for water conservation and efficiency piloted in 50% of basins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water is a strategically managed enabler of continental value chains and economic development Robust, dynamic benefit-sharing mechanisms (economic, social, environmental) operational in all shared basins

2063 Target	2033 Milestone	2043 Milestone	2053 Milestone
Core focus: Source protection and water quality			
All basins implement effective source water protection and pollution control, maintaining water quality and environmental flows.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Source water protection plans adopted in 30% of major basins Baseline pollution monitoring established in all transboundary basins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pollution load reduction targets set and enforced in 80% of basins Environmental flow requirements implemented in 60% of major river systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continental water quality standards met Environmental flows secured for all major rivers and ecosystems Source protection is mainstreamed in land-use practice
Core focus: Integrated risk management			
Resilience to climate risks (floods, droughts) vastly improved through basin-wide early warning systems and joint infrastructure/planning.	<p>Basin-wide water-related disaster early warning systems (using AI/digital twins) operational in 50% of vulnerable basins.</p> <p>Joint risk assessments complete for 80%.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint infrastructure (multipurpose dams, flood control) operational in five major basins based on shared risk management plans Early warning systems cover 90% of vulnerable populations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate-resilient water management is the norm Losses from water-related disasters minimised through proactive, cooperative basin-scale adaptation
Core focus: Application of integrated approaches			
Integrated approaches are the standard for water management and planning in all transboundary basins, optimising synergies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment methodologies for integrated approaches standardised and applied in 60% of major basins Pilot integrated projects in three basins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination mechanisms institutionalised in 80% of basin organisations Significant efficiency gains recorded in key sectors (e.g. agriculture, energy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optimisation of integrated approaches drives continental resource security and sustainability Trade-offs managed transparently through basin institutions

3.3 Sustainability and Resilience: water for environmentally sustainable and climate resilient economies and communities.

Africa faces an intensifying water crisis that is driven by climate change and manifests as greater fluctuations in rainfall, prolonged droughts, devastating floods and rising sea levels. These shifts threaten water security, amplify disaster risks and degrade the vital aquatic ecosystems on which economies and communities depend – from mountain springs to coastal deltas. Decisive action is required to pre-empt the risk that these impacts will exacerbate poverty, displace populations and undermine decades of development gains.

This pillar, therefore, focuses on building systemic resilience by ensuring the integrity of water-related ecosystems, transforming production practices, and fostering equitable, inclusive adaptation. It complements the infrastructure-led solutions outlined

in Section 3.2⁴ by addressing the foundational environmental and social dimensions essential for long-term sustainability.

The goal is to create economies and communities that thrive within ecological boundaries, buffered against climate shocks and sharing the benefits of nature fairly.

3.3.1 Safeguard ecosystem integrity from source to sea

Aquatic ecosystems – rivers, wetlands, lakes, aquifers and coastal zones – are the natural infrastructure underpinning water security and climate resilience. Their degradation directly results in reduced water

⁴ Harvesting and storing water, managing groundwater, flood control, conveyance and drought resilience.

yield, deterioration of water quality, loss of fisheries and increased flood and erosion risks, among other consequences.

Policy must mandate and enforce comprehensive ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) strategies in a transboundary context. Legally binding frameworks are required to define and protect environmental flows; conserve critical watersheds and recharge zones; restore degraded wetlands and floodplains; and establish marine protected areas. In addition, such frameworks will safeguard socio-environmental sustainability.

Implementing robust spatial planning, rigorously enforced through permits and land-use controls, will prevent encroachment on vital buffers and biodiversity hotspots.

Strengthening the mandate and capacity of transboundary governance frameworks to manage ecosystems holistically is paramount.

Protecting and restoring these natural systems will enhance their inherent capacity to provide cost-effective, long-term resilience dividends for all water users and sectors through:

1. Regulating water flows
2. Filtering pollutants
3. Buffering floods
4. Recharging aquifers
5. Supporting fisheries and tourism

3.3.2 Enable sustainable production within ecological limits

Ineffectively managed economic growth can manifest in negative side-effects such as ecosystem degradation and pollution. Current practices in key sectors such as agriculture, mining, forestry, fisheries, tourism and industry are major contributors to water pollution, habitat loss and biodiversity decline. This undermines the natural resource base they depend on.

Policy interventions must drive a systemic shift towards circular, nature-positive production models. It is thus necessary to:

1. Set and enforce stringent, sector-specific effluent standards aligned with continental water quality goals (see section 3.1.6)

2. Mandate water-use efficiency and pollution prevention technologies, and promote regenerative agriculture – agroecology, conservation tillage, integrated pest management

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) frameworks must be implemented continent-wide, requiring industries to manage the full lifecycle impact of their products, including waste collection, treatment and recycling costs.

Promoting sustainable aquaculture and fisheries management, coupled with eco-certification for tourism, will ensure that these blue-economy sectors thrive without depleting resources.

Embedding biodiversity “net gain” or “net positive” requirements into development permits and investment frameworks will ensure that ecosystem restoration is integrated into economic activities.

Transforming negative production practices will reduce pollution at source, conserve water, protect biodiversity, enhance soil health, secure long-term productivity for key economic sectors and build resilience against climate-induced resource scarcity.

3.3.3 Implement inclusive, locally led ecosystem stewardship and benefit sharing

Climate and ecosystem resilience must be rooted in social equity. The communities most dependent on ecosystem services – often the poor, women, youth and indigenous groups – are also the most vulnerable to their degradation and climate impacts.

Policies must ensure equitable access to resources and fair sharing of benefits derived from ecosystems. A key requirement is to secure legal recognition, particularly for marginalised groups, of water and related resources rights. Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) and community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) mechanisms that directly compensate local stewards for good conservation outcomes will channel economic value back to communities.

Ensuring vulnerable groups have meaningful representation in basin planning and disaster risk management institutions is critical. Empowering local actors as stewards through capacity building, access to finance and secure tenure will:

1. Unlock local knowledge
2. Foster long-term commitment to conservation
3. Reduce vulnerability
4. Create green jobs
5. Ensure climate adaptation strategies are grounded in local realities and needs, leading to more sustainable and socially just outcomes

3.3.4 Build inclusive climate resilience through knowledge, institutions and nature-based solutions

Reducing vulnerability requires proactive, knowledge-driven investment accessible to all. In addition to the built infrastructure solutions covered in Section 3.1, resilience at scale will equally depend on strengthening institutions and information systems, and the widespread deployment of nature-based solutions (NbS).

Policy must prioritise continent-wide deployment of integrated, AI-enhanced early warning systems for floods, droughts and water-quality threats, ensuring universal accessibility, especially for remote and vulnerable communities.

Strengthening national and local disaster management institutions with clear mandates, resources and inclusive planning processes are essential.

Scaling up NbS⁵ will provide cost-effective, multifunctional resilience alongside biodiversity benefits.

Investing in climate-resilient WASH infrastructure (see Section 3.1) and ensuring inclusive access will be fundamental to community health and dignity during shocks. Climate risk screening and resilience criteria must be mandatory for all water-related investments, public and private.

Building robust information systems, empowered institutions and widespread NbS will:

1. Empower communities with timely knowledge
2. Provide diverse ecological buffers against shocks
3. Reduce disaster-recovery costs
4. Protect livelihoods

⁵ Including reforestation for erosion control and groundwater recharge, wetland restoration for flood attenuation and water purification, and mangrove conservation for coastal protection.

5. Ensure that resilience-building efforts reach those who need them most, thereby creating a foundation for equitable and sustainable development

3.3.5 Embed integrated approaches to optimise overall benefit and enhance systemic resilience

Achieving water security for economic growth and social transformation necessitates integrated management approaches that transcend sectoral boundaries.

The focus of transboundary water management in Africa has so far been on the application of the principles of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) planning at basin level. The goal is to promote coordinated development and stewardship of water, land and related resources to maximise economic and social welfare equitably while preserving vital ecosystems.

The resulting cooperation and governance arrangements from these initiatives form a firm foundation for the application of the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems (WEFE) nexus. The WEFE nexus addresses interconnections – ensuring implementation of solutions that simultaneously support sustainable energy production, food security and ecosystem health.

To consolidate the progress achieved through both approaches, the focus must now shift to facilitating investment in strategic water management solutions that deliver transboundary, if not regional, benefits.

Basin organisations must be strengthened with mandates and resources to facilitate collaborative planning, incorporating environmental flow requirements and climate resilience measures into water allocation frameworks. At policy level, integrating WEFE considerations into national development strategies will align agricultural subsidies, energy pricing and environmental regulations to incentivise efficient resource use. Coordinating reservoir operations for hydropower generation, irrigation releases and flood control can, for example, enhance renewable energy output while securing water for dry-season farming and protecting downstream communities. Similarly, promoting water-efficient crops and renewable energy in food processing reduces pressure on shared water resources.

The transformative impact of integrated approaches lies in unlocking efficiency gains, reducing conflict and building systemic resilience. Africa can achieve more sustainable and inclusive growth, where water security catalyses renewable energy expansion, boosts agricultural productivity and safeguards the ecological foundations of economies and livelihoods. This is essential for navigating climate uncertainty and accelerating progress towards Agenda 2063.

3.3.6 Scale green water utilisation for resilience across sectors

Green water represents a vast, underutilised resource critical for enhancing water security and climate resilience. As highlighted in Section 3.1.3.2, green water's role in rainfed agriculture is foundational. Expanding its use across multiple sectors therefore offers transformative opportunities for inclusive growth.

In agriculture, scaling soil moisture conservation techniques, including conservation tillage and mulching, and promoting drought-resistant crops, are vital for boosting yields and reducing irrigation demand.

Beyond farming, strategic green water management in urban and rural landscapes can drive broader economic and environmental benefits. Urban green infrastructure – including parks, green roofs and permeable surfaces – should serve the purpose of capturing rainfall, reducing runoff, recharging groundwater and cooling

cities. Integrating these features into urban planning will supplement municipal water supplies, mitigate flood risks, lower cooling costs and create green jobs in construction and maintenance.

Similarly, promoting urban agriculture that utilises green water will enhance food security and income generation for vulnerable communities.

In forested and degraded landscapes, agroforestry and watershed restoration will increase soil moisture retention, in turn supporting the production of timber and non-timber forest products while sequestering carbon.

Realising this potential will require policy incentives for rainwater harvesting and land-use practices that prioritise soil health.

Capacity-building programmes for farmers, urban planners and community groups will help to mainstream techniques such as contour bunding.

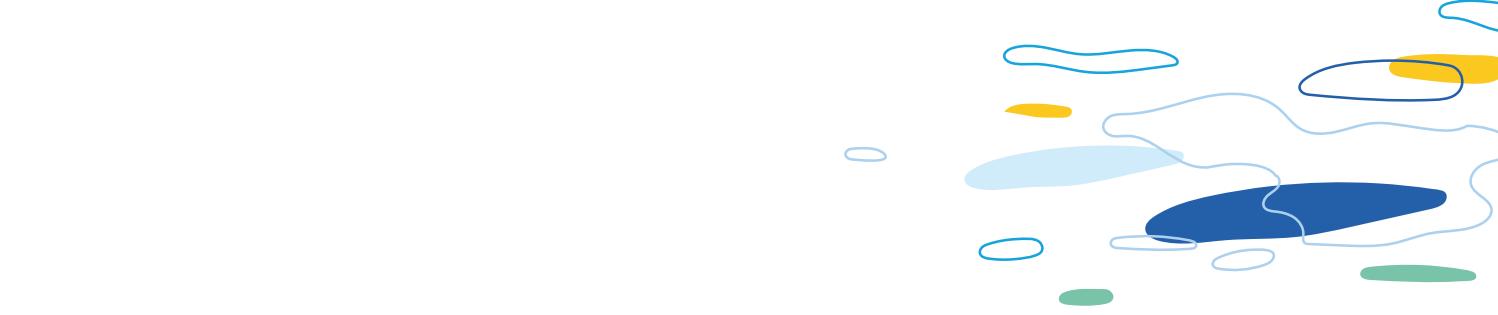
Economic instruments such as payments for ecosystem services for watershed protection will incentivise large-scale adoption.

Maximising green water's multifunctional role will:

1. Enhance water productivity
2. Build ecological resilience
3. Create inclusive livelihood opportunities, particularly in arid and variable climates where every drop of rainfall counts.

Table 4: Water for environmentally sustainable and climate resilient economies and communities – action framework, targets and milestones

2063 Target	2033 Milestone	2043 Milestone	2053 Milestone
Vision Statement 6: People, economies, and ecosystems are resilient and adequately protected from risks of natural and man-made water-related disasters			
Core focus: Ecosystem integrity			
Aquatic ecosystems functionally intact from source to sea, supporting biodiversity and climate adaptation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basin-specific environmental flow requirements established for all major rivers • Critical watershed protection plans adopted in 60% of transboundary basins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measurable improvement in ecological health indicators (e.g. fish diversity, wetland extent) in 70% of priority basins • Recharge zones legally protected in water-stressed regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-sustaining ecosystem recovery observed in 90% of restored areas • Continent-wide standards for aquatic health mainstreamed in sector policies



2063 Target	2033 Milestone	2043 Milestone	2053 Milestone
Core focus: Sustainable production			
Water-polluting sectors operate within planetary boundaries while maintaining productivity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) laws enacted in 80% of Member States Sectoral pollution reduction roadmaps adopted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verified 40% reduction in agricultural chemical runoff in pilot basins Circular economy certifications adopted by major industries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zero discharge of untreated industrial wastewater Regenerative practices dominant in key water-dependent sectors
Core focus: Inclusive stewardship and benefits			
Equitable benefit-sharing reduces vulnerability and strengthens ecosystem stewardship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal frameworks recognising community resource rights established in 50% of Member States Benefit-sharing principles integrated into basin agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documented livelihood improvements in 60% of PES/CBNRM mechanisms implementing areas Women, youth representation secured in 75% of local water committees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community-led conservation models institutionalised continent-wide Localised value chains directly funding ecosystem protection
Core focus: Inclusive resilience building			
Climate-vulnerable communities sustain livelihoods during hydrological shocks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early warning systems with inclusive dissemination protocols operational in high-risk zones National NbS implementation guidelines adopted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disaster-related economic losses reduced by 40% in NbS pilot region Climate-resilient WASH services accessible to 80% of vulnerable groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local institutions autonomously manage resilience systems Integrated risk management embedded in all development planning
Core focus: Integrated resources management approaches			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated resources management approaches operational in 100% of transboundary basins 30% water efficiency gain in energy and food production systems 	Cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms institutionalised in 60% of major basins.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80% of basins implement joint WEFE allocation frameworks 50% reduction in sectoral conflicts over water from 2025 baseline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continental WEFE optimisation platform functional 90% of agricultural and energy investments comply with nexus guidelines
Core focus: Green Water Scaling			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green water utilisation doubles in agriculture and urban systems 40% reduction in irrigation demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National green water strategies adopted in 50% of Member States Soil moisture conservation techniques applied on 30% of rainfed croplands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban green infrastructure – including permeable surfaces – mandated in 70% of cities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90% of rainfed agriculture uses moisture-efficient practices.

3.4 Innovation, Capacity and Information: developing capacity and efficient decision support systems for trust at all levels

Innovation, human capacity and effective water information management systems are key to valuing water and implementing a circular economy to drive investment and funding for the sector.

The availability of reliable, complete and validated data is key to the extent to which wider appreciation can be achieved of the importance of water to economic growth, job creation and industrialisation. Yet, this is a first step towards:

1. Embedding water in national economic priorities
2. Accelerating water infrastructure investments
3. Enhancing human and institutional capacity
4. Strengthening data systems for informed water management

Without robust data, empowered institutions and adaptive learning, Africa's water governance will remain reactive rather than proactive, undermining efforts to achieve water security by 2063.

3.4.1 Human capital, technology and adaptive learning to enable stewardship of water resources

3.4.1.1 Advance African-led research and technology co-creation

Generation of the knowledge and information necessary to advance water solutions in the African context requires – as an entry point – commensurate investment into research anchored in regional universities and innovation hubs.

Demand-driven research, combining local knowledge with cutting-edge science such as big data analytics and AI-driven predictive modelling for water resources, floods and droughts, is imperative to generate homegrown innovations that accelerate application of solutions. The need to transform water management to context-specific solutions that are fully adapted to Africa's unique circumstances cannot be overemphasised, especially on priorities that include:

1. Climate-resilient water harvesting
2. Nature-based treatment systems, and low-energy desalination tailored to arid regions and Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

3. Reducing non-revenue water, lowering costs and improving maintenance feasibility in urban systems

4. Optimising groundwater use in agriculture

5. Non-conventional water resources development

6. Converting waste to energy in sanitation services

Such a co-creation model must combine traditional knowledge with cutting-edge tools such as AI-enabled hydrological modelling and climate analytics. These tailored, demand-driven innovations will reduce Africa's dependence on externally developed technologies and accelerate impact at scale.

3.4.1.2 Mainstream digital intelligence across all water domains

Africa must leapfrog to a digitally intelligent water future. Deploying integrated digital twins – virtual replicas of entire water basins – powered by IoT sensors, satellite monitoring and big data analytics using AI will revolutionise water decision-making. These systems must be interoperable, feeding real-time data on rainfall, soil moisture, reservoir levels and water quality into open-access continental platforms. For smallholder farmers, when coupled with appropriate dissemination systems, this translates into accessible mobile advisories allowing precision irrigation, optimised crop yields and reduced water waste. Smart water systems based on sensors and IoT technology will support utilities in predicting pipe failures and prioritise repairs, slashing non-revenue water losses.

By democratising data access through user-friendly mobile applications in local languages, even marginalised communities can participate in water governance, reporting pollution or dry taps instantly.

This digital leap will legitimise water data, turning contested information into a shared evidence base for cooperative action, in turn reducing transboundary disputes and unlocking climate finance through verifiable impact reporting.

3.4.1.3 Institutionalise skills development for a transformed water sector

Scaling the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) Human Capacity Development programme to include a water skills accelerator component is

essential. It will bridge critical gaps in technical, managerial and digital literacy. Fields of particular interest include IoT maintenance, circular sanitation entrepreneurship and climate-resilient infrastructure design.

Curricula should be co-developed with industry for alignment with emerging green jobs in desalination plant operation, photovoltaic pumping systems development and maintenance, wetland restoration and blue carbon credit auditing, among others.

Universities should upgrade current curricula and embed cross-disciplinary water modules in engineering, economics and ecology degrees, developing a generation of systems thinkers.

Simultaneously, executive programmes for policymakers should demystify water valuation and blended finance, enabling smarter investment choices. Such a skills revolution will better position Africa to harness water expertise, attract high-value investments and ensure local ownership of water infrastructure.

3.4.1.4 Catalyse innovation in blue and circular economy financing

The Africa Water Facility should be strengthened to include a Water Innovation Fund backed by pooled sovereign guarantees to de-risk investments in water management and supply, sanitation and hygiene services delivery.

The fund should blend public capital with impact investment, offering concessional loans for technologies that achieve verified water savings or pollution reduction. Concurrently, it is necessary to introduce innovation procurement policies where governments commit to purchasing outputs from circular economy ventures, for example reclaimed water for municipal landscaping or nutrient-rich biosolids for fertiliser.

Patent-sharing pools across Member States will fast-track scaling of proven solutions, avoiding redundant research and development costs.

By monetising innovation through results-based financing, Africa can shift water tech from aid-dependent pilots to market-driven enterprises, stimulating job creation and growth in the sanitation economy.

3.4.2 Legitimised water data reshapes economic planning and investment

3.4.2.1 Embed water valuation in national economic architecture

To reposition water as an asset on national balance sheets, Member States should integrate water valuation into macroeconomic planning, budgeting processes and public investment appraisals. This requires systematic coordination, including establishing dedicated water-economy units.

The targeted outcome of this integration is that national development plans will, by 2040, feature water productivity targets alongside traditional economic indicators.

3.4.2.2 Build trusted water intelligence ecosystems

Legitimacy of water data hinges on transparent, multistakeholder governance. Independent Water Data Auditors accredited at continental level should verify monitoring networks in transboundary basins, reconciling upstream-downstream data disputes through peer-reviewed methodologies. A unified African Water Information Clearinghouse should curate open-access datasets on everything from groundwater recharge rates to sanitation enterprise revenues, using blockchain to trace data lineage and prevent manipulation.

For citizens, it is envisaged that interactive public dashboards will display real-time water quality in schools or investment flows to local utilities, enabling social accountability. Industry will access forecasted water scarcity premiums to guide factory siting. This “single source of truth” ecosystem will transform mistrust into cooperation, as a shared evidence base compels joint action on pollution control or drought preparedness, ultimately attracting pension funds seeking de-risked long-term water investments.



3.4.2.3 Articulate and monetise the circular sanitation economy

To shift perceptions of waste as a cost to a resource, continental campaigns should spotlight successful models, such as:

1. Biogas from faecal sludge powering treatment plants
2. Recovered phosphorus fertilising commercial farms

National statistics offices will adopt standardised metrics to track the sanitation economy's contribution to GDP, including job creation in waste collection, energy production and recycled-water irrigation.

Investment prospectuses will quantify returns from avoided health costs, e.g. fewer outbreaks of diarrhoea, and new revenue streams such as carbon credits from methane capture.

Development finance institutions will issue "circular resilience bonds", with yields tied to verified waste-to-value outputs.

The ambition is that by 2043, mainstreaming these narratives will redirect more than 20% of sanitation investments toward circular ventures, creating two million green jobs while reducing freshwater extraction pressures.

3.4.2.4 Fortify investor confidence through de-risking and credit enhancement frameworks

Political and regulatory risks currently deter 70% of potential private water investments. To reverse this, there is an urgent need to operationalise standardised risk-sharing instruments, including:

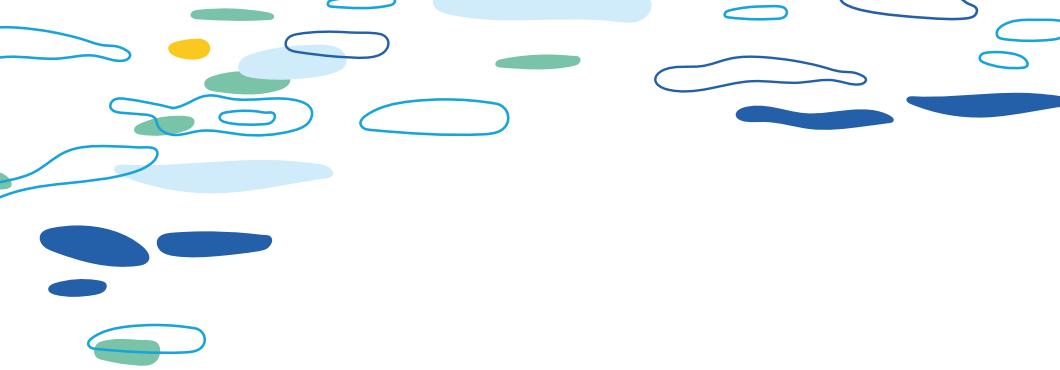
1. Sovereign water risk guarantees from the African Development Bank, covering contract cancellation or regulatory breach
2. Fast-tracked permitting for agreed projects aligning with PIDA-Priority Action Plans

It is envisaged that in addition to operating the Water Innovation Fund, the AWF will undertake the function of an African Water Infrastructure Credit Rating Agency. This function will allow the AWF to assess project bankability using harmonised risk criteria, assigning "water resilience scores" that influence borrowing costs. These measures, combined with transparent water data, will catalyse commercial lending for irrigation modernisation, wastewater reuse parks and climate-proofed utilities.

Given the changing funding priorities of sector partners, a paradigm shift is required to transform water into a viable asset class for investment.

Table 5: Innovation, capacity and information – action framework, targets and milestones

2063 Target	2033 Milestone	2043 Milestone	2053 Milestone
Vision Statement 7: Human capital development, technological empowerment and adaptive learning meet the requirements for effective management of Africa's natural resources base			
Core focus: Research and technology			
African-led innovations meet 90% of continent's water tech needs; five million green jobs in water sector	10 regional innovation hubs operational; IoT soil moisture networks cover 50% of commercial farms	70% new water infrastructure uses African-designed tech; AI flood/drought alerts cover all major basins	Water tech exports exceed imports; R&D spending at 1.5% of water sector GDP
Core focus: Digital transformation			
Real-time, integrated, open-access water data underpins major decisions; universal digital literacy	Open water-related data platforms functional in 10% of transboundary basins; farmer advisories reach 40-million users	Digital twins operational for all major rivers; 50% utilities use predictive maintenance	Continental water "metaverse" enables climate stress-testing of all infrastructure



2063 Target	2033 Milestone	2043 Milestone	2053 Milestone
Core focus: Skills development			
Africa hosts global centre of excellence for water-climate solutions; gender parity in technical roles	100 vocational water academies; 30% female enrolment in water and sanitation engineering programmes	500 000 certified water professionals; 20% youth employment in circular sanitation ventures	70% water utilities led by locally trained executives; skills surplus in 15 tech domains
Core focus: Innovation financing			
Water sector R&D attracts \$20-billion/year private investment; 30% ventures woman-owned	Africa Water Innovation Fund launched with \$1-billion capital; first patent-sharing pool for drip irrigation	60% Member States have innovation procurement policies; sanitation economy valued at 5% GDP	Blue bonds fund 80% of coastal resilience; water tech value chain ecosystem self-sustaining
<p>Vision Statement 8: There is investment into legitimised and integrated water information systems supporting science-based decision-making for climate resilience and raising the prioritisation of water management and sanitation in national systems for economic planning, investment and financial allocation</p>			
Core focus: Water valuation			
Water accounts integrated into 100% of national budgets; “water stress tests” mandatory for all PPPs	Water economy units established in 40 Member States; continental accounting standards adopted	70% national budgets reflect water productivity targets; sectoral water intensity disclosed	Water resilience ratings mandatory for stock exchange listings
Core focus: Data ecosystems			
Zero disputes over shared basin data; public trust in water information above 90%	Independent Data Auditors accredited; blockchain traceability piloted in 5 basins	Clearinghouse curates 100% public water data; citizen dashboards in 80% municipalities	Real-time water-GDP contribution visible in all economic reporting
Core focus: Sanitation economy			
Waste-to-value covers 60% of sanitation costs; no waste discharge to waterways	National metrics for circular sanitation GDP; five countries issue circular resilience bonds	50% wastewater plants energy self-sufficient; biosolids reuse in 70% agriculture	Health cost savings from safe sanitation exceed sector investment
Core focus: De-risking investment			
African water infrastructure rated secure and bankable; commercial finance covers 70% of needs	Sovereign guarantee facility launched; fast-track permits for priority IWRM for development projects	AWF Water Credit Agency function rates 200 projects; blended finance covers 40% of irrigation upgrades	Default rates on water projects below 2%; local pension funds allocate 15% to water



4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

Realising the Africa Water Vision 2063 and Policy demands coordinated action across all levels. This chapter outlines pathways and institutional roles to translate commitments into tangible outcomes.

4.1 Implementation Pathways

Success hinges on integrated, phased approaches, synchronised with Agenda 2063's decadal milestones.

4.1.1. Investment-led regional integration: 2026-2033

The first phase focuses on unlocking regional opportunities through strategic investments, as follows:

1. Prioritise agreed transboundary water infrastructure aligned with PIDA-PAP and AfCFTA
2. Prioritise foundational investments and de-risking of public-private partnerships
3. Fast-track five flagship IWRM for development projects
4. Operationalise open water-related data platforms in 60% of shared basins to enable science-based decisions

4.1.2 Systemic transformation: 2033-2043

The second phase aims to accelerate the structural transformation of Africa's water economy, as follows:

1. Scale circular water economies and digital management systems continent-wide
2. Integrate water valuation into national accounting frameworks
3. Intensify the pursuit of gender equality and social inclusion in water management and services delivery
4. Mainstream climate resilience in all water investments, ensuring 80% of vulnerable communities access early-warning systems

4.1.3 Consolidated sustainability: 2043-2063

The final phase focuses on locking in sustainability, equity, and innovation, as follows:

1. Secure intergenerational equity through legally binding ecosystem protections and youth-led water governance
2. Mainstream innovation, achieve universal access and lock in climate resilience
3. Institutionalise youth-led and community-driven water governance mechanisms
4. Achieve universal access to safe water and sanitation
5. Lock in climate resilience and mainstream innovation as systemic features of Africa's water and sanitation systems

4.2 Implementation Principles, Monitoring and Reporting

Pursuit of the Vision and Policy should be guided by the principles summarised in Table 6, which are adapted from and build on the implementation of the Africa Water Resources Management Priority Action Plan 2016-2025.

Progress will be tracked through the Africa Water and Sanitation Sector Monitoring (WASSMO) system and the PIDA Water Scorecard, with reports presented to the AU Assembly biennially.

4.3 Institutional Framework

The Member States are the custodians of the Africa Water Vision 2063 and Policy. Their collective action is what will realise the vision of a water-secure and resilient Africa with safe sanitation for all. Incorporating the policy goals into national policy and investment frameworks will thus be key to achieving the vision and policy targets.

Political leadership and oversight rest with the AU. The African Ministers' Council on Water will provide policy leadership and direction as the sectoral Ministerial Committee on water and sanitation of the AU's Specialised Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, Water and Environment (STC on ARBWE). The technical institutions, organisations and agencies of the African Union and AMCOW will coordinate the partnerships and stakeholder engagement necessary to realise the Vision and Policy. A key role will be played by AUDA-NEPAD, which anchors the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) within efforts to achieve the goals of AU Agenda 2063. They will lead policy coordination, as well as monitoring and providing accountability using the WASSMO system.

The African Development Bank and related financial institutions will play a key role in operationalising mechanisms to improve the sector's investment and funding outlook.

Regional Economic Communities, either directly or working through Basin Organisations, will be key actors in promoting regional cooperation, trade, integration, peace and security.

Civil Society and the Private Sector will co-design solutions and be actively engaged in their delivery. They will support innovation, accountability and service delivery, and ensure inclusion, entrepreneurship and social mobilisation.

Table 6: Implementation principles

Principle	Description
Programmatic approach	The Africa Water Vision 2063 and Policy aligns with the African Union's Agenda 2063 and provides a continental framework for its implementation. It will transition the unfinished business of the Africa Water Vision 2025 and pursuit of the targets of the 2014 Malabo Declaration on Agriculture ⁶ , the SDGs and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.
Comparative advantage	Focus is placed on areas where the AU, AMCOW, AfDB and UNECA can drive action. The impacts will produce more results and add value to what the Member States, RECs, basin organisations (BOs), civil society organisations (CSOs) and the private sector are doing.
Additionality	The AU and AMCOW, working in partnerships with AUDA-NEPAD, AfDB, UNECA, RECs, BOs, CSOs and relevant institutions, organisations and stakeholders will motivate Member States' interventions to realise the vision.
Prioritisation	Based on the African Union's development priorities and aspirations of an African Renaissance: Agenda 2063 – The Africa We Want.
Flexibility	Implementation plans for realising the vision and policy shall be synchronised with Agenda 2063's decadal milestones. Regular periodic reviews are required to respond to the ever-changing environment.
Variable geometry	A multipronged approach to implementation of key activities at Member State, REC and BO levels, taking advantage of opportunities for immediate action.
Basin approach	RECs and BOs are critical institutions for the application of integrated water management approaches, the principles of valuing water and the water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus.
Best practices	Implementation of the planned activities is to be informed and guided by best practices and lessons learnt in Africa and beyond.
Demonstration	Activities to pilot and/or demonstrate concepts and approaches to underlie processes for the proposed water sector reforms, especially as it relates to establishing valuing water in national systems for economic planning.
Participation	Relevant partners and stakeholders will be informed, consulted and involved as appropriate in the pursuit of the vision and policy.
Subsidiarity	Interventions will be undertaken at the most appropriate governance level.
Sustainability	Pursuit of the vision and policy shall promote local and national ownership, awareness, capacity development, gender equality and social inclusion, and institutional development.

⁶ The 2014 Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods, Assembly/AU/Decl.1(XXIII).



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

#	Term	Definition	Source/notes
A			
1	Agenda 2063	The African Union's 50-year strategic framework for inclusive growth, sustainable development and continental integration	African Union
2	Agroecology	Ecological approach to agriculture, integrating biodiversity, ecosystem services and social equity	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
B			
4	Blended finance	Strategic use of catalytic capital from public/philanthropic sources to mobilise private investment	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
5	Blue economy	Sustainable use of ocean and freshwater resources for economic growth, livelihoods and ecosystem health	World Bank
6	Blue water	Freshwater in surface water bodies (e.g. rivers and lakes) and groundwater available for human use	IWMI
C			
7	Circular sanitation economy	Systems recovering water, nutrients and energy from wastewater to reduce resource consumption and pollution	CSE
8	Climate-resilient financing	Financial instruments incorporating climate risk assessment to ensure durability under changing climatic conditions	UNEP
9	Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM)	Community-led governance of natural resources ensuring local benefits and sustainable management	IUCN
10	Conjunctive use	Coordinated management of surface water and groundwater to maximise yield and sustainability	FAO
D			
11	De-risking	Financial tools (guarantees, insurance) mitigating political, credit or currency risks for infrastructure investments	World Bank
12	Digital twins	Virtual models of physical systems updated by real-time data to simulate and optimise performance	SNT
E			
13	Ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA)	Use of biodiversity and ecosystem services to help communities adapt to climate change impacts	IUCN-UNEP
14	Environmental flows	Quantity, timing and quality of water required to sustain freshwater ecosystems and human livelihoods	Science Direct
15	Extended producer responsibility (EPR)	Policy approach holding producers accountable for end-of-life management of their products	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
G			
16	Green water	Soil moisture from precipitation directly used by plants in rainfed agriculture	SIWI (2025)
17	Groundwater recharge zones	Areas where water infiltrates the ground to replenish aquifers, critical for sustainable groundwater management	Research Gate
H			
18	Hydro-diplomacy	Cooperative management of shared water resources through negotiation, international law and conflict resolution	UN-Water
19	Hydro-social contracts	Governance agreements renegotiating water rights, access and responsibilities among stakeholders	Sustainability Directory

#	Term	Definition	Source/notes
I			
20	Integrated water resources management (IWRM)	Coordinated development/management of water, land and resources to maximise welfare without compromising sustainability	Global Water Partnership
M			
21	Managing aquifer recharge (MAR)	Intentional recharge of aquifers using surface water, reclaimed water or stormwater	ISMAR
N			
22	Nature-based solutions (NbS)	Actions to protect, manage or restore ecosystems to address societal challenges, while benefiting biodiversity	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
23	Non-conventional water resources (NCWR)	Water sources requiring specialised extraction/treatment (desalination, wastewater reuse, fog harvesting)	UN Water
24	Non-revenue water	Water supplied but not billed due to leakage, theft, metering inaccuracies, or unbilled authorised use	IWA
P			
25	Payment for ecosystem services (PES)	Voluntary transactions where ecosystem service beneficiaries compensate providers for stewardship actions	Resource
26	Positive peace	The attitudes, institutions and structures sustaining peaceful societies	Institute for Economics & Peace
R			
27	Regenerative agriculture	Farming principles enhancing soil health, biodiversity, water cycles and carbon sequestration	Regenerative Organic Alliance
S			
28	Safely managed sanitation	Improved facilities not shared between households, with excreta safely disposed or treated	World Health Organization/ Unicef JMP
29	Subsidiarity	Governance principle where decisions are made at the most local capable level	ISS-Africa
T			
30	Transboundary aquifers	Groundwater bodies shared by two or more countries	IGRAC
V			
31	Valuing water principles	UN-endorsed framework recognising water's multiple values (economic, social, environmental) for decision-making	Global Water Partnership
W			
32	Water economy units	Government entities that integrate water valuation into economic planning	A term specific to the Africa Water Vision 2063 and Policy 2063
33	Water productivity	Ratio of beneficial output (e.g. crop yield) to water input	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
34	Water stress tests	Assessment of water systems' resilience under scenarios of scarcity, drought or demand shocks	Fluence
35	Water trusteeship	Legal frameworks granting communities authority to protect water resources	Emerging water governance concept (e.g., Ostrom 1990)
36	WEFE nexus	Integrated approach managing water, energy, food and ecosystems interdependencies	Global Water Partnership

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ANNEX 1 Africa Water Vision 2063 and Policy alignment with the Agenda 2063

Vision Statement 1: There is universal access to safely managed water, sanitation and hygiene services

Deriving from the following Africa Water Vision 2025 (AWV2025) statement(s):

1. There is sustainable access to safe and adequate water supply and sanitation to meet the basic needs of all
10. There is political will, public awareness and commitment among all for sustainable water-resources management, including the mainstreaming of gender issues and youth concerns and the use of participatory approaches

Policy Goals

1. Reliable availability of water of a safe quality for all household needs
2. Inclusive, sustainable and resilient delivery systems for safely managed sanitation and hygiene services delivery
3. Action to reduce the health and environmental risks associated with waste and pollution

Contributing to the following Agenda 2063 Aspirations and Goals

Aspiration 1: A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development

Goals (Priority Areas)

1. A high standard of living, quality of life and well-being for all citizens
3. Healthy and well-nourished citizens
4. Transformed economies
7. Environmentally sustainable and climate resilient economies and communities (Sustainable consumption and production patterns)

Aspiration 3: An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law

Goals (Priority Areas)

11. Democratic values, practices, universal principles of human rights, justice and the rule of law entrenched (Participatory development and local governance)

Aspiration 6: An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children

Goals

17. Full gender equality in all spheres of life

Vision Statement 2: There is sustainable water availability for transformed economies and growing, prosperous populations facing greater climate uncertainty

Deriving from the following AWV2025 statement(s):

2. There is sufficient water for food and energy security

Policy Goals

1. Manage water demand and quality, as well as improve efficiency in the production, supply and utilisation of water in all sectors
2. Increase the productivity of water use in those sectors
3. Assure resilience of the economies to the anticipated limitations of water availability due to climate uncertainties – addressing Africa's water infrastructure deficit
4. Responding to increases in water demand:
 - a. To produce more food
 - b. For energy production to support modernisation of economies and social progress
 - c. Due to a rapidly growing population, increased urbanisation and sanitation deficiencies

Contributing to the following Agenda 2063 Aspirations and Goals

Aspiration 1: A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development

Goals (Priority Areas)

1. A high standard of living, quality of life and well-being for all citizens
3. Healthy and well-nourished citizens
4. Transformed economies (Sustainable and inclusive economic growth)
5. Modern agriculture for increased productivity and production (Agricultural productivity and production)
7. Environmentally sustainable and climate resilient economies and communities. (Sustainable natural resource management and biodiversity conservation/ Water security/Climate resilience and natural disasters preparedness and prevention/Renewable energy)

Vision Statement 3: People, economies, and ecosystems are resilient and adequately protected from water-related disasters risks

Deriving from the following AWV2025 statement(s):

3. Water for sustaining ecosystems and biodiversity is adequate in quantity and quality
8. There are effective and sustainable strategies for addressing natural and man-made water-resources problems, including climate variability and change

Policy Goals

1. Source to sea: maintaining integrity and function of aquatic ecosystems
2. Developing policy and regulatory frameworks that ensure that freshwater, marine and related resource use is appropriately situated to maximise production without undermining or degrading biodiversity
3. Improving and changing production practices to reduce effluent pollution from water and biodiversity-impacting sectors – agriculture, forestry, fisheries, tourism, natural resources extraction
4. Fair and equitable sharing of benefits from ecosystem services, especially at local level
5. Ensuring inclusive investments in information, institutions, natural and built infrastructure that reduces vulnerability and leads to climate resilient communities, livelihoods, production systems, economies, and social, environmental and development systems

Contributing to the following Agenda 2063 Aspirations and Goals

Aspiration 1: A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development

Goals (Priority Areas)

11. A high standard of living, quality of life and well-being for all citizens
6. Blue/ocean economy for accelerated economic growth (Marine resources and energy)
7. Environmentally sustainable and climate resilient economies and communities (Sustainable natural resource management and biodiversity conservation/Water security/Climate resilience and natural disasters preparedness and prevention/Renewable energy)

Vision Statement 4: Good water governance systems, management institutions and transformative leadership are in place and grounded in international water law and the principles of subsidiarity, accountability and transparency

Deriving from the following AWV2025 statement(s):

4. Institutions that deal with water resources have been reformed to create an enabling environment for effective and integrated management of water in national and transboundary water basins, including management at the lowest appropriate level
10. There is political will, public awareness and commitment among all for sustainable water-resources management, including the mainstreaming of gender issues and youth concerns and the use of participatory approaches

Policy Goals

Strengthen governance systems to reduce water insecurity and curtail the economic and social factors underlying unemployment, migration, displacement and regional insecurity through:

1. Creating an environment supportive of trust and confidence building by encouraging: accountability and transparency; data and information sharing and exchange; and collaboration in resources mobilisation to finance investments
2. Ensuring broad, inclusive and active stakeholder engagement and participation with clear gender objectives, and opportunities for public-private sector engagement
3. Mobilising political commitment and informing related decision-making processes
4. Supporting the standardisation of processes to generate and apply knowledge to improve effectiveness of resource management arrangements

Contributing to the following Agenda 2063 Aspirations and Goals

Aspiration 2: An integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance

Priority Area

Framework and institutions for a united Africa

Aspiration 3: An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law

Goals (Priority Areas)

11. Democratic values, practices, universal principles of human rights, justice and the rule of law entrenched (Participatory development and local governance)

Aspiration 6: An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children

Goals (Priority Areas)

17. Full gender equality in all spheres of life

Vision Statement 5: Water basins are recognised as shared natural assets that drive peace, trade, regional integration, social inclusion and political stability

Deriving from the following AWV2025 statement(s)

5. Water basins serve as a basis for regional cooperation and development, and are treated as natural assets for all within such basins

Policy Goals

1. Investment-led transboundary management and governance of water and environmental resources;
2. Ensuring inclusive access to benefits of shared water resources, fostering regional integration and peace, and driving shared prosperity and ecological health across all riparian states
3. Source water protection for maintaining water quality and quantity
4. Addressing pollution, contamination and other threats to water quality within water bodies
5. Managing water-related risks and hazards – floods, droughts, landslides, and others
6. Application of integrated approaches – build on the foundations of integrated water resources management to advocate for approaches such as the water-energy-food-ecosystem nexus

Contributing to the following Agenda 2063 Aspirations and Goals

Aspiration 1: A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development

Goals (Priority Areas)

7. Environmentally sustainable and climate resilient economies and communities (Sustainable natural resource management and biodiversity conservation/ Water security/Climate resilience and natural disasters preparedness and prevention/Renewable energy)

Aspiration 3: An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law

Goals (Priority Areas)

11. Democratic values, practices, universal principles of human rights, justice and the rule of law entrenched (Participatory development and local governance)

Aspiration 6: An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children

Aspiration 7: Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner

Goals

19. Africa as a major partner in global affairs and peaceful co-existence

Vision Statement 6: Human capital development, technological empowerment and adaptive learning meet the requirements for effective management of Africa's natural resources base

Deriving from the following AWV2025 statement(s):

6. There is an adequate number of motivated and highly skilled water professionals.

Policy Goals

1. Research on new water and sanitation science and technology directions in Africa;
2. Science, technology, innovation and skills development for knowledge generation and application to assure water security
3. Big data and Internet-of-Things (IoT) solutions for precision agriculture water management
4. Development and implementation of a policy framework and strategy(ies) for:
 - a. Investment in science-based decision-making and policy support – data gathering, information and knowledge generation, application, sharing, networking and brokering
 - b. Green technology research in the water sector
 - c. blue economy/ocean economy for accelerated economic growth
 - d. Financing innovation

Contributing to the following Agenda 2063 Aspirations and Goals

Aspiration 1: A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development

Goals (Priority Areas)

2. Well-educated citizens and skills revolution underpinned by science, technology and innovation (Education and STI skills driven revolution)
6. Blue/ocean economy for accelerated economic growth

Aspiration 3: An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law

Goals (Priority Areas)

12. Capable institutions and transformative leadership in place (Institutions and leadership)

 **Vision Statement 7:** There is investment into legitimised and integrated water information systems supporting science-based decision-making for climate resilience and raising the profile of water management and sanitation in national systems for economic planning, investment and financial allocation

Deriving from the following AWV2025 statement(s):

7. There is an effective and financially sustainable system for data collection, assessment and dissemination for national and trans-boundary water basins
9. Water is financed and priced to promote equity, efficiency and sustainability
10. There is political will, public awareness and commitment among all for sustainable water-resources management, including the mainstreaming of gender issues and youth concerns and the use of participatory approaches

Policy Goals

1. Institutionalising the application of the principles of valuing water and the circular economy to make the economic case for:
 - a. Better prioritisation of water resources management and safely managed hygiene and sanitation services provision in domestic economic planning and financial allocation
 - b. Cross-sector financing and investment to assure viability of investments in water dependent productive sectors
2. Strengthening information systems for:
 - a. Identifying and taking into account the multiple and diverse values of water to different groups and interests in all decisions affecting water
 - b. Reconciling values of water in ways that are equitable, transparent and inclusive
 - c. Articulating the sanitation economy, waste as a resource and waste-to-value innovations
 - d. Sensitisation and public awareness about the intrinsic value of water and its essential role in all aspects of life, as well as the circular sanitation economy
3. Enhancing the enabling environment and provide assurances to boost investors' confidence, and overcoming political and non-commercial risks associated with investments in the water and sanitation sector

Contributing to the following Agenda 2063 Aspirations and Goals

Aspiration 1: A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development

Goals (Priority Areas)

2. Well-educated citizens and skills revolution underpinned by science, technology and innovation (Education and STI skills-driven revolution)
4. Transformed economies (Sustainable and inclusive economic growth)
6. Blue/ocean economy for accelerated economic growth

Aspiration 2: An integrated continent; politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance

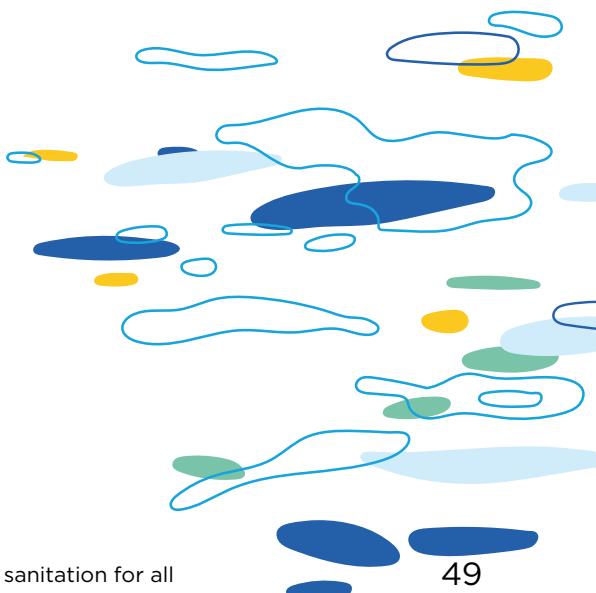
Priority Area

Communications and infrastructure connectivity

Aspiration 7: Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner

Goals (Priority Area)

20. Africa takes full responsibility for financing her development (Partnership/development assistance)



⌚ Vision Statement 8: A thriving blue economy⁷ sustainably leverages Africa's marine resources to drive prosperity, climate resilience, ecosystem protection and well-being

Deriving from the following AWV2025 statement(s):

Policy Goals

1. Sustainable development and management of blue economy ecosystem services and sectors for inclusive societal progress in a diverse Africa (see Table 1 below)
2. Investing in research, innovation, infrastructure and facilities to support ocean-related activities
3. Developing infrastructure⁸ and operationalising institutional measures to build inclusive resilience of Africa's Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to the shocks caused by climate risks
4. Managing marine fisheries and preventing illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (which undermines economies and contributes to insecurity particularly in Africa's SIDS)
5. Preventing and reducing pollution of marine environments, including plastic waste and industrial discharge

Contributing to the following Agenda 2063 Aspirations and Goals

Aspiration 1: A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development

Goals (Priority Areas)

4. Transformed economies (Sustainable and inclusive economic growth)
6. Blue/ocean economy for accelerated economic growth

Aspiration 6: An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children

Goals (Priority Areas)

17. Full gender equality in all spheres of life

Table 7: Key blue economy ecosystem services and sectors

Type of ecosystem services	Blue economy sectors
Harvesting of living aquatic resources: seafood, plant marine organisms and marine-biotechnological products	Fishing (inland, coastal, and deep seas) Aquaculture Mariculture Pharmaceuticals, chemicals, cosmetics, genetic research
Extraction of non-living resources and generation of new energy resources	Deep-sea and seabed mining Offshore oil and gas Renewable energy Marine salt harvesting Coastal mining of sand, gravel and other construction materials
Commerce and trade in and around the ocean and rivers	Maritime transport and services Port infrastructure Shipbuilding and repairs River transport Tourism and recreation
Protection	Coastal protection Marine ecosystem protection Water resource protection
Cultural and religious values	Cultural and religious practices
Knowledge and information	Biophysical, socioeconomic and political research

⁷ The blue economy in Africa covers aquatic and marine spaces, including oceans, seas, coasts, lakes, rivers and underground water, and it comprises a range of productive sectors, such as fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, transport, shipbuilding, energy, bioprospecting, and underwater mining and related activities (see Table 1).

⁸ Transport infrastructure (ports); protection infrastructure (coastal/seawall); infrastructure for ocean energy development (tidal energy).



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This Vision and Policy document reflects consensus on priorities and aspirations of Member States, who actively engaged throughout the process. Together, they agreed to adopt this Vision and Policy as a continental implementation framework for achieving the goals of Agenda 2063 towards the achievement of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want!

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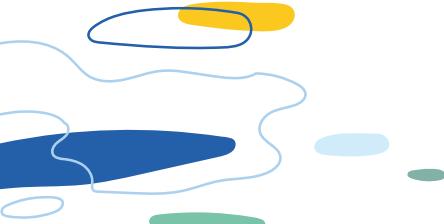
WaterAid



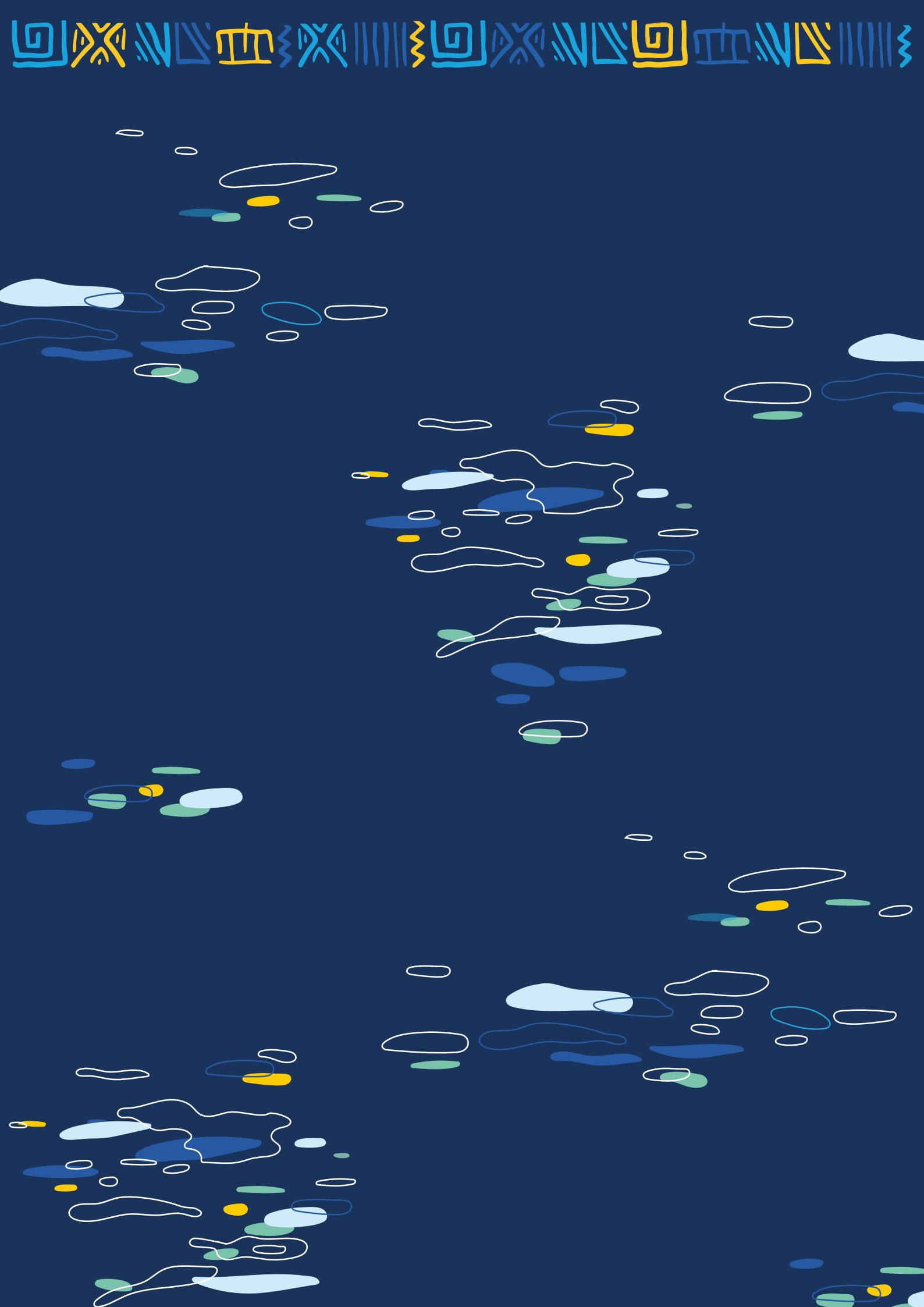
Global Water
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NOTES





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A WATER SECURE AND RESILIENT AFRICA WITH SAFE SANITATION FOR ALL

This is a call for us to:
Invest boldly!
Govern inclusively!
Innovate relentlessly!
Act collectively!

