



الوكالة الدولية للطاقة الذرية

国际原子能机构

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AGENCE INTERNATIONALE DE L'ÉNERGIE ATOMIQUE
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Pan-African Implementation and Partnership Conference on Water

Statement by Dr. Werner Burkart, Deputy Director General

Distinguished Chairmen, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The International Atomic Energy Agency is a unique organization in the UN System contributing towards both peace and sustainable development. The Agency is often recognised for its role in the verification of international safeguards agreements, and its roles in nuclear safety and power. Lesser known are its contributions to programmes in food and agriculture, human health, protection of the environment, and importantly for this conference, its contributions to water resources management.

An adequate supply of freshwater is one of the most fundamental needs of all people. Nuclear sciences and their applications provide cost effective, and often unique solutions to satisfy such basic human needs.

The fact that freshwater on earth moves in a cycle, evaporating from the oceans, forming clouds, precipitating, and reaching the sea again through rivers, has been known in all religions and cultures for thousands of years. Yet accurate characterisation of distribution and availability of freshwater on the earth remains a problem. Also, the threat of climate change with consequent changes in the hydrologic cycle and the potential to affect the availability of freshwater is real, and still not understood. It is this lack of knowledge that poses a great challenge to mankind today.

The Agency's Water Resource programme aims to increase the knowledge base and scientific capacity for the assessment and management of water resources. The Agency leads in the field of isotope hydrology, a technique that assists countries to assess and track the origin, renewal and pollution of freshwater resources, and to improve or develop resource management strategies. We have a vigorous programme to improve the scientific understanding of the water cycle, which was an issue that was highlighted in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation arising from the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

For over 40 years, the Agency has assisted its Member States to better understand and manage their water resources. It is committed to be a partner in the socio-economic development of its Member States, particularly those in Africa. Nearly 45 projects in the Agency's programme of Technical Co-operation are being implemented every two years, with the objective of gaining scientific knowledge to improve the management of rivers, lakes, and groundwater resources. Here in Addis Ababa, the Agency assisted the city authorities to bring into production a new groundwater field that now meets nearly 40% of the local water

demand. Resulting from that project, a critical need was identified to assess fully the groundwater resources across the whole of Ethiopia. The Agency was pleased to assist the Government in developing a national plan of groundwater assessment.

A major component of the Agency's Technical Co-operation programmes is the development of local expertise, with the aim of developing substantial human resources and institutional capacity within Member States. More than 650 scientists worldwide have been trained over the last 5 years in various aspects of water quality and quantity assessment and monitoring.

An important aspect of our programmes is ownership. Secretary General Kofi Annan observed a few years ago that, "after 40 years of technical assistance programmes in Africa, 90 percent of the \$12 billion in technical assistance was still spent on foreign expertise". The Agency's programmes make great efforts to recruit project experts from within the region, often experts that we have ourselves trained. This strengthens both the technical cooperation between national and regional institutions, and promotes ownership of the technologies that can bring about lasting and sustainable solutions to the problems.

Better management of freshwater resources may appear a daunting task. But it is certainly possible, particularly if we all work together effectively and as partners. I can assure you, that the Agency remains dedicated to contributing its share to this task.

I wish you all success in the Conference.

Thank you.