

## **Accelerating the recovery from the corona virus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels - Africa's Key Messages**

### **Introduction**

1. In December 2016, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) unanimously adopted the resolution [“International Decade \(2018–2028\) for Action – Water for Sustainable Development”](#) to help put a greater focus on water during the ten years ahead. UN Member States expressed deep concern over the lack of access to safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene and over water related disasters, scarcity and pollution being exacerbated by urbanization, population growth, desertification, drought, and climate change.
2. The African Union Commission(AUC), African Development Bank(AfDB) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) response to the UNGA resolution for the Mid Term Review of the Water Action Decade follows a joint approach to global matters in which they form a **“three-legged African stool”** which attains stability when all its legs (effort) work in tandem, synergy, linkage, coordination and complementarity.
3. African stakeholders (both governments and civil society) and UN agencies took stock and reaffirmed their commitment to solving Africa’s water crisis and to collectively implement the actions envisaged in the African Water Vision 2025, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 2030) on water (SDG 6) and the AU Agenda 2063.
4. The African Regional Consultations provided an opportunity for WASH transformation and building back better from covid. These opportunities included:
  - a) Increased availability and access towards progressive realization of human right to water and sanitation.
  - b) Enhanced communication and coordination between Water and other sectors.
  - c) Increased innovation and efficiency in processes and resource use.
  - d) Advocating the earmarking of additional financial, institutional and human resources to the water sector.

It also contributed to a common approach, based on updated data/information from the SDG custodian agencies, to the Mid-Term Review Conference and set out a Road Map for effective preparations.

### **Progress made in achieving objectives of International Decade of Action**

#### **5. *Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (UNICEF, WHO)***

There was steady progress at all levels and in all sub regions in the percentage of the population using safely managed, basic, limited, unimproved sources of water for each sub region and for urban and rural areas prior to the Covid pandemic but the ***rate of improvement needs to be drastically increased to meet the goal of universal coverage by 2030.*** A similar but ***inadequate trend was recorded for sanitation*** as percentage of the population using safely managed, basic, limited, unimproved sanitation facilities as well as open defecation by sub region and for urban and rural areas. It is observed that ***208 million people in the AU member countries resort to open defecation.*** The trends in access to hygiene facilities from 2015-2020 show that 839 million people in Africa lacked access to hygiene facilities This is especially

important since *hygiene is essential in reducing the disease burden in Africa* and ideally all sanitation facilities must have well-functioning and associated hygiene facilities to break common diseases cycles such as cholera, diarrhea and dysentery.

#### 6. *Wastewater Safely Treated (WHO, UN HABITAT, UNSD)*

There is an urgent need to collect or update waste water generation and disposal data specifically for the Africa region to be able to evaluate progress and the level of effort required to meet the SDG 6.3.1 target. Very few African countries have been reporting to the custodian agencies. Related to this, SDG 6.3.2 data on Water Quality collected between 2017 to 2020 show that over 3 billion people are at risk because the health of their river, lakes and groundwater is unknown. This is particularly true for Africa. *There is need for Africa focused data since anecdotal evidence in countries such as Ghana indicates that the situation is getting worse from activities such as illegal mining for gold and diamonds and use of chemicals such as mercury in the process.*

#### 7 *Improved Water Use Efficiency and Water Scarcity<sup>1</sup> (FAO)*

Agricultural production consumes about 70% of water worldwide and more than 85% of water in developing countries. Furthermore, by 2050, we expect that about 60% more food will be needed to feed the world; this figure goes up to 100% in developing countries. Therefore, food security has been and remains one of the most arduous features of our global water security challenge. Agriculture is the major water use and tends to have a much lower water use efficiency compared to other productive sectors.

Increasing agricultural water productivity is therefore a key intervention for improving water use efficiency in Africa. The agriculture sector has seen an 8 percent increase in their water use efficiency since 2015<sup>2</sup>. Other important measures include reducing water losses by tackling leakages in municipal distribution networks , promoting of sustainable waste-water management, encouraging innovation to develop low-cost water supply, and optimizing industrial and energy cooling processes. Overall progress made is shown in Fig 1 below.

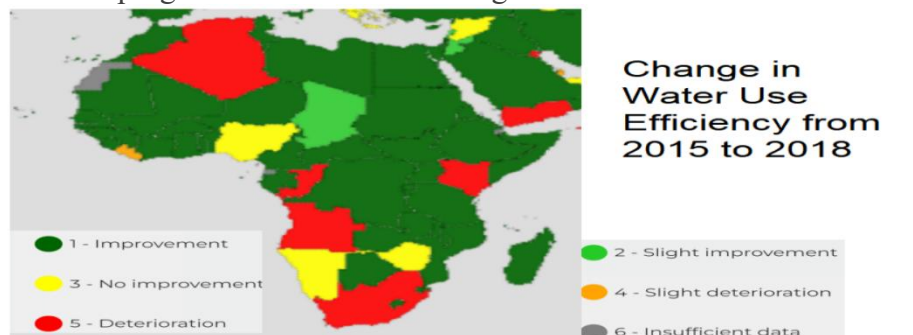


Figure 1- Change in Water Use Efficiency 2015-2018

<sup>1</sup> [6.4.1 Water use efficiency | Sustainable Development Goals | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(fao.org\)](https://www.fao.org/3/a/641e0e/)

<sup>2</sup> FAO presentation at the 1<sup>st</sup> Round of Africa Regional Consultations of the Mid Term Review of WAD.

8 **Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) (UNEP, UNECE, UNESCO).**

In Africa the implementation of SDG 6.5.1 Integrated Water Resources Management<sup>3</sup> shows that the region is lagging with subregional differences in terms of the enabling environment, institutions and participation, management instruments and financing. Figure 2 Illustrates progress made in the implementation of IWRM by member states by 2020 and shows projections for the period 2020-2030 under two scenarios, business as usual and required accelerated rate to meet the 2030 Target.

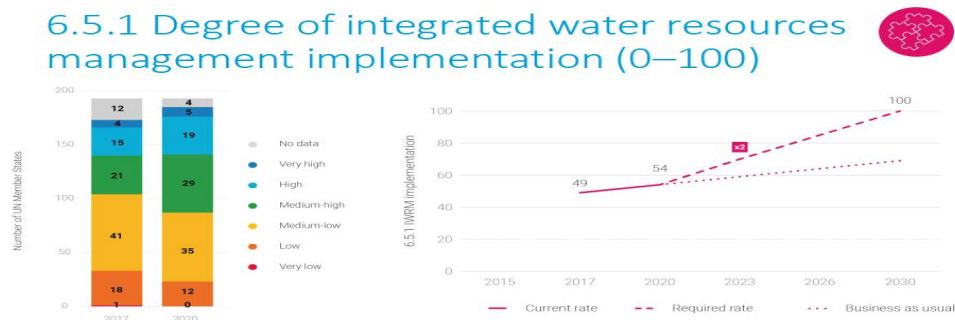


Figure 2 - Degree of IWRM Implementation in Africa

9 **Transboundary Water Cooperation.**

Out of 63 transboundary river/lake basins in the region, only the 14 major river/lake basins have co-operative legal and institutional arrangements with certain degree of responsibility for development of common resources. Similarly, out of the 106 transboundary aquifers only three have their waters covered by operational arrangements. The proportion of transboundary basins (river and lake basins, and aquifers) with operational arrangements for co-operation in place is generally remarkably high in Southern Africa, Central Africa and West Africa (between 90 and 100 percent coverage). . In the East, the major basin is the Nile which has 11 riparians and 2 major tributaries for planning purposes, i.e., the White and Blue Nile. This basin has been subject to major disagreements in recent years between lower and upper riparian states due to disagreement on article 14(b) of the Cooperative Framework Agreement and the construction of the Grand Ethiopia Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the Blue Nile tributary.

**Key Messages from Africa**

10 During the Covid 19 pandemic, water, sanitation and hygiene became a critical aspect of global health. In fact, water is also at the center of adaptation and mitigation on the effects of climate change and should be the focus of the accelerated efforts of the sustainable development goals. From the two regional consultation rounds in 2022 and the AMCOW 13<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee meeting the following are the key messages :

<sup>3</sup> [Indicator 6.5.1 “Degree of integrated water resources management implementation \(0-100\)” | UN-Water \(unwater.org\)](https://unwater.org/indicators/6.5.1-degree-of-integrated-water-resources-management-implementation-0-100/)

1. **Adopt the Dakar Declaration<sup>4</sup> of the 9<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum, Dakar, Senegal:** Endorse for adoption the Dakar Stakeholders' Declaration: *A Blue Deal for Water Security and Sanitation for Peace and Development* and invite the international community and all stakeholders to contribute to the effective implementation of Dakar Stakeholders' Declaration of the 9<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum<sup>5</sup> in Dakar, Senegal.
2. **There is a need to strengthen the Water Integrity Networks** to improve accountability, efficiency, and transparency in the water sector
3. **Increase domestic allocations and investment into the water and sanitation sector Africa:**  
It is imperative to raise the profile and vital importance attached to water and sanitation in national systems for economic planning including health. . This should also include **improved Investment for Water** (domestic use, , food security, industry, ecosystem conservation) infrastructure through smart/innovative financing (blended finance, green finance,). Funding must be **prioritized for operation and maintenance of water use sectors and sanitation infrastructure** as well as for financing research and development of appropriate Technologies to enhance water availability, access, system sustainability and **water quality monitoring programs**
4. **A call to action to release the full potential of the sanitation economy to benefit business and society in Africa:**  
Realize the untapped potential of private sector participation in the delivery of water, sanitation and hygiene services for all as a profitable business. Of particular urgency, is the need to address the sanitation failures associated with the disease burden constraining productivity of the labour force and degrading the environment. The African Sanitation Policy Guidelines<sup>6</sup> (ASPGs) provide the framework for promoting the sanitation economy.
5. **Promote increase in efficiency of water use as well as reuse of treated wastewater and agricultural drainage for agriculture and industrial uses. Enhance Water-related disaster risk reduction and management capabilities in Africa:** Promote proactive approaches to flood and drought management centered around the pillars of monitoring, forecasting and early warning vulnerability and impact assessment, as well as preparedness, mitigation and response.
6. **The establishment of an AMCOW Multi-Donor Trust Fund and a Partners Platform** for transboundary water cooperation would help facilitate transboundary cooperation. Increased investment (from public, private or PPP) should be guided to scientific and innovative, actionable research in order to enhance the understanding of the resource and the links between research, policy, and governance of transboundary water resources (in particular Transboundary Aquifers),
7. **There is a need to strengthen the existing legal frameworks** taking into account the UN Water Conventions ( 1992, 1997) for all inclusive R/L/A Basin Organizations.

<sup>4</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/documents/8821dakar%2520declaration.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://amcow-online.org/initiatives/african-sanitation-policy-guidelines-aspg>

- 8. Consolidate evidence-based and timely decision making at all levels:**  
Prioritise investment for monitoring, evaluation, knowledge and information management and learning. Member States need to foster research and application of knowledge and innovations to inform sector interventions targeted at improving knowledge of the resource (assessment and monitoring), water governance and management, as well as water, sanitation and hygiene services delivery. This is targeted at addressing the challenges faced to access reliable and complete data in the water especially groundwater and sanitation sub sectors which are lagging..
- 9. Revitalize the UN-Water Africa<sup>7</sup>** to efficiently and effectively respond to country and regional requests by facilitating connection to expertise, technical assistance, and support.
- 10. AMCOW** to start working on developing a new Africa Water Vision beyond 2025, this vision should be guided by the aspirations to achieve the goals of 2063 agenda, align with the accelerated implementation of SDG 6 and should be formulated in a “bottom-up” process from local, national, basin, sub regional to Africa-wide..

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<sup>7</sup> <https://repository.uneca.org/handle/10855/32418>