

# **Climate Change and Water Vulnerability: Strategies and Practices for Emerging Water Management and Governance Challenges**

## **Perspectives from Africa**

**Statement by Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ECA**

**Kronberg Castle, Copenhagen, Denmark  
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Dr. R. K. Pachauri, Director General of TERI,

Mr. Muhtar Kent, CEO of Coca Cola,

Colleagues from the UN and the private sector,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are glad that the Honorable **Ms Buyelwa Patience Sonjica**, Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs of the Republic of South Africa is here.

Let me first thank my friend Dr. Pachauri for inviting me to participate in this side event, and congratulate TERI and its partners for organizing it at a time when the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change are negotiating a post-2012 global agreement on climate regime.

We all agree that water is the basis of life on Planet Earth and a vital resource for social and economic development and for the maintenance of ecosystems integrity.

Water resources in Africa have been decreasing over time, mainly as a result of persistent droughts, rapid melting of snowcaps, and drying of lakes and rivers. And this phenomenon is being exacerbated by climate change. Water levels have decreased significantly in major lakes such as Lake Victoria and Lake Chad, which has already lost over 50% of its water since the early 1970s. Major rivers such as the Nile, Niger and Zambezi also face declining water levels.

The IPCC 4th Assessment Report vividly captures this challenge by projecting that up to 250 million people in Africa could be exposed to increased water stress by 2020. Decreasing water levels in the face of increasing demand on water for various uses (households, agriculture, industry, energy, etc.), will adversely impact the livelihoods of these people. Water-related problems would include, among others, constrained agricultural production, increased food insecurity, increased energy constraints, and conflicts resulting from competing demands for shared water resources.

In the face of increasing and competing demands for decreasing water resources, it is critical to boldly address issues of governance and cooperation in managing water resources.

### **Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Water resources policy-making involves various actors with different interests, stakes and powers. From the local to the national and international levels, these include interest groups from civil society, private sector and governments. As interests often conflict among, and sometimes within, these groups, good governance and strong cooperation at all levels is key to effective and sustainable water resources management.

At 10 percent, Africa's share of global fresh water resources closely matches its 12 percent share of the world population. But the distribution of this resource is uneven -- from areas of severe aridity like the Sahara and Sahel in the north, and Kalahari in the south, to the Congo basin, which is estimated to have fifty percent of Africa's fresh water.

This brings to the fore the critical issue of regional co-operation. Rivers and lakes know no boundaries. Rains and droughts do not carry passports. To harness the available water resources in Africa, it is necessary to firm up commitments to developing and strengthening major water-basin management as embodied in the Africa Water Vision 2025 and various sub-regional and basin-specific visions such the West African Vision, Lake Chad Basin Vision, and the Nile Basin Vision.

Examples in this regard include joint management of shared water resources through the SADC revised protocol and Lake Chad Basin Commission; Sustainable development and environmental protection through Lake Victoria Basin Authority and joint water resources development for hydropower and agriculture of the Senegal River Basin Organization. (OMVS).

The Nile, whose drainage area encompasses ten African countries, is becoming a model of regional cooperation and integration, especially with the agreement on a shared vision for the development of the basin, and the launch of the Nile Basin Initiative. With the assistance of the International Consortium on the Nile (ICCON), concrete programmes have been developed and funded from internal and external financial sources.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Improving governance over water resources is essential to improving people's livelihood opportunities, alleviating poverty and achieving sustainable development. Many countries in the arid and semi-arid parts of Africa face the double challenge of water shortage and governance. Poor governance often results in local water scarcities, even in countries that have abundant water resources due to lack of properly functioning institutions and adequate infrastructure to provide water and sanitation services and protect water resources.

Water decisions are anchored in governance systems across three levels: government, civil society and the private sector. Facilitating dynamic interactions among them is critical for good water governance. This is more so as opportunities to expand water supplies decrease and competition over available supplies escalate. Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) is an appropriate tool for resolving most of the water governance challenges with regard to social equity, economic efficiency, environmental sustainability, and political stability.

Progress in water policy development and governance in Africa is still uneven and considerable challenges remain. The African Ministerial Conference on Water (AMCOW) and the African Water Vision 2025 offer sound political and programmatic frameworks for the way forward in addressing these challenges.

Convinced that the appropriate answer to the challenges is often bigger than sub regional co-operation, we, at ECA, have been very supportive of African processes of developing mutually beneficial use of regional common goods. We have been among the prime movers of the process that ultimately resulted in the Nile Basin Initiative. In addition we have provided technical support for the Zambezi River Cooperative arrangements and other river basin organizations such as those of the Lake Chad, Niger River and Congo River.

And, to help African countries cooperate in tackling the challenges of climate change, ECA has partnered with African Union Commission and African Development Bank, to develop and implement a major Climate Information for Development in Africa (ClimDev-Africa) programme, which aims at improving climate-related observations and data, information services, adaptation, mitigation and policies, with emphasis on priority climate-sensitive sectors, chief among which are water resources. Within the same framework, ECA is establishing a dedicated African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC), aimed at generating, assembling and administering an adequate base of knowledge to strengthen efforts and capacities of African countries in mainstreaming climate change mitigation and adaptation policies in their priorities, frameworks and plans for sustainable development.

I thank you for your kind attention.