

Janneh says concrete programme necessary to render water accessible to rural Africa

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Marseilles, 14 March 2012 (ECA) – The United Nations Under Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has called on participants at the ongoing 6th World Water Forum to agree on concrete actions to facilitate the delivery of safe water to millions of Africans who remain in need.

Addressing a high-level session on the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Initiative and the Africa Water Facility, Mr. Abdoulie Janneh said that a measure of success for the Forum would be an agreement on renewed pledges to support African countries in meeting the MDG targets for water and sanitation, particularly in the rural areas.

Mr. Janneh was speaking on a panel on partnership for strengthening water security in Africa. He urged African countries and development agencies to come up strategies to harness the resources needed to transform Africa's immense water potential into assets for people to grow food and save millions of lives from water borne diseases.

Other members of the panel included Dr. Jean Ping, Chairperson of the African Union Commission; Mr. Donald Kaberuka, President of the African Development Bank; HRH The Prince of Orange, Chairman of United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB); The Hon. Edna Edith Molewa, President of the African Ministers Council on Water AMCOW (South Africa); and Mr. Bai Mass Taal, Executive Secretary of the African Ministers Council on Water.

The panel was unanimous in calling on African governments, bilateral and multilateral partners and other key stakeholders to help raise the resources (estimated at \$400 million over the next three years) required to ensure that safe water is availability in acceptable levels throughout Africa.

Mr. Janneh said that there is a clear need for a work programme that would lead to the achievement of the goal African countries set for ourselves by continuing to place water issues at the forefront of Africa's development agenda.

He renewed the commitment of ECA which hosts the secretariat of UN-Water/Africa to continue providing the support that will enable the water sector in the continent to build on its pioneering role as a model of inter-Agency coherence and synergy.

He recalled the dire situation of water needs in Africa and underscored its perplexing nature because the continent is actually "awash with large rivers, big lakes, vast wet lands and widespread ground water resources."

"Indeed, in the context of this 6th World Water Forum, it is notable that Africa is endowed with transboundary waters with international river basins that cover not less than 62% of its land area", he explained. Earlier, the President of the World Water Council, Mr. Loïc Fauchon said that Africa needs to bridge the gap between availability of water on the continent and the access its people have to it by fully integrating water accessibility and food security into national health strategies. "What use is it to feed children only to see them die for lack of safe water", he asked, adding that water is as important for health as it is for energy. He called for future climate change negotiations, including the future Green Fund, to put water issues on top of their discussions.

The Prince of Orange lauded efforts made by individual African countries, despite obvious financial constraints to supply water to the ever-increasing city populations, though regretting the fact that not so much progress had been made in the area of basic sanitation.

He called on Africa to begin to believe in its abilities saying, "a lot of good practices do exist on the continent and Africa countries should begin to look at each other for good examples."

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Jean Ping related different regional initiatives on water and said that the intra-African solidarity revealed during recent draughts in Somalia shows that Africa can contribute substantially towards resolving its water problems.

Mr. Donald Kaberuka, President of the Africa Development Bank, recalled different initiatives by the Bank and called for African ownership of its water projects, even as they continue to seek partnerships with development agencies.

Ms. Edna Edith Molewa, President of the African Ministers Council on Water (AMCOW) hammered on the theme of the Forum – Time for Solutions – arguing Africa is doing its best, as testified by the growing number of African countries that have increased the budgetary allocations for water provision.

"Now is the time to use water to wash away poverty and underdevelopment", she concluded.

The entire panel agreed that "a time for solutions" should also be an important step in preparing the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

This resonates with Africa's position which is that water must be placed at the heart of all the issues on the agenda at Rio+20:



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This resonates with Africa's position which is that water must be placed at the heart of all the issues on the agenda at Rio+20: for the green economy and in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

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