

## **Africa's uneven water distribution calls for stronger regional cooperation, says Janneh**

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Copenhagen, Denmark, 12 December 2009 (ECA) - The uneven distribution of water resources in Africa warrants stronger regional cooperation and effective water governance on the continent, said UN Under Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Abdoulaye Janneh, today in Copenhagen as the 15th session of the Conference of the Parties entered its sixth day.

In a remark at a side event to launch a White Paper on Climate Change and Water Vulnerability, Mr. Janneh said water resources in Africa were characterized by severe aridity in the Sahara, Sahel and Kalahari as well as abundance in the Congo basin which, he said, is estimated to have fifty percent of Africa's fresh water.

The White Paper, which was prepared by the Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) in collaboration with Yale University, contains a review of the impacts of global climate change on water; an assessment of water security and resource management challenges as well as viable options for water resource management for various sectors and regions, showcasing best practices in adaptation and mitigation.

At the launch, Mr. Janneh said water resources policy making involves various actors with different interests, stakes and powers. "As interests often collide among, and sometimes, within these groups, good governance and strong cooperation at all levels is key to effective and sustainable water resources management," he said.

He said regional cooperation was imperative because "rivers and lakes know no boundaries; rains and droughts do not carry national passports."

Mr. Janneh said many African countries in the arid and semi arid regions face the double challenge of water shortage and governance. "Poor governance often result 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".

In order to harness the available water resources in Africa, Mr. Janneh called for firming up of commitments which African countries had made to develop and strengthen major water basin management, as embodied in the African Water Vision 2025 and various sub regional and Basin-specific visions such as the West African Vision, Lake Chad Basin Vision and the Nile Basin Vision.

He said ECA had supported African processes in developing mutually beneficial use of regional common goods. "ECA was among the prime movers of the process that resulted in the Nile Basin Initiative and provided technical support for the Zambezi River Cooperative and other river basin organizations in Africa," said Mr. Janneh.

To help African countries cooperate in tackling the challenges of climate change, he said, ECA had partnered with the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank to develop the Climate Information for Development in Africa (ClimDev-Africa) programme which aims at improving climate-related observations, data, information services as well as adaptation and mitigation policies.

Janneh said within the framework of ClimDev-Africa, ECA had also established the African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC) which will generate, assemble and administer an adequate base of knowledge to strengthen efforts and capacities of African countries in mainstreaming climate change mitigation and adaptation policies in their plans for sustainable development.

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