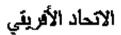
AFRICAN UNION





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UN Conference on Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the objectives of international decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development," 2018 - 2028

Possible themes for five Interactive Dialogues

- 1. Unlocking finance for water investment to promote equity, efficiency, peace and sustainable access.
- 2. Developing effective and reliable strategies for coping with climate change, growing water scarcity, shrinking water bodies and desertification.
- 3. Enhancing political will, advocacy, public awareness to promote partnership and secure commitment for sustainable water resources management including gender mainstreaming and youth engagement.
- 4. Improving water laws and regulations for effective water quality management, water pollution prevention and Transboundary water management for regional cooperation and development.
- 5. Strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems.

Brief description of the rationale and Background for the proposed themes

Threats to water resources cannot be taken for granted due to certain natural phenomena and human factors. The Africa Water Vision 2025 was adopted at the beginning of the millennium to sustainably manage Africa's water resources as a level for social and economic development. In addition, the July 2008 Sharm El-Sheikh Commitment on Water and Sanitation and its successor are the major policy frameworks guiding the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and multipurpose uses in the sector. However, since the adoption of these landmark policy instruments, many trends and changes have taken place and others such as the emergence of the global pandemic of COVID 19 and the EBOLA Virus Disease, which have now broadened the scope of this important and crucial sector.

The latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC6) also brings dire warnings on water resources and the survival of Planet Earth. Many populations will face intensified water scarcity, water stress, rising sea levels and expansion of water will exacerbate saltwater intrusion and salinity. The Africa's Small Island Developing States are particularly vulnerable as well as the 38 Coastal States. Some Land Locked Countries will also experience issues of drought and desertification. Some lakes such as the Lake Chad is shrinking and the ice on Mount Kilimanjaro is melting. The impact of climate variability and climate change will no doubt have a severe impact on WASH.

There has been low public capacity to finance required investments in development and water is key to promote equity, efficiency, peace, and sustainable development including protection and restoration of aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems.

The need to increase political will, heighten public awareness and commitment among all stakeholders for sustainable water resources management, including participatory approaches for gender mainstreaming and youth involvement cannot be underscored.

Achieving sustainable financing for investments in water supply, sanitation, irrigation, hydropower, flood control and other uses for development of national and transboundary water resources to enhance effective water resources management is thus paramount.

It is high time for reversing growing man-induced water challenges on quantity and quality including overexploitation, pollution and degradation of watersheds and ecosystems.

The Decade for Action needs to ensure that women are firmly at the Centre of the Action. Evidence shows that women play a key role in water use and serve as the primary managers of water, sanitation and hygiene at household and community level. The nexus between water resources and gender equality also relates to women's personal wellbeing, dignity, security, livelihood and socio-economic advancement. It is unacceptable that in this day and age, the gap in development is so huge that women in some African communities still have to walk an average of 6km and carry a load of almost 20kg on their backs to fetch water which is mostly not potable in accordance with SDG Goal 6 on Clean Water and Sanitation.

In the face of the multiple variances and for the fact that sanitation has dragged so long behind water supply, there is therefore an urgent need for coherence and coordination at multiple levels and the AU Commission is fully committed to advocate for water and sanitation and to engage with all Partners in advancing water security, climate change resilience and also accelerating access to safe sanitation for all African countries and Regional Economic Communities in realization of Africa Agenda 2063: 'The Africa we want,' and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Goal 6 and other Goals reliant on water.