

Final Statement
issued at the conclusion of
Workshop for Water Utility Managers of Africa Region

We, senior managers (regulators and operators) of water utilities of the Africa Region, participated in a Capacity Building Workshop organized jointly by UN-DESA and UN-HABITAT in Nairobi, Kenya, from 6-8 December 2006.

We consider this workshop an important step in following-up the implementation of CSD-13 decisions, especially those related to improving the performance and effectiveness of water utilities in provision of sustainable water and sanitation services.

We appreciate the political support African Minister's Council on Water (AMCOW) is providing to accelerate the implementation of water and sanitation agenda in the region, and request AMCOW to continue providing similar support to the water utilities.

In the workshop, we discussed issues and challenges facing water utilities and operators; mechanisms to strengthen institutional governance and accountability; financing needs for expanding water and sanitation services, especially for the poor; rationalization of tariffs and subsidies; role of partnerships in enhancing the efficiency of water utilities; and capacity building needs of water utilities.

We understand that the proceeding of the meeting will be compiled by the workshop organizers and shared with the participants in due course of time. Meantime, we endorse the following summary of conclusions and recommendations emerging from extensive discussions during the four thematic plenary and three working group sessions.

1. Public water utilities remain the leading players in the provision of water and sanitation services in the region. Since performance of these utilities can be constrained by limited technical, financial and institutional capacities, programs should be developed and implemented to overcome the capacity gaps. These programmes should be targeted at educational training, monitoring research and forecasting, legislation and regulation as well as sustainable financing of infrastructure.
2. Improving the performance of water utilities is a process, which needs commitment, support and participation of all stakeholders, especially the national and local governments. Towards this aim, the governments should consider providing due autonomy to public utilities in the design and implementation of strategies leading to efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, accountability, sustainability and combating corruption.

3. Financing has to be increased to improve and extend safe and adequate access to water and sanitation to all. For this purpose, all potential sources should be explored and tapped. In this regard, much can be achieved by blending, pooling and co-financing of ODA and local resources, credit worthiness of utilities, as well as better management of water utilities which is imperative to acquire additional funds. The need to look beyond traditional revenue generation mechanisms (such as tariffs and subsidies) was emphasized, and utilities were encouraged to explore innovative solutions to mobilize local resources. The government at both the local and national level should take a greater effort in financing water and sanitation.
4. Many countries in the region have utilities or organizations that carry out the dual functions of regulatory and operational activities. This could lead to a conflict of interest, and may give rise to lack of transparency, accountability and poor delivery of services. Therefore, separation of these functions was recommended to be a pre-requisite to improve the performance of public utilities in delivering water and sanitation services.
5. Benchmarking of utilities was recognized as an important management tool to enhance their performance and accountability. Towards this aim, it is essential to implement actions such as: criteria for customer satisfaction, evaluating the performance of utility managers, water quality evaluation, serving the poor as well as creating gender balance in the utilities etc.
6. The observed lag in the sanitation sector deserves special attention and needs to be tackled within the framework of integrated water resource management.
7. Developing partnerships among water operators was considered as an important mechanism through which less efficient utilities can learn from more competent utilities on a not-for-profit basis. Towards this end, participants supported the idea of developing and institutionalizing Water Operators Partnership (WOP) mechanism at the global level geared towards promoting the exchange of experiences and facilitating contact among utilities.
8. The meeting requested UN-HABITAT to take further necessary steps in collaboration with its partners to transform this concept into reality and establish a global WOP, while ensuring due participation of already existing international, regional and sub-regional networks and professional associations in the process.
9. It was recognized that existing network such as the Water Utilities Partnership (WUP) for the Africa region could play an important role in capacity building of utilities and connecting them with each other in the region, but it requires considerable support and strengthening both in terms of organization and operational activities. To explore how this could be done, the participants welcomed the proposal of IWA-ESAR (International Water Association, East and

Southern African Region) and Rand Water to host a meeting in South Africa during April 2007.

We request the organizers of this workshop to take necessary steps in collaboration with the relevant partners to implement the above recommendations, and keep us informed of subsequent developments and progress on follow-up actions.

We appreciate UN-DESA and UN-HABITAT for organizing this workshop, as well as other international institutions such as WSP, SIWI, UN-ECA, UNU, African Union, WaterAid, UNESCO IHE, IWA, UNSGAB for their contributions to this workshop.

8 December 2006.
Nairobi, Kenya