



Position of the African Union for the purpose of the conference held by Forum for 21st Century on 29 November 2011 reflected in the first draft of the negotiation paper, regarding the global water issues.

The African Union would like to thank the Forum for 21st Century initiating the discussion and organizing the conference on global water issues. While Africa uses only about 4 per cent of its renewable fresh water resources, water is becoming one of the most critical natural resource issues. The African continent is one of the two regions in the world facing serious water shortage. More than 300 million people in Africa lack adequate access to safe water. The Union express its appreciation of the opportunity to renew and refocus the attention of the international community on the water problems. At the same time we express our full support towards solving the challenges occurring in the new global scenario. After an in-depth analysis of the draft proposed by the Forum for 21st Century let us annotate it and include our suggestions as well. The African Union stresses that it supports all efforts to take part in making the global situation's performance more effective and that it sees the most important issues in assecuration of collective security in 21st century.

- ✚ The African Union promotes the proposal of The Forum for 21st Century to direct more financial resources towards creating new sources of water. Africa's financial needs are much greater than its domestic resources; therefore foreign sources should be tapped. At present Africa lacks the technology and financial resources to develop its full potential. Sudan faces serious water crisis. 12.3 million people only have access to contaminated water. Only 30% of the rural population and 40% of the urban population have clean drinking water. The Nile River is the main source of surface water in Sudan, but access to this river is limited for many citizens due to the surrounding terrain. Furthermore, even for those with access, the Nile itself experiences shortages depending on the weather. Somalia is facing a severe water shortage, as well.
- ✚ We welcome The Forum's offer of assistance by creating of new wells. We are ready to discuss the proposal of creating a committee which would have this agenda in its description and will process propositions of NGOs or the private sector to create these wells. But we also recognize that the primary responsibility for ensuring the sustainable and equitable management of water resources, in Africa, rests with our governments and peoples. The multiple challenges confronting our continent have led to the adoption, by the African Heads of State and Government of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The already ongoing subregional initiatives in Africa provide solid foundation for our strategy. The Ministers responsible for water resources, in this regard, have a special role to play.
- ✚ The African Union agrees with the Forum that there are weak institutional arrangements and legal frameworks for the ownership, allocation and management of water resources in Africa. We express our appreciation for the commendable efforts of The Forum for 21st Century to support the local NGOs and private sector with possible legislation problems in the countries, communication with authorities and know-how provided by governments who would be represented by officials in the committee. We welcome help with funding



local wastewater treatment plants, as well. There is an increased awareness of the fragility of the African water resources. Examples of African responses include the institutionalisation of the African Ministerial Conference on Water, the ratification of all global environmental conventions, the formulation and implementation of various environmental action plans, rules and regulations and conservation strategies. The African Union articulates reforming water-resources institutions to establish good governance as its strategic challenge.

- ✿ The African Union welcomes the intention of the Forum to lower the amount of water used in industrial production, promote and support development of new technologies that have an impact on water consumption. We would like to add, that the attention should be paid also to the agriculture. We recognise that agriculture is the largest user of water in Africa, accounting for 88 per cent of total water consumption. Aquatic species, habitats and ecosystems are also at risk. With increasing water demand throughout Africa to support greater agricultural productivity, industrial expansion, rural and urban growth and more water to meet human needs means less for maintaining aquatic ecosystems and the many other species and environmental services they support.
- ✿ The African Union stresses the developing non-conventional resources such as desalination and re-use of water as a mean to meet urgent water needs. We promote great initiative of the Forum for 21st Century in creating new sources of fresh water with the method of desalination from salt water.
- ✿ We appreciate the financial support of projects aimed at the creation and maintaining needed water pipelines proposed by the Forum for 21st century.
- ✿ The African Union agrees proposition of equal numbers of seats and therefore an equal vote in the committee proposed by the Forum. Concerning the financial contribution to the fund, the most members of the African Union, especially LDCs cannot financially support the fund. As it was mentioned above, Africa lacks at the moment financial resources. In adopting the Millennium Declaration, in 2000, the world's Heads of State and Government identified a number of values, including tolerance and solidarity. We shall therefore, count on that new culture of international solidarity in tackling the concerns highlighted in this statement. It is hope of the African Union that future international support will be proportionate to the gravity and magnitude of the water and sanitation problems in Africa.
- ✿ We feel the responsibility for the solution of water problems in Africa and we recognize the need to tackle it together with the support of other countries. We propose to the Forum for 21st Century the cooperation in developing effective systems and capacity for research and development in water and for the collection, assessment, and dissemination of data and information on water resources.