



Ministerial Declaration

Adopted by Ministers meeting at the Gender, Water and Development
East London, South Africa
5 November 2014

We, Ministers with responsibilities for water affairs, environment and development from 46 countries throughout the world, have assembled in East London, Republic of South Africa to initiate discussions in implementing gender mainstreaming on actions required to increase water security and sanitation dignity so as to achieve sustainable management of water resources.

We consider that the Agenda 21, Johannesburg Plan of Action, World Summit on Sustainable Development Summit, Budapest Water Summit for Sustainable Development, reflected water is key to peace and stability and central to provide powerful multifaceted contribution in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

We consider the equitable and sustainable use and the protection of the world's freshwater resources a key challenge facing governments on the road to a safer, more peaceful, equitable and prosperous world. Combating poverty is the main challenge for achieving equitable and sustainable development, and water plays a vital role in relation to human health, livelihood, economic growth as well as sustaining ecosystems. The outcome of the Korea Water Summit on Sustainable Development must include decisive action on water issues.

We express our deep concern that at the beginning of the 21st century 1.2 billion people live a life in poverty without access to safe drinking water, and that almost 2.5 billion have no access to proper sanitation. Safe and sufficient water and sanitation are basic human needs. The world-wide struggle to alleviate poverty must bring safe and decent living conditions to those who are deprived of these basic requirements.

We confirm our resolve to reach the International Development Targets agreed by the UN Millennium Summit, in particular the target to halve, until the year 2015, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty and to halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger and are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water. We also confirm our resolve to stop the unsustainable exploitation of water resources by developing water management strategies at regional, national and local levels.

Water is needed in all aspects of life. For sustainable development, it is necessary to take into account water's social, environmental and economic dimensions and all of its varied uses. Water management therefore requires an integrated approach.

Governance

The primary responsibility for ensuring the sustainable and equitable management of water resources rests with the governments. Each country should have in place applicable arrangements for the governance of water affairs at all levels and, where appropriate, accelerate water sector reforms.

We urge the private sector to join with government and civil society to contribute to bringing water and sanitation services to the unserved and to strengthen investment and management capabilities. Privately managed service delivery should not imply private ownership of water resources. Service providers should be subject to effective regulation and monitoring.

We encourage riparian states to co-operate on matters related to international water courses.

Funding Gap

There is an enormous gap in funding investments in water infrastructure, maintenance, training and capacity building, research, and data generation.

It is urgent to close this gap using existing resources more efficiently and with additional financial resources from all sources: public investment budgets, capital markets, and community based finance, user and polluter charges; as well as increased international development financing from public and private sources particularly for developing countries to reflect the acute needs in the water sector.

Resources also need to be made available to assist developing countries to mitigate the effects of natural disasters and to assist in adapting to the impacts of climate change.

In this regard we highlight the importance of a specific mechanism for channelling investments and financial resources into water and women.

Role of the international community

We call on the international community to strengthen its commitment and its efforts to enable developing countries to manage water sustainably and to ensure an equitable sharing of benefits from water resources

Capacity Building and Technology transfer

We recognise that capacity building and innovative technologies including the improvement of indigenous technologies are needed to efficiently utilise water, control pollution and develop new and alternative water sources in water stressed countries. We will support capacity building programmes and information exchange to ensure the effective use of human, financial, and technical resources for water management.

Gender

Water resources management should be based on a participatory approach. Both men and women should be involved and have an equal voice in managing the sustainable use of water resources and sharing of benefits. The role of women in water related areas needs to be strengthened and their participation broadened.

We recognise that governments must immediately implement their international commitments to women's rights and gender equity in relation to water and sanitation;

All stakeholders must recognize that women's empowerment is essential to poverty eradication and environmental regeneration. Women, therefore, must be leaders in the development, implementation, and monitoring of viable initiatives and solutions.

We recognise that Local governments, utilities and the public sector must use participatory, gender-balanced and gender-sensitive working methods in developing sustainable, equitable and affordable water and sanitation systems, and water treatment infrastructure. Women must be key actors in the decision-making and development, implementation and monitoring of these systems.

Asserting our existing commitments

- *Towards the emancipation of women in Africa;*
- *To implement the AMCOW policy and strategy for mainstreaming gender in the water sector in Africa, that we signed in 2013; and*
- *To ensure that national water development and management fully align with our commitments to the Millennium Development Goals, the proposed Sustainable Development Goals, the human right to water and sanitation and the human rights to food, adequate standard of living, dignity, non-discrimination and participation.*

Commit:

- *To accelerate the implementation of the AMCOW policy and strategy for mainstreaming gender in the water sector in Africa in our countries by:*
 - *establishing or strengthening national-level Gender and Water Desks as well as a functional Gender Unit within the AMCOW Secretariat by 2015;*
 - *establishing national targets and a monitoring and evaluation framework for each of the seven pillars of the AMCOW gender policy and strategy, including sex-disaggregated indicators for the African context, following guidelines of the UNESCO World Water Assessment Program, by 2016;*
 - *reporting annually to AMCOW on progress on each of the seven pillars of the policy and strategy;*
 - *harmonizing the reporting on the AMCOW gender strategy with other gender-inclusive reporting commitments and;*
 - *proposing to AMCOW to introduce a Gender Day during the bi-annual Africa Water Week from 2016 onwards*
- *To call on our fellow African water ministers, through AMCOW, to commit to the same commitments as those listed in the above by 2015*
- *To promote learning from each other and the promotion of good practices in the gender and water and sanitation sector*
- *To promote the establishment of a Global Women for Water Fund for a sustainable follow up initiative of the High Level Gender Forum held in Tajikistan on August 2013.*
- *To propose to AMCOW to designate a Minister to be the champion for gender and water and sanitation in Africa*

We thank the government of Republic of South Africa for its hospitality and its determination to promote dynamic action on gender mainstreaming so as to promote water sustainable development agenda.