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**SPEECH OF HER EXCELLENCY MRS RHODA PEACE TUMUSIIME**  
**THE COMMISSIONER FOR RURAL ECONOMY AND AGRICULTURE,**  
**AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

**ON THE OCCASION OF**

**THE 10th MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE**  
**AFRICAN MINISTERS' COUNCIL ON WATER (AMCOW)**

**Radisson Blu Hotel, Sandton, Johannesburg, South Africa**  
**21 - 22 October 2011**

- Thank you Facilitator, Mr. Zikora Oseloka,
- Honourable Edna Molewa, Minister for Water and Environment Affairs of the Republic of South Africa and President of AMCOW
- Honourable Ministers responsible for Water and Sanitation in the Member States of the African Union,
- Partners
- Distinguished Guests,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to attend this important meeting and to address you, Honourable Ministers who are responsible for one of the key strategic sectors for Africa's development. I would like to, first of all, convey to you fraternal greetings from the Commission of the African Union and specifically from the Chairperson of the Commission, His Excellency Dr Jean Ping.

Allow me to also express our deep gratitude to the Government and people of the Republic of South Africa for graciously hosting us. In a special way, I would like to thank Hon. Edna Molewa for your leadership as President of AMCOW.

This 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the AMCOW Executive Committee takes place at a critical juncture. It precedes the marking of AMCOW's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary next year. It also takes place as we come to the close of a year in which much of Africa has endured serious challenges including the devastating flooding in Southern Africa; severe drought and famine in the Horn of Africa; and social unrest in part due to soaring food and commodity prices. Given the vitality of water to improving livelihoods; ensuring food security; generating energy; providing transportation; and driving economic development, and also that it is a crosscutting factor in the challenges that I have just mentioned, it goes without saying that the hopes of our people are pinned to the political guidance of this venerable Committee to ensure that we stay the course towards the Africa Water Vision 2025 of:

***“An Africa where there is an equitable and sustainable use and management of water resources for poverty alleviation, socio-economic development, regional cooperation, and the environment”.***

Honourable Ministers,

The wording of the AMCOW mission

***“to provide political leadership, policy direction and advocacy in the supply and management of water for sustainable social, economic, environmental development and the maintenance of Africa’s ecosystems”***

could not be more pertinent particularly as we prepare for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20); and, even before that, as Africa prepares to host the world here in South Africa for the 17<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Africa will be championing the call to action to achieve food security, climate change adaptation and mitigation for sustainable development.

To this end, as many of you are aware, the Heads of State and Government of the African Union decided that at COP17, we mount an African Pavilion where all the pertinent initiatives depicting best practices and success stories on the African continent will be show-cased. I am glad to report that we have received enthusiastic response from AU Member States preparing to participate in the African Pavilion. I am also pleased to note that AMCOW is in advanced stages of arranging facilitation for two round-table discussions on water and climate change adaptation and mitigation. This has to be applauded especially since water and related resources will be the medium through which many of the anticipated impacts of climate change and variability will be felt.

Honourable Ministers,

I note that during the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of your Executive Committee, you will be deciding on strategic directions regarding:

- implementation of the Sharm El-Sheikh Commitments and the eThekweni Declaration;
- strengthening the financing of action programmes and the AMCOW Secretariat’s operations; and,
- partnership arrangements, among others.

As I wish you successful deliberations, allow me to briefly reiterate seven key messages of the *Sharm El-Sheikh Commitments for Accelerating Achievement of Water and Sanitation Goals*:

1. to raise the profile of sanitation;
2. to address issues pertaining to agricultural water use for food security which constitutes the highest percentage of water consumption;
3. to create an enabling environment and develop action plans for achieving MDG targets on water and sanitation by 2015;
4. to ensure the equitable and sustainable use, as well as promote integrated management and development of national and shared water resources in Africa;
5. to build relevant institutional and human capacity, enhance information and knowledge management, as well as strengthening monitoring and evaluation;
6. to increase domestic financial resources allocated to water and sanitation development activities; water and sanitation need to be well-mainstreamed in PRSPs and,
7. to annually report on progress made in the implementation of commitments on water and sanitation to the AU Summit; the next Summit in in January 2012 in Addis Ababa.

Honourable Ministers,

We note with appreciation the significant achievements made towards those goals, as a result of your political guidance and your able stewardship of AMCOW in advancing Africa's water agenda. As we approach the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of AMCOW and look to its next decade, I hope you will all agree with me that your continued leadership will be critical in not only bridging the gap between policy and action, but also consolidating the gains and achievements of the last decade.

Before I conclude, I wish to reaffirm the commitment of the Commission of the African Union to support AMCOW in capitalising on the opportunities and developments towards achieving the aspirations of AU Member States in realising the goals pertaining to provision of adequate, safe and accessible water for socio-economic development of Africa.

Thank you.