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**6th World Water Forum
High Level Discussion on Strengthening Africa's Water Management Function at
Sub-regional Level**

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

**Palais d'Europe, Peu 1 -Europa 1, Marseille, France
15 March 2012**

- Your Excellencies;
- Distinguished Partners of the Water Agenda in Africa;
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
- Distinguished Guests,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour of conveying to you cordial greetings and best wishes from the African Union Commission.

It is also with appreciation to the organising committee that I take this opportunity to address you at this High Level Discussion on ***Strengthening Africa's Water Management Function at sub-regional level.***

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is gratifying that we are gathered here today under the auspices of, particularly, the African Ministers' Council on Water; but also the World Water Forum.

1. It is important to note that AMCOW is on a mission to provide political leadership, policy direction and advocacy for the protection, management and efficient utilisation of all Africa's water resources for sustainable social, economic and environmental development; and for the maintenance of Africa's ecosystems in furtherance of both the vision of the African Union for a united, strong, secure and prosperous continent.

Indeed, AMCOW embodies the collaboration and commitment of African governments, regional institutions, civil society groups, development cooperation partners and financial institutions towards the African 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".

2. We are further pleased to note that the design of AMCOW's policy objectives and its current triennial workplan 2011 – 2013 are founded on efforts to accelerate the achievement of the aspirations of the African Water Vision 2025, which was in turn conceptualised at the inaugural edition of the World Water Forum in Morocco in 1997. The

firm foundation and the positive efforts prove the rightfulness of the Abuja Declaration 2002, which formally established AMCOW, and was a culmination of a long process to forge and formalise a coordination structure for water policy dialogue and formulation in Africa to attain the Vision.

I am sure you will all agree with me that in the years since Morocco and Abuja, major political commitments have been made towards alleviating some of the challenges facing the water sector in Africa. As a result, there has also been a significant increase in the level of awareness of:

- regional water and food security;
- transboundary water resources management;
- hygiene and sanitation;
- climate change; and
- water related disaster risk management issues.

It is also pleasantly evident that these are also the key issues around which the 9 targets of the Africa Regional Process are centred.

It is on the basis of the above that the Africa Regional Paper at the 5th edition of the World Water Forum in essence highlighted the fact that the point had been reached where there needs to be greater convergence between the high level commitments and delivery through concrete unambiguous actions, strengthening and scaling up of existing mechanisms and initiatives, and refinement of strategies to close gaps.

For the 6th edition of the World Water Forum, the Africa Region Process has accorded due cognisance to the selfless contributions by the various partners and stakeholders in bridging the gap between policy and action on water issues, as well as celebrating the achievements to date. The 9 targets to be presented here during the course of this week, speak to and are consistent with the commitments made by the AU Heads of State and Government in the ***Sharm and El Sheikh Declaration***; the ***Tunis Declaration on Accelerating Socio-economic Growth through Water Security***; and the ***EThekweni Declaration on Sanitation***, among others. More importantly, the proposals for the post-Forum actions aim to consolidate the gains and achievements of AMCOW and partners in implementing those political commitments, as well as the Forum Solutions.

It is our wish and hope that the proposed Action Plans place emphasis on scaling up existing solutions or adopting new ones to accelerate progress. I am aware that they also place emphasis on monitoring, evaluation and reporting. AMCOW and its structures have a greater responsibility now to ensure that the solutions identified are regionally shared, owned and implemented at national and local levels. Additionally, it has a responsibility to ensure that effective mechanisms are in place in each country to monitor the extent of progress for their own decision-making, and for reporting back to the policy organs of the African Union.

The approach proposed under Target 6 is to draw on the unique regional and strategic advantages, presented by various fora and established regional institutions, to create and support water divisions that will drive necessary action at the appropriate level. It envisages that the Water Divisions once established will play a key role in intensifying the level of activity around water issues. Furthermore, they will not only strengthen regional governance mechanisms and water sector management arrangements, but also catalyse collaborative action by States, River and Lake Basin Organisations and Regional Economic Communities for the implementation of the various political initiatives for improving water management in Africa.

As I wish you successful deliberations, allow me to reaffirm the AUC's commitment to step up support to the process of implementing the solutions and approaches agreed upon in this session and the other eight Africa Process sessions at the Forum. It goes without saying that the time for action is long overdue, we need to act now to save the generations to come.

Thank you.