



**TALKING POINTS FOR  
H.E. MAHMOUD ALI YOUSSEF  
CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION  
FOR THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE THIRD AFRICAN  
IMPLEMENTATION AND PARTNERSHIP CONFERENCE ON WATER  
(PANAFCON-3)  
27-29 May 2025, Lusaka, ZAMBIA**

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- ✓ Excellency Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia,
- ✓ Excellencies Representatives of Head of States and Governments
- ✓ Hon Cheikh Tidiane Dieye, Minister of Water and Sanitation of the Republic of Senegal, and President of African Ministers' Council on Water
- ✓ Hon. Eng Collins Nzovu, Minister of Water Development and Sanitation of the Republic of Zambia
- ✓ Hon. Ministers of Water and Sanitation of the various countries
- ✓ Her Excellency Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations
- ✓ H.E. Jozef Síkela, Commissioner for International Partnerships of the European Union
- ✓ H.E. Elias M. Magosi, Executive Secretary of the Southern African Development Community
- ✓ Dr Beth Dunford, Vice President, Agriculture, Human and Social Development of the African Development Bank
- ✓ Hon. Sheal Mulyata, Provincial Minister for Lusaka Province

- ✓ Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners
- ✓ Representatives of International and Continental Organisations
- ✓ Our Development Partners present.
- ✓ Members of the Media
- ✓ Youth and Women Groups and People with Special Needs.
- ✓ Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen
- ✓ Fellow Africans

1. I bring you greetings from H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, who would have loved to be in our midst today but unfortunately due to equally pressing matters of our continent, he tenders his apology.
2. Excellencies, Honourable delegates, it is an honour to express our gratitude to H.E Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia; and the People of this great Republic for the legendary hospitality accorded to us since our arrival to this beautiful city of Lusaka.
3. Allow me to also thank H.E. President Hichilema for hosting the Third African Implementation and Partnership Conference on Water (PANAFCON-3) that we are officially initiating today in Lusaka, Zambia for 27-29 May 2025, under the theme ***“Assuring Inclusive and Climate-Resilient Water Security and Sanitation for the Africa We Want”***
4. We are also honoured to have the Honourable Ministers responsible for Water and Sanitation across our rich and beautiful continent of Africa.
5. A warmly welcome to the Honourable Ministers, Members of Parliament, and representatives of the various organisations including the wider water and sanitation community of Africa.

***Excellency, Honourable Ministers***

6. Africa must recognise water as a critical resource and an enabler for sustainable socio-economic development!
7. **WHY?** Because Africa's aspirations for economic growth; social transformation; regional integration; trade; peace and security, collectively coined as Africa's Agenda 2063, is dependent on sustainable water availability.
8. Africa cannot achieve the Aspiration of Agenda 2063 or the Sustainable Development Goals without reliable supply of water.
9. For example, how can we produce food and address hunger in a changing climate without water for irrigation?
10. How do we switch to clean energy under the framework of a just energy transition without water supply?
11. The list goes on and it is the same for our industrialisation goal, and on the health front, COVID-19 has reminded us about the importance of water as it relates to hygiene and sanitation.
12. In this respect, the African Union Commission has been elevating the water and sanitation issues to the level of Heads of State and Government, and promoting direct connection of water with national development plans. This is a critical paradigm shift, not only in our approach of managing our water resources but also in our appreciation and valuing of water.
13. Allow me, Excellency and Honourable Ministers, to commend our Heads of State and Government for recognizing the catalytic role of water and sanitation in our development agenda as demonstrated by the adoption of water and sanitation as the AU Theme for 2026 - ***“Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063”***
14. This decision of our leaders is also informed by the fact that despite abundant water resources both surface and underground ones, Africa still has about 400 million people without access to safely managed water and 800 million without access to sanitation.

15. Yes, we have deserts and are experiencing increased frequency of droughts but what Africa lacks is sustained investments in water and sanitation development including in maintaining water infrastructure.
16. This is particularly a challenge in our cities where infrastructure built many years before are no longer able to cope with the growing population.
17. It is for this reason that our leaders in their wisdom developed the Africa Water Investment Programme which is supporting member states to develop national water investment programmes and thus strive to close the investment gap in order to realise access to water and sanitation by 2030.
18. Excellencies and Honourable Ministers, climate change is one of the major challenges of our time and it is threatening our water resources and affecting the pattern and distribution of precipitation on our continent.
19. As the African Union Commission, we are working with partners to develop multi-country programmes aimed at supporting member states to access readiness funding from the Green Climate Fund, in order to help them build resilience of their water sector to the impacts of climate change.
20. We thank the Green Climate Fund because they approved Phase 1 of this project that is supporting 15 AU member states and we are now looking forward to Phase 2 of this important project.
21. Furthermore, recognising the huge gap to accessing sustainable water and safely managed sanitation services in Africa, and mindful of the role of water in building climate resilience in the various socio-economic sectors, Africa is preparing its new Water Vision and Policy.
22. I am glad to report to Your Excellency and Honourable Ministers that following regional consultations, we now have a draft Vision and Policy document, the summarized version of which was circulated to our Member States – we thank AU member states, the European Union and other partners for their financial contribution towards this process.
23. The development of the Water Vision and Policy is a joint venture with AMCOW and we are looking forward to your critical review and contribution towards its finalization and approval.

24. This PANAFCON-3 is intended to provide an opportunity to collect input aimed at enriching the current draft.
25. During the PANAFCON-3, we shall have thematic sessions that will generate policy issues or interventions to be incorporated into the draft Water Vision and Policy.

***Excellency and Honourable Ministers,***

26. The African Union Commission conveys its gratitude to the leadership and commitment of the Republic of Zambia in promoting climate-resilient and inclusive water security in Africa.
27. His Excellency President Hakainde Hichilema's role by being a member of the High-Level Panel on Water Investment for Africa, and his leadership in developing the Zambia Water Investment Programme that the President launched on 16 July 2022, on the margins of the 4th Mid-Year Coordination Summit of African Union Heads of State and Government here in Lusaka, is highly commendable.
28. We appeal to other AU member States to also place water at the centre of their development agenda given its role in sectors such as mining, tourism, agriculture, energy, fisheries and manufacturing.

**Excellency, Honourable Ministers**

29. The Water Vision and Policy alone does not take Africa far. ***We need to Act. Africa needs to Act-*** through developing and implementing its water investment programme towards climate resilient and inclusive water security.

***Africa needs to Act-*** through developing and implementing its water investment projects to ensure water security for all; and

***Africa needs to Act-*** through mobilising investment and finance for water security, mainly focusing on domestic sources of finance.

On this note, I would like to inform you that the African Union Commission in collaboration with the Government of the Republic of South Africa is organizing the Africa Water Investment Summit which will take place from 13-15 August 2025 in Cape Town, South Africa as part of South Africa's Presidency of G20. The Honourable Minister of the Republic of South Africa will shed more details.

### **Excellencies, Honourable Ministers**

30. Allow me the opportunity to assure you that the African Union Commission is committed to ensure that the new Africa Water Vision and Policy is formulated and adopted to place water and sanitation at the very heart of achieving the African Union's Agenda 2063.
31. As I conclude, Your Excellency, allow me the opportunity to thank the Government and People of the Republic of Zambia once again for hosting all of us here.
32. Allow me also to thank the co-convenors of PANAFCON-3, specifically the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Development Bank/Africa Water Facility (AfDB/AWF), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).
33. Let me also express our appreciation to all the partners and sponsors who generously supported this event.
34. Finally, I wish you all successful deliberations and productive dialogues during the three days of the PANAFCON-3.

I Thank You Very Much!