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South Africa host inaugural AMCOW technical expert committee meeting on issues of youth and gender inclusion

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The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) hosted African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) and its member entities to discuss issues around the inclusion of youth and gender equality in the water sector. The first of its kind, the technical expert committee meeting was held on the sidelines of the Department's National Water and Sanitation Youth Indaba in Limpopo Province on 25-26 July 2024.

The meeting adopted terms of reference for the committee, developed a consolidated action framework to drive the implementation of the Youth and Gender Inclusion Strategy and related goals for the next two years. There was also a discussion about strategic areas and priorities for youth, gender and social inclusion towards informing the development of the organisation's Post-2025 Africa Water Vision.

Addressing delegates at the meeting, DWS' Ms Pertunia Ramunenyiwa emphasised the importance of taking the inclusion conversation outside the meeting and back to respective operational spaces.

"Maybe we are talking too much among ourselves and we know what needs to be done. We need to go lobby those who still need understanding of what we mean when we talk about inclusion. We need males to be the face of this gender mainstreaming we are trying to achieve because as much as we talk about women in leadership position, it doesn't automatically imply that mainstreaming is actually happening. We need to look into that."

Some of the issues raised in the meeting were part of the topics covered during panel discussions throughout the Youth Indaba week.

Sareen Malik, the Executive Secretary of African Civil Society Network for Water and Sanitation, urged the team to put more effort into agreed goals and take advantage of the

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platforms already available to push the agenda of transformation. “Because of your contributions, efforts and your work I have no doubt that we will see tap water in every household in the continent, better health outcome, better education, better livelihoods in general and a vibrant continent come 2063. Even if some of us wouldn’t be there, but this is the legacy we will work on. Whether we will be remembered for it, it doesn’t matter”, he said.

AMCOW Senior Policy Officer in Water Resources Management, Joanna Fatch, extended gratitude to the department for availing itself and resources for the gathering.

“We are grateful for the generosity of the South African Government for hosting this event and pushing that something actually happens with regard to the Youth and Gender Inclusion agenda for the sector and the continent. We appreciate the resources you availed for this meeting and championing this transformative agenda for years. Your consistency is commendable” Fatch said.

“It is important to accelerate the actions that we have and already committed to doing. Let’s fulfil the ambitions of pursuing a future we want for the continent and one that is paved by social transformation based on inclusive economic growth. For that to be achieved we cannot ignore issues of youth, gender and social inclusion in its totality” she added.

The meeting was also held on a hybrid platform, allowing participation of representatives from member states and other role players in the sector who couldn’t make it physically to South Africa.

Mashilo Raletjena

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