

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY MS. BUYELWA SONJICA, MINISTER  
OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS, REPUBLIC OF  
SOUTH AFRICA, AT THE AMCOW EXCO MEETING, AT THE  
RADISSON BLU HOTEL IN CAPE TOWN ON 30 JULY 2010**

Fellow Honourable Ministers  
Executive Secretariat  
TAC President  
Distinguished Guests from the Water Sector,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I extend to you all, a warm welcome to this meeting devoted to advancing our collective efforts aimed at accelerating the implementation of the historic *Sharm El Sheikh* Commitments on Water and Sanitation and duly adopted by our African Heads of State and Government in 2008. These commitments represent Africa's roadmap to the Africa 2025 Water Vision as well as the 2015 Millennium Development Goals' targets on Water and Sanitation. It is instructive to observe that we are convening this EXCO of AMCOW on the heels of the highly successful 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup tournament which was held for the first time on African soil. Equally, it is most gratifying to formally welcome you to our shores.

Firstly, let me express gratitude and sincere thanks to all of you for accepting the invitation to this meeting. It is a meeting that will be helpful for us to give the necessary strategic and political direction to the executive.

Today's meeting marks what I will call "a preliminary performance review" of the implementation of the water political declarations that we, as Ministers and the

Executive have committed ourselves to, in ensuring that we meet the Millennium Development Goals. For us meeting the MDGs is not about numbers, but rather about changing the lives of our people for the better. As you may know, AMCOW has for some time recognized the need to coordinate and harmonize Africa's Water agenda to avoid duplication but rather strengthen institutional linkages and promote harmonization of activities between AMCOW, partners and other institutional formations that contribute to socio-economic upliftment on the continent.

Secondly, our meeting here comes in the wake of the 7<sup>th</sup> Session of our African Ministers Council on Water, held in Johannesburg a few months ago. During that session we took important decisions aimed at enhancing the prospects of our countries making greater progress towards the achievement of our regionally and internationally set targets with respect to water and sanitation. In the outcomes document of that session, we had agreed to carry forward a number of decisions and initiatives.

Our meeting here must enable us to exchange views on strategies for making AMCOW a more effective Specialized Technical Committee of the African Union in the areas of water and sanitation. That new mandate entrusted to us by our Heads of States and Government, means that AMCOW reports annually to the African Union.

Finally, the purpose of our meeting here is to facilitate our consideration of the state of AMCOW, notably its governance, including programmatic and operational arrangements. In that context, we need to determine how we can secure greater commitment and support for AMCOW, given the fact that it has now become a Specialised Technical Committee of the African Union. It was for this reason that we have asked all African countries through their Water Ministers to honour the agreed to annual contributions of US\$10,000 per country to compliment the means of implementing our own decisions.

The consolidation of the African agenda remains central to our foreign policy objectives. South Africa will continue to work towards achieving a vision of an African continent which is united, peaceful and prosperous. This vision of African unity has its roots in centuries of struggle on our continent and those waged by people of African descent elsewhere in the world.

Let me take this opportunity and inform you that most of us South Africans, Africans elsewhere in the continent and the diaspora, have not fully recovered from the hangover resulting from hosting the 2010 FIFA World Cup. It is more appropriate therefore to conclude that the success of this event will remain a glowing inspiration and pride of Africa for a long time to come

In conclusion, I wish to thank you for your committed participation and support for the process which led to the successful outcomes of the 7<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of AMCOW, held in Johannesburg, South Africa in November last year.

I therefore declare this meeting officially open; and I believe that, as informed by the decisions made in Johannesburg, 2010 and beyond, will be a highly significant time in tackling the enormous challenges of water and sanitation facing our continent. I believe that this meeting will accelerate the efforts that our Council has made in the past few years, and helped to prepare us for the significant challenges that still lie ahead.

**I thank you!**