

Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Water and Land Reform of the Republic of Namibia, and President of the Council of Ministers of AMCOW;

Your Excellency the Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment (ARBE) of the African Union Commission;

Honourable Ministers and Members of the Executive Committee of AMCOW;

Delegated representatives of some of the members of the Executive Committee of AMCOW;

Members of the AMCOW Technical Advisory Committee;

Representatives of our technical, funding and implementation partners;

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen;

All protocols observed.

It is with humility that I accept the honour bestowed upon me to serve Africa as the Executive Secretary of AMCOW. In so doing, I pledge to fully apply myself to transform AMCOW into an effective mandated organ of the African Union's efforts to assure water security in Africa.

Honourable Ministers, ladies and gentlemen

The role water management plays in ensuring human and environmental health; economic production; and climate resilience cannot be overemphasised. In this context, AMCOW has to be at the forefront of initiatives to realise "*a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development*", which is Aspiration 1 of Agenda 2063.

In the short-term, our leadership of this vital function has to be demonstrated by the ability to refocus the agenda on ensuring water availability.

Improving water access is essential for our Member States to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, restore growth and build resilience. The significance of this challenge to the Member States is emphasised by the numerous seminal decisions of AMCOW and the AU to implement programmes that include:

- i. *the Kigali Action Plan (KAP);*
- ii. *the Programme for Universal Access to Water Supply and Sanitation in Africa (2M4M);*
- iii. *the African Clean Village Programme (ACV);*
- iv. *the pan-African Productive Sanitation Programme (ProSan); and,*
- v. *the Africa Water Investment Programme (AIP).*

As the Executive Secretary of AMCOW, putting in place practical measures to achieve the objectives of these programmes will be my first course of action.

- i. I will revitalise our compact with the KAP beneficiary countries to catalyse construction of the identified 12,388 water supply facilities, and 154,658 basic sanitation facilities.
- ii. Secondly, I will re-establish the information flow channels and operational linkages with the National Focal Point persons who played an invaluable role in formulating the programmes. Similar linkages will be re-established for the AUC, AUDA-NEPAD, the RECs and the RLBOs.
- iii. Thirdly, I will rekindle our long history of strong partnerships with, among others, the African Water Facility; AfWA; UNICEF; BMGF; UNEP; WaterAid; SIWI; the World Water Council; the European Commission; EU Member Countries especially Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland; as well as the US State Department.
- iv. Fourth, I will ensure that the 2022 Africa Water and Sanitation Sector monitoring report to the AU Assembly is submitted for consideration at the January 2023 AU Summit. Subsequently, I will ensure regular periodic reporting to the African Union on the pursuit of water and sanitation goals.

Honourable Ministers, ladies and gentlemen

Gaining traction on the above initiatives will set AMCOW on a path to demonstrate relevance to the Member States, the African Union and our partners. It should follow that improved engagement with our leadership, partners and stakeholders will stabilise AMCOW's funding situation as a first step to long-term financial sustainability.

In the long-term, it is imperative to consolidate AMCOW's status as:

- i. a trusted facilitator of action to achieve water and sanitation goals in Africa;
- ii. a globally recognised convenor of key actors to realise the Africa Water Vision; the N’Gor commitments on water security and sanitation; and the SDGs; and,
- iii. the institution actively changing Africa’s label as a data-poor continent, at least within the water and sanitation sector.

A key priority is to raise the profile and value attached to water in national systems for economic planning and development. We need to inject new approaches into ongoing efforts to increase domestic allocations and investment into the water and sanitation sector.

I will, therefore, advocate for making the principles of valuing water the backbone of the action framework for the post-2025 Africa Water Vision. Application of these principles holds promise for highlighting the vitality of water security and sustainable sanitation to Africa’s agenda for economic growth and social transformation. In turn, a compelling case can be made for commensurate funding to the sector to strengthen water security. We need to improve the investment outlook for water infrastructure development, as well as improving water governance and management capacities at all levels.

Honourable Ministers, ladies and gentlemen

I also commit to ensuring that the post-2025 Africa Water Vision is aligned to, and is adopted as an implementation framework of Agenda 2063. A key element of this commitment is to fulfil AMCOW’s reporting obligations to the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union. The African Water and Sanitation Sector Monitoring reports are a useful tool for mobilising evidence-based action to achieve the goals of Aspiration 1 of Agenda 2063.

Over the next four years to the final milestone of the Africa Water Vision 2025, we will collectively work to strengthen the WASSMO system. The intent is to utilise the system to evaluate the extent to which the targets of the Africa Water Vision have been achieved. Starting with a report to the AU Summit on Water and Sanitation in Dakar in March 2022, the information will be used to plan for the transition to the post-2025 era.

With support from the Member States and partners, we will fully operationalise related AMCOW Decisions to broaden the scope of WASSMO to provide information on:

- i. first, sector financing for water resources development, utilisation and

- management;
- ii. second, progress in implementing the transboundary water projects under the Priority Action Plan of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa – PIDA-PAP; and,
 - iii. third, progress in delivering on the N’Gor Commitments on Water Security, Sanitation and Hygiene.

Honourable Ministers, ladies and gentlemen

These strategic goals will define the tenure of my leadership of the AMCOW Secretariat. They will be achieved with:

- i. the guidance of the policy organs of AMCOW and the African Union;
- ii. the ownership and involvement of the Member States; and,
- iii. the invaluable support of our partners, stakeholders and technical structures.

Collectively, we will institute the mechanisms to count every drop and make every drop count in the pursuit of the goals of Agenda 2063.

I thank you.