

Dr. Ania Grobicki, GWP Executive Secretary

Addis Ababa, November 26, 2010

At the opening of the AMCOW Ministerial Session

Madam President of AMCOW and Minister of Environment and Water Affairs of South Africa, Honourable Edna Molewa, Your Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen, my African brothers and sisters –

Partnership is what GWP stands for.

GWP is proud to be a partner of AMCOW, and we are committed to supporting AMCOW in operationalizing its workplan, which will be presented to you for approval later today. Our five Regional Water Partnerships in Africa are aligned with the five sub-regions of AMCOW TAC (Technical Advisory Committee) and will work together with them to implement the decisions which you, the Ministers, have taken – to manage, protect and develop water resources in the service of African societies.

Through the Country Water Partnerships, GWP has supported the development and implementation of integrated water resources management plans (IWRM plans) in 13 African countries, and has reviewed progress on IWRM planning and implementation in a further 26 countries. We wish to thank you, the Ministers, who have enabled this work to be carried out in your countries, and we wish to thank the partners SADC, ECOWAS, the African Development Bank and of course AMCOW for the wonderful support and partnership in this work.

We are especially pleased that this partnership with AMCOW has developed in the area of climate change adaptation, since the request was made to GWP by the AMCOW Executive Secretary in Abidjan in January 2008. We have worked together to bring the message to the climate community that climate change adaptation is all about better water management, in COP 15 in Copenhagen, in Bonn, and the same key message will be taken to COP 16 in Cancun next week. On the programmatic front, the framework programme on Water, Climate and Development has been introduced and discussed by AMCOW TAC, and will be presented to you today. The goals of the programme are clear: to reduce the risks that climate change brings, especially the increasing risks of both droughts and floods; to protect the gains that African societies have made, and to develop water resources further in a way that builds resilience to disasters as well as building strong economies.

I would like to repeat to you Trevor Manuel's words spoken in the opening plenary session of the 2nd African Water Week one year ago: "Lack of rain is now a matter of national security." The frequency and severity of these extreme climate events, namely droughts and floods, are increasing - and this can have serious consequences in the gains made in water supply and sanitation, and in meeting the MDGs.

Honourable Ministers, the goals of the Water, Climate and Development Programme will need many partners to work together to realize them, and we seek interested partners to join the programme,

especially partners from the National Meteorological Services and National Hydrological Services in your countries. We are especially happy for this opportunity to announce to you our strong partnerships with international organizations, with WMO and UNESCO, who work to bring the climate information from the global climate models and global climate information services to a regional level and to a country level. This information is essential in working on the issues of floods and droughts in the context of Integrated Water Resources Management. Both integrated flood management and integrated drought management will form an important part of the programme on Water, Climate and Development.

We are also very proud to have been working together with the African Development Bank, in support of AMCOW, in the field of financing water resources management. As we all know, developing water resources builds strong economies, supporting agriculture, energy and hydropower development, and industrial development, in the same way as the vital work of developing drinking water supplies and good sanitation builds strong societies.

One key message from the financing stream of the Africa Water Week was a warning about the large-scale investments in land (through Foreign Direct Investment, FDI) which are also having a huge and unforeseen impact on water. Some have said that these so-called “land grabs” are really “water grabs.” These water impacts must be controlled and regulated through strong water resources management.

A second key message is that government budgets and Overseas Development Aid should be used primarily for social purposes and public goods, such as drinking water supply and sanitation, while commercial funding should be used for water resources projects in the productive sectors, which can pay back loans. The money is there – yet each year large sums go unspent. Even more money is now becoming available in the shape of climate adaptation funds. The Country Water Partnerships can support your Ministries in preparing project proposals and in implementing the projects, bringing the local and regional expertise, insight and understanding necessary to develop what are called “bankable projects” – which more than pay for themselves over time.

In conclusion, on behalf of GWP, I wish to reaffirm our commitment to AMCOW, through the Regional Water Partnerships in Africa, to support you and to serve you, to implement your workplan, to support inter-country and inter-regional co-operation and a Pan-African vision.

God bless Africa! Thank you very much.