



## **STATEMENT BY**

**Donald Kaberuka**

President of the African Development Bank Group

**At the Welcome Dinner in Honor of Ministers and Guests  
of the First African Water Week, 26-28 March 2008**

*Tunis – 25 March 2008*

Your Excellency President of AMCOW  
Minister Habib Haddad, Minister of Agriculture of Tunisia  
Your Royal Highness, The Prince of Orange  
Ministers  
Excellencies  
Ladies and Gentlemen

1. It is a pleasure to see you in Tunis and I join Minister Haddad to extend to you a warm welcome. I thank the Tunisian Authorities and People for their hospitality. I want to assure you that our happiness at hosting this first Africa Water Week is commensurate to the issues before us.
2. Let me begin by observing that the choice of the theme of the First Africa Water Week “Accelerating Water Security for Socio-economic Development in Africa” reflects the veritable concern of the day, be it potable water for human consumption, for economic activities, sanitation, food production, energy and ecosystem protection, water security, must now be addressed.
3. Let me recall for you the statistics which are familiar to you:
  - (i) 340 million Africans lack access to safe water;
  - (ii) 500 million Africans have no access to sanitation;
  - (iii) Only 4% of Africa’s potential for irrigation, hydropower, water supply is developed;
  - (iv) Per capita water storage is less than 100 cubic meters compared to three thousand to six thousand in developed countries;
  - (v) out of 40 million irrigable hectares, of which only 10%, is cultivated, only an insignificant part is irrigated.

Africa’s urban population explosion – at a rate unique in history – is characterized by growing slums, unemployment, poor access to water, sanitation and health services which present us with challenges unique in recent times. Due to insufficient water storage infrastructure the devastating floods last year that caused death and suffering in 19 countries were preceded a few years earlier by widespread drought which was also a source of misery and mayhem.

4. As Africa’s premier Bank, it is our role to help our countries face challenges of this nature, old and new, threats of climate change, demography, urbanization, food security, water stress, competition for natural resources, pollution, disease and malnutrition.

Let me observe how inspired we are at the Bank are, at the progress African governments, stakeholders and partners have registered over the past few years in the domain of water and sanitation:

- The Sirte Declaration by Heads of State
- The African Water Vision and Framework

- The establishment of the African Ministers' Council on Water which has provided leadership strategic direction and a forum for advocacy and consensus building on water issues
- The establishment of the African Water Facility, which we are honoured to host, to support RMCs attain goals of the African Water Vision.

5. I have remarked on several occasions the remarkable performance by our economies in recent years, the longest period in recent years – and it is not all about price in the world markets for oil and minerals, but also results of many years of reform, improved governance and stronger proposals for stability.

The AfDB recognizes fully, the essential role it must play in sustaining this phase of growth. Our analysis is that to reduce poverty we need growth, but that growth must be sustained and shared. That is why in our strategy, we are focusing in a set of flagship areas that target the levers of growth. Among them we have focused on infrastructure, water and sanitation, private sector, regional integration, skills building institutions and capable states.

6. As many of you know, the Bank began a significant scaling up in rural water supply and sanitation five years ago. In addition, four complementary initiatives were developed with you and with partners and these have been pivotal:

- (i) The Rural Water & Sanitation Initiative
- (ii) The African Water Facility
- (iii) The Multi Donor Water Partnership
- (iv) The NEPAD Water & Sanitation Programme.

7. Conceived to address the problem of low access to water supply and sanitation in rural Africa, the RWWSI has grown to be the largest initiative in the Bank. Many of you were present at the launch here in Tunis in 2004. Since then 17 programmes worth 1.8 billion US dollars (of which the Bank contributed 750 million dollars) have been financed. I hope we can make faster progress with more resources.

The African Water Facility, only in its second year, has already provided 24 million Euros worth of financing to strengthen water governance, sustainable management of national trans-boundary water resources, feasibility studies and pilot investments.

I am also glad to inform you that the Bank's financing in the water and sanitation sector is up five-fold to 700 million US dollars.

8. Together, we are registering successes, from Uganda, to Mozambique and Morocco and elsewhere. A few months ago, the Bank hosted an International Conference on "Funding Mechanisms for Sustainable Management of the Congo Basin Forest Ecosystems" and thanks to a generous support by the UK who entrusted us with a Fund for the Basin ecosystems – this huge carbon sink for humanity. You will also know that the Africa Water Facility is supporting the establishment of the Congo Basin Authority and funding a feasibility study for the development the Inga.

Excellencies  
Ladies and Gentlemen

9. As someone said this morning, “business as usual” will not enable us to make the step change needed on the issues of water security. I invite you to think out of the box. I welcome warmly the increasing attention accorded by African Governments on water development in your budgets, in your national programs, for sanitation, water supply, irrigation, hydropower, flood control and water conservation. It is critical now to build capacity and to boost sector governance.

I urge donors and other partners, including NGOs to join in this capacity building effort especially at local community, municipal level for enhanced effectiveness.

10. It is clear to all of us that the financing requirements for water security and related infrastructure are a real challenge. This is why I applaud progress made in creating the conducive environment for deeper private sector investment. Time is long gone when this was conceived as a public sector domain exclusive. We want to work with you in catalyzing, in crowding in private sector investment and strengthening public utilities.

In the same spirit, we count on your support as we seek to manage the challenges of trans-boundary water basins and deepening markets in energy, water supplies in the context of our regional and continental integration.

Mr. President  
Your Royal Highness  
Excellencies  
Ladies and Gentlemen

I know that in the next two days, you will be deliberating on all these issues. Time is now ripe for a strategic, medium long term approach to water security in Africa and I want to assure you of the full support of the African Development Bank.

Thank you for coming and I wish you successful deliberations.