Kigali Symposium Communiqué on Systems Transformation towards the Implementation of the Africa Water Vision 2063 and Policy

Preamble

We, Ministers responsible for water affairs and sanitation, finance, planning and environment; mayors and local authorities; regulators; utility and service provider executives; development finance institutions and banks; regional economic communities; United Nations agencies; research institutions, civil society, the private sector and young water professionals, together with all other participants gathered in Kigali, Republic of Rwanda, from 17 to 21 August 2026 for the Africa Water and Sanitation Systems Leadership Symposium, held to accelerate water and sanitation transformation for the sustainable development of Africa;

1. Welcoming the designation by the 39th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union of "Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063" as the Theme of the Year 2026, as well as the launch of the Africa Water Vision 2063 and Policy which identifies strong governance, institutional capacity, and transformative leadership as the essential foundations of water security and sustainable development in Africa;
2. Recalling the All Systems Go Africa meeting held in Accra in 2022, which established that transformation of the water and sanitation sector must be African-led;
3. Noting that some progress has been made on the provision of basic water supply and sanitation services across Africa;
4. Concerned however that nearly 418 million people on the African continent still do not have access to basic drinking water and about 779 million live without basic sanitation while some 839 million are without basic hygiene services; further concerned by the scale of the sanitation financing deficit across the continent;
5. Cognisant of the peculiarities and challenges faced by Small Island Developing States, especially with increased vulnerability to the effects of climate change and exposure to water scarcity risk;
6. Inspired by the finding of the International High-Level Panel on Water Investments for Africa, convened by the African Water Investment Programme (AIP), that improved sector governance could generate about USD 11.5 billion each year, and domestic resource mobilisation of a further USD 17.5 billion;
7. Acknowledging the Water Investment Readiness Interim Report of the AIP-PIDA Water Investment Scorecard led by the AUDA-NEPAD;
8. Mindful that the outcomes of this Symposium contribute to the preparatory processes for the 2026 United Nations Water Conference in Abu Dhabi (8–10 December 2026), co-hosted by Senegal and the United Arab Emirates with Egypt, Ghana, South Africa and Zambia co-chairing the Interactive Dialogues, and equally to the 11th World Water Forum in Riyadh in March 2027;

9. Affirming that closing Africa's water and sanitation access and investment gaps requires strong leadership, effective governance, accountable institutions and robust regulation;

10. Mindful that regulatory constraints acutely persist in sanitation and hygiene services in rural and small-town areas, and among small-scale and informal operators on which a large share of Africa's population depends;

11. Recognising that the four pillars of this Symposium, leadership, regulation and accountability, professionalisation, and strategic public finance are **interdependent and need to be addressed in a coherent and complementary manner -** therefore, effective regulation depends on good governance and requisite political backing, credible tariff reform, and accountable institutions.

We therefore call on the following to:

12. **Service providers and associations** – ensure transparency in operational and financial performance, asset management and maintenance; reduce non-revenue water, improve billing efficiency, and invest in workforce competence, including pathways for young professionals.

13. **Professional institutions** – ensure that standards of practice and certification requirements are made known and improve collaboration with water and sanitation training institutions and academia to improve workforce capacity; and extend services to rural, small-town and sanitation providers.

14. **Regulatory authorities** – extend oversight and transparent tariff-setting models to rural and small-town services, on-site sanitation and small-scale operators, ensuring sustainability with affordability.

15. **Development and financing institutions** – support countries in the preparation and structuring of bankable projects; deploy risk mitigation instruments; and support institutional strengthening and capital investment including the mobilization of blended finance adapted to the needs of the sector.

16. **Private sector** - increase investment in the sanitation economy as a viable, income-generating sector.

17. **Civil society organisations and consumer-rights groups** - strengthen independent monitoring of service performance and keep performance information accessible to users.

18. **Young water professionals and innovators -** bring digital, commercial and circular-economy solutions to scale within existing institutions and take their place in the sector's leadership and succession plans.

19. **Technical, knowledge and research partners -** support national reform agendas and strengthen evidence base for sector decision-making.

20. **All stakeholders** - document and share knowledge and experiences in institutional reforms across member states.

Consequently, we request -

21. Heads of State and Government and other political leaders to continuously drive transformative change in water and sanitation throughout the continent; championing the water security agenda in the context of climate

change. Further to ensure that the high-level commemoration of the AU Theme of the Year 2026 on water, and the launch of the Africa Water Vision 2063 and Policy leave a lasting legacy that elevates the sector's profile in the next decade and delivers benefits to the millions of Africans still without access to safe drinking water and decent sanitation.

22. Member States to domesticate the Africa Water Vision 2063 and Policy at local, national and regional levels, and mobilise resources for effective implementation.

23. Governments and their partners to embed water security in national economic planning, national climate resilience strategies and plans, public finance and investment frameworks, recognising water not as a sectoral cost but as a strategic asset for inclusive and climate-resilient sustainable transformation.

24. Governments to advance tariff reform and subsidy policies adapted to national contexts, ensuring financial sustainability while safeguarding affordability and social equity; and to adequately resource regulatory authorities.

25. Governments to invest in the professionalisation of service provision — accreditation of training institutions, certification of operators, and the structured transition of informal and voluntary delivery models towards formalised and regulated provision.

26. Governments to commit to improved sanitation financing at all levels including at faecal sludge management and reuse, wastewater treatment and sanitation by-products as economic assets and for job creation rather than liabilities.

27. Governments to strengthen policy interventions to accelerate the development and utilisation of non-conventional water resources to augment supplies.

28. Public and private sector service providers to pursue project preparation financing, including through the 2026 Call for Proposals of the African Water Facility, with national authorities' endorsement of viable applications.

29. Development finance institutions, multilateral development banks and development partners to finance both institutional strengthening and infrastructure, with clear-cut lending conditions, as well as supporting continental programmes for implementing the Africa Water Vision 2063 and Policy.

30. National and commercial banks and institutional investors to increase financing for viable water and sanitation projects, supported by appropriate guarantee instruments, risk-sharing mechanisms and blended finance solutions.

31. Climate finance institutions to elevate water and sanitation systems as climate adaptation investments and increase funding for given the sector's high vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.

32. The AUC in collaboration with AMCOW and partners to advance efforts to develop an Africa Common Position for the 2026 United Nations Water Conference in Abu Dhabi and the 11th World Water Forum in Riyadh in 2027, in order to shape global attention and mobilise support to address Africa's water and sanitation sector priorities.

Now, therefore, we further request

33. The African Union Commission and AMCOW, to work with Member States to strengthen water and sanitation sector systems and governance, and service delivery towards the implementation of the Africa Water Vision 2063 and Policy. Specifically, with attention placed on:

- **Leadership:** champion and drive coherent reform agenda and strengthen coordination across institutions for the creation of systems that are credible while promoting investment ready projects.
- **Regulation and Accountability:** strengthen regulatory oversight and accountability functions in accordance with national frameworks, as well as realistic performance monitoring for the sector.
- **Professionalisation:** promote systems that recognize, train and retain skilled staff, and effective management tools for effective service delivery.
- **Strategic Public Finance:** facilitate reliable and strategic public financing that delivers service at scale by combining fiscal discipline, technological innovation, and inclusiveness.
- **Monitoring and reporting:** strengthen the use of the existing Africa Water and Sanitation Monitoring (WASSMO) system to report regularly on the progress and results achieved on accelerating water and sanitation transformation for sustainable impact.
- **Symposium Report:** to produce the report and disseminate it to all relevant stakeholders.

Conclusion

34. We commend the leadership provided by the Republic of Rwanda, the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Riva Africa (formerly IRC) and other partners in organising this 2026 Africa Water and Sanitation Systems Leadership Symposium.

35. We express appreciation to the Republic of Senegal and the United Arab Emirates as the Co-Host as well as the Co-Chairs of the Interactive Dialogues of the 2026 UN Water Conference namely: the Arab Republic of Egypt, Republic of Ghana, the Republic of South Africa and the Republic of Zambia together with their other counterparts.

36. We welcome and appreciate the offer and commitment made by the Republic of Benin to host the next edition of the Symposium in 2028.

Done in Kigali, Republic of Rwanda. Dated: 20 August 2026.