

Today's Snapshot



photo Hydroconseil

At the current rate of investment in the sector, the African continent is facing an irrefutable fact: the MDG for water and sanitation will not be reached

Africa Day in Istanbul – Delivering on our Commitments

Each day of the forum is dedicated, in addition to the number of sessions on offer, to a region of the world. This gives each continent the opportunity to present their water sector situation and to mobilise the international community to work together to meet today's challenges and those of tomorrow.

On Wednesday, it was Africa's turn. In Istanbul sector stakeholders agreed on the fact that immense efforts have been made in recent years to improve access to drinking water and that sanitation has gained considerable visibility in 2008,

International Year of Sanitation. However, this is not enough. The MDGs will not be reached in Africa unless the financial commitments are multiplied. And yet the political commitments by African decision-makers were many in 2008: the Declaration of Heads of State in Sharm El Sheikh (July 2008), the eThekwini declaration of African Ministers (February 2008), the ministerial declaration of the African Water Week in Tunis (March 2008). Indeed, the political commitments are unprecedented for the sector and for the continent. But one year on, the implementation of these commitments is yet to become reality. And this is the main message of the committee in charge of writing the regional report for Africa for this 5th World Water Forum, keen to "Deliver

on our Commitments". To do this, a short-term regional action plan was drawn up (Appendix 3 of the report), which is based on the work of national and local governments as well as on a massive mobilisation of development partners. In this ambitious plan which aims to move from commitment to action, AMCOW (African Ministers Council on Water, www.amcow.org) is a key actor, supervising and reporting on progress on this road map for the entire continent.

The African regional document is available at: www.worldwaterforum5.org/index.php?id=2151

Monitoring MDG progress: the tools available

Six years before the deadline for reaching the MDGs, regular measuring of progress made in terms of improving access to water and sanitation is under the spotlight. Therefore, a session organised by UNICEF was dedicated to monitoring. Certain countries have developed particularly innovative and appropriate monitoring systems. Senegal is one example, where the Millennium water supply and sanitation programme (PEPAM, www.pepam.gouv.sn), invites the operators of rural water supply systems to send their production data by mobile telephone, for direct computer processing. Another significant advance is the alliance between development partners who have joined forces to work on drawing up a global monitoring system through the GLAAS report (Global Annual Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water). Nonetheless, a global-scale monitoring mechanism is dependent on the quality of the data available in each country. And admittedly, in several

countries, due to a lack of support, monitoring is still very weak.

Information systems for countries of the South

Each country, each basin (national or international) must have viable and up-to-date data to be able to make the most appropriate decisions regarding the water sector, whether it be a matter of major hydraulic installations or monitoring resource quality. Wednesday came to a close at the French pavilion with a session on Water Information Systems (WIS). WIS in countries of the North (ANA, national water agency of Brazil, www.ana.gov.br, SEMIDE, Euro-mediterranean information system on water know-how, www.semide.net, and WISE, Water Information System for Europe, www.water.europa.eu) tend to be expensive data gathering and processing systems and their applicability in countries of the South is questionable. This technical and financial challenge has not stopped the African continent which has launched several information system projects for water, in particular for trans-national water basins (such as the Senegal River promotion organisation, OMVS, www.omvs.org) but also, more recently, AWIS (African Water Information System) which aims at building a network of African partners who produce information on water with a view to collating this information and making it available on the Internet: www.sadieau.org.

Sanitation: Where there's a will there's a way!

Since 2008, International Year of Sanitation, access to sanitation to protect

health but also treatment of effluents to preserve natural resources is a priority for the international community. The World Water Forum therefore organised a high-level panel to debate on this issue. The different participants all agreed that faced with the sheer scale of the challenge before us, several experiences show that it is possible carry out large-scale actions, whether in Brazil, Mexico or Korea. Hachmi Kennou, Director of the Mediterranean Water Institute (www.ime-eau.org), reported how a strong political will on the part of the Tunisian government over a period of 30 years, has given rise to a high level of sanitation coverage throughout the country. Guy Fradin, Director of the Seine–Normandie Water Agency (www.eau-seine-normandie.fr) also demonstrated how, on the basis of a real political drive and appropriate financial and institutional tools, the quality of the

water of the Seine has significantly improved in recent years. Samir Bensaïd, General Director of the International Water and Sanitation Institute and the National Office of Water (ONEP, www.onep.org.ma) highlighted the importance of financing that targets both water and sanitation as well as the need for subsidies for sanitation: even in industrialised countries pricing alone cannot ensure development of the sector.

Faced with a shared objective of sustainable sanitation, the main recommendations highlighted the importance of offering, within a given country, a wide range of technologies and options, and to encourage innovation not in terms of technology but in terms of the mechanisms to set up to develop the sector which are based on solidarity between town and country, upstream and downstream.

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