The utilisation of shared water resources present an opportunity for regional integration, sustainable socio-economic development, poverty alleviation and the protection of the vital eco-systems, and is a great vehicle for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Africa Water Vision 2025.

However, the outstanding challenge in developing these water resources in Africa lies in establishing the appropriate infrastructure, water facilities, institutional platforms and frameworks for greater co-operation and sustainable basin utilisation among the riparian countries.

The African Water Facility, or AWF, is a key regional instrument for fostering transboundary cooperation. Being an initiative of AMCOW hosted by the African Development Bank, the Facility has linkages at national, regional and continental levels and works closely with regional organization and international partners.

The AWF provides grants to basin organisations, regional economic communities and other regional organisation to meet critical funding requirements for fostering and strengthening cooperation.

We provide support for a diversity of trans-boundary water resources management activities over the continent. We currently manage 23 transboundary projects worth around € 30 million, which constitutes 31 per cent of our total commitments.

More specifically, we support transboundary cooperation through regional and river basin organisations in areas of water governance and institutional development, information and knowledge development, monitoring and investment project preparation.
Generally, the AWF has contributed to the overall cooperation architecture in either initiating cooperation where it is weak or non-existent, or in strengthening and enhancing existing mechanisms.

For example - we have supported the establishment of the Volta Basin Authority, helped prepare an IWRM Strategic Action Plan for the Congo River Basin, and have also assisted in drafting the Lake Chad Basin Water Charter.

The range of transboundary operations include dealing with challenges of shared aquifers in North Africa, and shared rivers in west, central, east and southern Africa as well as strengthening regional frameworks at continental and regional levels.

The AWF has made an important contribution to the promotion of cooperation on transboundary water resources management at every stage of the cooperation continuum.

[1] The first stage of cooperation is related to the coordination of collection and exchange of information, the assessment of resources, the preparation of development strategies and monitoring at the river basin level as well as regional and continental platforms of cooperation.

For example we are:

1. strengthening the capacity to the African Network for Basin Organizations (ANBO);
2. implementing the Niger and Volta Basin HYCOS programmes;
3. improving knowledge of groundwater situation in Northern Sahara Aquifer System and IWRM of the Iullemeden and Taoudeni Aquifer Systems and Niger River Basin;
4. strengthening water information services and developing cooperation mechanism in the IGAD member states.

[2] The next level of cooperation is the promotion of collaboration which implies the adoption of common frameworks or protocols to secure gains from shared water resources.

At this level, the AWF has been supporting the adoption of common IWRM based plans for water conservation and development and common regulatory framework and institutional set-up leading to water resources development and management.

Examples of that include:
1. the preparation of multipurpose water resources development project for the Baro-Akobo-Sobat basin in the Nile system;
2. strengthening the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) to implement regional water policy;
3. the preparation of the of Kayanga Geba River Basin IWRM Plan in west Africa; and
4. support to SADC to establish a regional framework for water supply and sanitation planning and management.

[3] And at the third level, where “joint actions” is key, the AWF support has enhanced cooperation resulting in joint actions for multipurpose project design, and implementation; institutional capacity building, and the development of legal frameworks.

These operations have helped generate mutual benefits between cooperating countries, organisations and other stakeholders.

Again, some examples of this work includes

1. the preparation of trans-boundary water resource infrastructure development study under the African Union’s Programme for Infrastructure Development (PIDA);
2. the preparation of the Lake Victoria Basin water and sanitation project;
3. the preparation of Songwe River Basin development programme shared between Malawi and Tanzania
4. the preparation of Shire-Zambezi waterways project.

So to conclude, the AWF supports collaboration and joint actions to enhance benefits at various levels – such as…

- the facilitation of water resources development for food and energy production
- the improvement of environmental management and flood risk management
- the design of projects that will result in increased food and energy supply
- the improvement of water supply services, watershed management and rural infrastructure provisions
- the increase of volume of water transport of goods and services and trade and
- the increase of access to water supply and sanitation services
The AWF has a mandate to increasing collaboration between countries to ensure that the potential of African water resources is fully developed for the benefit of the African people. The AWF remains committed to fostering cooperation between all stakeholders as we believe this is one of the most important conditions to achieving water security on the African continent.

Thank you for your attention.

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