

Workshop on Mainstreaming and Implementing the Water-Energy Nexus for Sustainable Development in the African Region

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Conference Room 3, UNCC, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Welcome and opening remarks on behalf Fatima Denton

Your Excellency **Dr. Abraha Ashenafi**, State Minister for Irrigation Sector, Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Electricity of Ethiopia,

Mr. Jong Soo Yoon, Head of United Nations Office for Sustainable Development

Mr. Samba Thiam, Head, UN Environment Liaison Office to AUC, UNECA and Representative in Ethiopia

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning.

It gives me great pleasure, on behalf of **Dr Fatima Denton, Director of Special Initiatives** here at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, to welcome you to this very important meeting on **Mainstreaming and Implementing the Water-Energy Nexus for Sustainable Development in Africa**. We thank the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development and the Ethiopian Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Electricity for inviting us to partner with them, UN Environment and UNDESA to organise this meeting.

This meeting comes at a very apt time.

The **2018 High Level Political Forum** of the United Nations held in July 2018 under the theme "**transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies**".

The Forum reviewed six of the **Sustainable Development Goals**, including **SDG 7 on Affordable and Clean Energy** and **SDG 6 on Clean Water and Sanitation**.

Although all the SDGs are interlinked, the nexus between water and energy is particularly strong, especially against a background of changing climate.

African countries are **already experiencing catastrophic climate change and variability impacts** in inter-related ways across many sectors - including water, agriculture, energy, ecosystems and infrastructure.

Yet, African economies are strongly dependent on these climate sensitive sectors.

Therefore, building **sustainable and resilient economies** in support of Africa's transformation - as encapsulated in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (**leave no one behind**) and Africa's bigger Agenda 2063 (**the Africa We Want**) - does require climate-informed and integrated strategies and approaches, especially given the **megatrends such as population growth, rapid urbanization, industrialization and climate change that will have huge impacts on the demand for water and energy**.

Climate change is a consequence of how we have globally **configured our economies and used our natural resources**.

Rethinking our development models and resource efficiency requires **holistic thinking** – a nexus approach.

That is why for us at the ECA the nexus work is of high importance, especially in view of **how we support our member States with the implementation of their nationally determined contributions (NDCs)** to climate change under the framework of the Paris Agreement.

This is particularly important given that most African countries have **NDC actions related to energy and water**. A nexus approach is thus crucial for efficient and effective **implementation of the Paris Agreement**.

That is why we are **conducting pilot country studies on integrated climate, land, energy and water strategies approach**, including Ethiopia, Sierra Leone and Cameroon.

We are also looking at the **climate, energy, food and trade nexus**, especially in view of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area – the biggest trading zone in the world when it becomes operational to assist member States capitalise on climate change and trade to strengthen their economies.

The importance of the nexus approach to **building resilience** cannot be over-emphasised.

The case of hydropower – which is key in Africa’s energy mix – illustrates this well.

Through our studies with the World Bank on enhancing the climate resilience of Africa’s infrastructure it was shown that **in some river basins under certain climate scenarios, power production could drop by as much as 60% and energy costs increase three-fold to consumers.**

Of course, we know what happened to the Kariba Dam two years ago when the drought induced by an **unusual El Nino almost shut down hydropower production**, with huge economic and social consequences for Zimbabwe and Zambia - who depend very much on the electricity from the Kariba.

Yet, many African countries will be investing **100s of billions of dollars in hydropower development**. Those investments could become stranded assets if resilience is not build into their planning and implementation. This calls for strong nexus approaches.

That is why together with the World Bank, the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank, we have established the **Africa Climate Resilient Investment Facility (AFRI-RES)** with initial funding from the Nordic Development Fund.

AFRI-RES aims to **strengthen the capacity of African institutions and project developers to plan, design, and implement investments resilient to climate variability and change in selected sectors – particularly the water and energy sectors.**



We look forward to **building more partnerships** to promote the **nexus approach to building resilience in Africa**, and to **learning from our member States** here present about their experiences with **mainstreaming the nexus approach in the implementation of their national development plans**.

We wish you great deliberations and hope that over these next three days we will come up with **strong messages and action orientation** for better support to member states on implementation of the SDGs.

But, we also hope that during all that hard work you will also find time to enjoy our beautiful city of Addis Ababa and all the rich culture and experiences it has to offer.

Thank