



Press Communiqué

Chairperson Underlines Importance of Water and Sanitation for Africa

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), Dr. Jean Ping received in his office at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa on Friday 26 November 2010, a delegation from the United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB) led by the Board's Deputy Chairperson, Dr. Uschi Eid, former Parliamentary Secretary and Africa Personal Representative of the German Chancellor. The delegation was in Ethiopia for the African Water Week which took place in Addis Ababa on 22-26 November.

Dr. Eid briefed the Chairperson on the policies, activities and objectives of the UNSGAB which is a group of eminent personalities committed to the search for solutions to the world's water and sanitation challenges, and expressed the interest of the UNSGAB to hold one of its meetings in Africa, to demonstrate the importance the Board attaches to the water and sanitation challenges of the continent.

In response, the Chairperson welcomed the idea and commended the Board for its continued efforts in dealing with the crucial challenges of water and sanitation, especially in the developing regions of the world, such as Africa.

Both parties agreed on the need to further consolidate bilateral cooperation ties between the AU and the UNSGAB and called for the sensitization of stakeholders, including Member States and Donors, on the use of new technologies to monitor water resources and effectively manage the rapidly increasing need to adapt water policy development and implementation to climate change and the preservation of ecosystems.

Dr. Ping urged the UNSGAB to specifically focus on Africa which faces the greatest challenges of securing safe water and maintaining sanitation, especially among the growing slum population and poor rural inhabitants.

Dr. Eid assured the Chairperson that the Board is working closely with its African partners and recalled that the UNSGAB had helped build support for the June 2008 African Union Summit which resulted in the breakthrough Sharm el-Sheikh Declaration regarding the acceleration of the achievement of water and sanitation goals in Africa, currently being promoted by several African and international institutions.

Dr. Eid assured the AUC Chairperson that the UNSGAB has already started an inclusive knowledge-sharing linking water-related disaster to climate change and sustainable development at various levels of governance. She expressed confidence that the Board can make a worthy and galvanizing contribution towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on water and sanitation.

The UNSGAB was established in 2004 on the initiative of former Japanese Prime Minister Hashimoto and is currently chaired by Prince Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands, with the Crown Prince of Japan serving as Honorary President.

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Addis Ababa, 26 November 2010