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OATUU'S STATEMENT ON THE THEME OF AU YEAR-2026

The Organisation of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU) joins the African Union (AU) and its Member States in observing and supporting the AU theme for the year 2026.

The African Union theme for 2026 is: **"Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063."** This theme brings together the efforts of African countries to implement the Africa Water Vision 2063, address the impacts of climate change, and mobilize investment for transformative change in water governance and infrastructure, ensuring water security and supporting the future socio-economic development of the African continent.

African communities urgently need secure, sustainable access to water and effective sanitation systems. According to the United Nations, as of 2024, only 74% of the world's population had access to safely managed drinking water, and just 58% had access to safely managed sanitation. In Africa, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), the region is currently off track to achieve these targets by 2030.

The availability of this indispensable resource now depends heavily on climate change. Climate change represents the most significant challenge globally, and especially in Africa, posing serious risks to water access and sanitation. It affects both the quantity and quality of water resources, intensifying the water crisis and slowing progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Droughts deplete water sources, while floods damage infrastructure and contaminate supplies. There is also strong evidence that the impacts of climate change on water and sanitation services will directly affect health—leading to infectious diseases such as cholera and malaria, as well as other noncommunicable diseases.

Therefore, water management and its effective use are essential components of human development and are cross-cutting priorities in the AU Agenda 2063 for achieving sustainable development. African governments must establish effective regulatory systems and frameworks to improve services and ensure sustainability, thereby realizing the human right to water and sanitation. These initiatives must go hand in hand with effective measures to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Climate change has a direct impact on nearly all SDGs, with over 80% of targets linked to climate. It is no longer feasible to treat climate change and sustainable development separately.

Focusing on synergies between climate action and access to safe water and sanitation is vital to overcoming these challenges. Ensuring access to safe drinking water and sanitation in the context of climate change requires a holistic and preventive approach. Safe drinking water depends on the availability of clean water in the environment, while sanitation is driven by the need to protect human health and the environment.

OATUU passionately urges all stakeholders, led by the AU and African governments, to adopt proactive, flexible, and inclusive approaches to ensure access to safe water, sustainable sanitation, and equitable services for all, in line with the targets and commitments of SDG 6.

We commend the AU for adopting the Africa Water Vision 2063 and related policies. OATUU and its affiliates are committed to publicizing this framework and participating in its implementation. This key water framework will ensure sustainable water availability and safe sanitation systems, contributing to the realization of the AU Agenda 2063. Its implementation will also accelerate progress toward achieving the SDG 6 targets.



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