

About the AWG

The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership on Water Affairs and Sanitation was launched in Johannesburg in 2002 and is being implemented through the EU Water Initiative – Africa Component. The purpose of this partnership is to make an effective joint (Africa-Europe) contribution to the achievement of water and sanitation related MDGs.

The strategic partnership has created an Africa Working Group (AWG) consisting of representatives from AMCOW-TAC, EU Member States, EU Commission, civil society and the private sector working as a joint platform on water-related development issues.

AWG News

Changing Chairs.....

In January 2009 the EU Member States' co-chair moved from UK to Austria. Austrian Development Agency's water sector expert Hans Schattauer, supported by Wolfgang Moser from the Austrian Ministry of European and International Affairs, took over from Peregrine Swann of DFID. Charles Ngangoué continues as the Congo-Brazzaville co-chair, with the hand-over of the AMCOW presidency to South-Africa expected in October 2009. Meanwhile AMCOW and AMCOW-TAC are supported by the new Executive Secretary Mr. Bai-Mass Taal whom we welcome to the AWG!

UK will continue to offer technical support during 2009, especially for sanitation and related issues and also to the AWG support group at IRC.

After three years of close involvement with the AWG, particular thanks are due to France as the out-going EU troika member, with special thanks to Jean-Luc Francois and Veronique Verdeil. We are pleased to announce that the Netherlands has agreed to join the troika as the incoming chair for 2010.

Currently the troika and the EC are discussing likely adaptations to the AWG work programme (drawn up in 2006) as a result of changes in development cooperation, more specifically in the water sector. This will feed into discussions with our African partners so that we will be able to formulate jointly a revised AWG work programme.

This is expected to take place at an AWG meeting currently being planned at the AMCOW secretariat in Abuja. Details of this meeting, which grew out of the idea of a joint EU AMCOW planning workshop, are expected to be known soon. The revised work programme will be submitted to the EU Water Facility, from which the AWG has received co-funding of Euro 600,000 to support activities over 2008 -09. A short mid-term report about activities and results in 2008 of the AWG has recently been delivered by the Water Facility.

Evaluation of Country Dialogues in Africa

The evaluation of African Country Dialogues by the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) was presented at the last AWG meeting in London. See www.euwi.net for details. The main finding was that effectiveness of CDs in Africa was constrained by poor definition and communication of the basic concept, resulting in insufficient demand. Discussions at the AWG meeting in London concluded that Country Dialogues are not considered to be the major AWG instrument and that future activities at country level must be based on clearly expressed demand from the partner country.

Communications materials in the making

Through DFID funding, the AWG prepared a communications plan during 2008. IRC is working on some of the planned communications materials, including a new information leaflet, a CD-ROM, policy

briefs and improved dissemination and e-communications on AWG activities. The first outputs are expected shortly.

AWG Meetings and Events

The last AWG meeting was held on 3 and 4 December 2008 in London. Whilst overall it was well attended, there were fewer African partners than had been hoped for. The participation of Mr. Bai-Mass Taal, the new AMCOW Executive Secretary, was an important and much-appreciated contribution. A participative format using break-out groups was adopted and excellent discussions ensued. Minutes of the meeting (in English and French) are available on the EUWI website.

In a post-meeting between AMCOW and the EU troika it was agreed to organise a joint planning workshop in Abuja to intensify the coordination and planning between African and Europe. In the course of the preparatory process the partners felt that the opportunity of meeting with representatives from AMCOW and AMCOW TAC at the location of the secretariat should be used to organise a full AWG meeting and not restrict it to the troika (see above).

Dates for your Diary

Details of the next meeting will be disseminated separately as soon as possible!

There will be an AWG meeting – as is the tradition - scheduled during the Stockholm Water Week (16-22 August 2009).

Hot topic 1: Sanitation Statement and the eThekwini Task Force

In our previous newsletter we reported on the formal launch of the statement by AMCOW President Minister Bruno Jean-Richard Itoua at the AWG side event held at the UN Commission for Sustainable Development 16th session in New York in May 2008. Further good news is that the Statement was endorsed by the Africa Union Heads of State at their meeting in Sharm el Sheik in July 2008. On the European side, the Statement was disseminated by DFID's Director General to his counterparts in the EU Member States.

However, the statement is far from an end in itself and we now look to how the AWG can support the principles outlined in the Statement. The Africa Working Group was invited by AMCOW and the World Bank to join the eThekwini Task Force, which was charged with taking forward the eThekwini Action Plans that were an outcome of the AfricaSan meeting in February 2008. AWG attended the Task Force meeting in Nairobi in November 2008 and we will ensure that the relevant component of our workplan aligns with this.

So why is the Statement important in relation to the aims of the EU Water Initiative and to the pressing need to work to improve sanitation in Africa?

- The process contributes to harmonization and alignment of EU Member States policy positions. The statement has been shared with all EU member states agencies at Director General level
- There is now a consistent message on sanitation that sits within recognized political frameworks that encompass both EU Member States and African States. This acceptance provides a sound basis and agreed principles for individual states (both European and African) to mutually support the development and implementation of national plans

Please let us have any news about activities that are underway in relation to the eThekwini action plans and your suggestions about activities that the AWG could pick up in relation to these.

Please reply to:
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ngangoucharles@yahoo.fr and
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Hot topic 2: Reporting on EU Aid flows

This work was substantially complete at the time of our last meeting in Stockholm. A Task Group meeting involving France, Germany, UK, Austria and the EC worked with the report authors to agree the

key headline issues arising from the report. The final report is now available in both French and English on the website and in hard copy (a Portuguese translation available in electronic format is forthcoming). Please contact Coline van der Ven (ven@irc.nl) if you require hard copies and if you can assist with further dissemination of the report.

Hot topic 3: Disaggregating the Reporting of Aid in Water and Sanitation

In a related piece of work, AWG members have contributed to a proposal to the OECD-DAC Creditor Reporting System to disaggregate the reporting of water and sanitation aid flows. This is in response to one of the key recommendations agreed by African Ministers in the eThekwini declaration - namely to create separate national budget lines for sanitation. This enables resource flows specifically for sanitation to be monitored. The first submission in June was unsuccessful; a small Task Group of the AWG was established to re-draft the paper in the light of the comments made. A revised proposal was reviewed favourably by an informal meeting of the OECD-DAC on 2 February and the paper will now be formally submitted to their June meeting where we are hopeful of a successful outcome.

Contact us

The AWG has about 145 registered members. Members automatically receive invitations for the AWG meetings, related events and have access to CIS-net, the secure area of the EUWI web-site. To register as member of the AWG please contact Coline van der Ven (ven@irc.nl) from the IRC support group. This Newsletter has been prepared by Andrew Cotton and Thomas Zipper on behalf of the Africa Working Group troika (UK, Austria). If you have any comments on this Newsletter, or suggestions for the next Newsletter, please send them to Coline van der Ven (ven@irc.nl) or Thomas Zipper (thomas.zipper@hydrophil.at). The Newsletter is open to all the AWG members, so feel free to send any information or opinion that you would like to be published in the next issue of the Newsletter (scheduled for Summer 2009).