



By Atayi Babs Convinced of the strong link between economic growth and increased access to sanitation and safe water, the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) has called on stakeholders from within and outside the continent to support ongoing initiatives aimed at unlocking Africa's growth potential via increased access to sanitation and hygiene. AMCOW's Executive Secretary, Dr. Canisius Kanangire made this known in a message to commemorate the 2016 World Toilet Day.

With about 2.4 billion people around the world living without toilet facilities and about 600 million Africans living at the mercy of diseases due to inadequate access to sanitation and unsafe water, Dr. Kanangire believes that this year's theme of "toilets and jobs" underscores the urgent need to provide jobs for Africa's teeming youth population.

"Poor sanitation and unsafe water in our homes and offices lead to poor health, exhaustion, decreased productivity, and loss of livelihoods but opportunities exist to turn around this situation for better through significant investments in appropriate toilets and sanitation projects." Dr. Kanangire added.

Calling for significant increase in the allocation of financial and technical resources for sanitation and hygiene in Africa in line with the N'gor commitments, the AMCOW Executive Secretary advocated leadership strengthening of sanitation institutions in cities and communities through support of locally appropriate technology solutions and financing across the entire sanitation value chain for households and institutions.

This according to him, could go a long way in reversing the migration trend while keeping restive youths gainfully engaged.

It will be recalled that than two billion people defecate in the open due to lack of proper toilet facilities. According to the United Nations, the provision of proper toilets could save the lives of more than 200,000 children each year. Countries where open defecation is most widely practiced are the same countries with the highest numbers of under-five child deaths, high levels of under-nutrition and poverty, and large wealth disparities.

In the municipal areas of Dar es Salaam and rural communities around the city to the N'gor coastal parts of Dakar there are diverse needs for sanitation goods and services. From Cairo to Cape Town, Lagos to Lubumbashi, sanitation challenges are essentially similar. These diverse needs and challenges present a very good opportunity for employment creation and income generation.

According to a report by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), "toilets play a crucial role in creating a strong economy as 17 per cent of workplace deaths are caused by disease transmission – an incentive to invest in access to proper sanitation in order to avoid the approximately \$260 billion that is lost every year due to poor sanitation and unsafe water."

To the UN Secretary General, "every dollar invested in water and sanitation leads to \$4 in economic returns."

World Toilet Day (WTD) is a campaign to motivate and mobilize millions around the world on issues of sanitation. Originally established by the World Toilet Organization in 2001, this day to draw attention to global sanitation issues is marked each year on 19 November. Since 2001, World Toilet Day has grown in scope and recognition by global partners. In 2013, the United Nations (UN) passed a resolution recognizing WTD as an official UN international day.