



African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) is working with its strategic partners in the sector to ensure that Africa not only meets the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 6.2 but also effectively maximises the use of the resources in the huge quantities of faeces generated every day.

In a message to commemorate World Toilet Day, AMCOW's Executive Secretary Dr. Canisius Kanangire noted that the need of achieving safely managed sanitation cannot be overemphasized because benefits are enormous and range from improved wellbeing to good health, to socioeconomic development and to brighter future for the nations and individuals.

Statistics from 2015 estimate that globally about 9.5 million cubic meters of human excreta and 900 million cubic meters of municipal wastewater are generated every day. These contains enough nutrients to replace 25 percent of Nitrogen and 15 percent of phosphorus currently used in synthetic fertilizers, and could be enough to cultivate about 40 million hectares of land.

To put it in context, at a city scale, the wastewater including faeces from a city of 20 million people (about the population of Lagos in Nigeria) contains enough recoverable plant nutrients to fertilize about 1 million hectares of farmland which is capable of producing about 3 million tons of crops! And this is just from the agriculture perspective.

Dr. Kanangire said that since AMCOW was formed, it has aggressively pushed the sanitation agenda.

"This led to the AfricaSan initiative which birthed the eThekweni Ministerial commitments which were later endorsed by the Heads of State and Governments in the Sharm el-Sheikh declarations in 2008. The AfricaSan initiative of AMCOW has since continued with other activities like the AfricaSan conference which is a key knowledge sharing event and the AfricaSan Awards which seeks to recognise and reward innovations in the sector on the

continent," Dr. Kanangire noted.

This strong political will and leadership led to a massive revolution in the enabling environment for sanitation service delivery. However, only less than 10 countries in Africa met the MDGs for sanitation. In 2015, African Ministers in charge of sanitation and hygiene endorsed Ngor commitments for sanitation and hygiene.

These carry the vision to ensure everyone everywhere in Africa has access to safely managed sanitation and hygiene, and that there is an end to open defecation in the continent. The commitments take into account among other things the need to eliminate untreated waste and to encourage its productive reuse. In addition, the commitments also seek to engage other sectors to encourage innovation in sanitation products and services.

AMCOW called upon players in the sanitation sector to prioritise sanitation agenda and embrace the technological revolution. AMCOW has prioritised sanitation in its strategy for 2018 – 2030. This, it hopes, will among other things, give the sanitation sector the political support, increased budgetary allocation, the policy and institutional reengineering it deserves and needs.

As the conversation around the need for a reinvented toilet for resource recovery gathers momentum, AMCOW calls on Africa's leaders to personally be the champions for the 21st century sanitation sector where public policy, public and private funding and people's participation will lead to the breakthrough in the innovations we need.