



SUMMARY OF KEY MESSAGES FOR THE PLENARY REPORT-BACK

I. Session (1) – Ministerial: Assessment of the Regional IWRM Process and Progress towards SDG 6 in West Africa

I.1. Major recommendations

Participants made the following recommendations:

- **Make water security** a priority of national and regional policies;
- **Strengthen governance mechanisms** and coordination between States, basin organisations and regional institutions;
- **Modernise water information systems** and encourage data sharing;
- **Mobilise more financial resources** from national, climate and private sources;
- **Develop structuring and bankable projects**;
- **Consolidate cooperation around transboundary basins** and promote the sharing of water-related benefits;
- **Strengthen water quality monitoring and ecosystem protection**;
- **Increase the involvement of women, young people and local communities** in water governance.

I.2. Key message of the ministerial session

The session concluded that **West Africa today has a solid and recognised regional water governance framework**, the fruit of more than twenty-five years of collective effort. **However, the coming years must be devoted to transforming institutional achievements into concrete results for people**, through better mobilisation of financing, innovation, more effective governance and strengthened regional cooperation in the service of water security, climate resilience and sustainable development.

II. Session (2): Financing of Water Infrastructure

Key message 1: Move from identified projects to completed investments and highlight the cost of inaction.

Key message 2: Make project preparation and bankability the first step of financing.

Key message 3: Diversify financing and progressively build regional financial sovereignty for water.¹

Key message 4: Make governance, coordination and risk-sharing accelerators of investment.²

¹Public and concessional financing remains indispensable, but must be complemented by climate funds, blended finance, PPPs, private capital, green and blue bonds and guarantee mechanisms.

²Sound governance and guarantee mechanisms are essential to attract financing.

Key message 5: Accelerate the entire “project – financing – infrastructure – impact” chain and ensure the sustainability of investments.³

III. Session (4): Regional Cooperation and Hydro-diplomacy

Key message 1: Structural water interdependence

Almost all of the major basins and several aquifers are transboundary. National decisions can therefore directly affect neighbouring States, making regional cooperation a structural necessity.

Key message 2: “Data diplomacy” as a guarantee of trust between States

Transparency and the regular sharing of reliable hydrological, hydrogeological and climate data are essential to build trust between States, prevent tensions and inform decision-making.

Key message 3: Better governance of transboundary aquifers

Groundwater is a strategic reserve in the face of droughts and climate variability. Knowledge, monitoring and concerted governance of these aquifers must become a regional priority.

Key message 4: Strengthen the capacities of basin organisations

The technical, institutional and financial capacities of basin organisations remain uneven and often insufficient to meet growing challenges: climate change, pollution, demographic pressures, aquifers and water infrastructure.

Targeted strengthening is essential to address emerging issues (pollution, demographic pressures, climate risks).

³Mobilising financing is not an end in itself: the objective is to deliver functional infrastructure and lasting impact.

IV. Session (5): Water-Energy-Food-Environment NEXUS

Key message 1: Effective operationalisation of the WEFE Nexus requires strong political leadership and structured cross-sectoral governance mechanisms.

Key message 2: Hybrid and innovative financing instruments are essential to de-risk WEFE investments and attract private capital.

Key message 3: Alignment between technical partners, research institutions and implementing agencies is essential for impact at scale.

Key message 4: Private sector engagement thrives when projects are profitable, when regulatory frameworks are clear (including financial risk management) and when capacities are strengthened.

V. Session 6: Gender, Youth and Social Inclusion

Key message 1: There is a gap between policies and their implementation. Moreover, gender and social inclusion are absent from water resources policies and guidelines in most countries. It is therefore necessary to close this gap between policy and implementation by systematically mainstreaming gender and social inclusion into water resources management, as well as into water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) policies, action plans, strategies and programmes, with clear institutional mechanisms and accountability arrangements.

Key message 2: Genuine and meaningful inclusion requires that a significant proportion of women, young people and vulnerable groups are able to make their voices heard on decision-making platforms, access information, and have the skills and digital capacities needed to influence technical, strategic and budgetary decisions. This enables them to help shape water governance not only as beneficiaries, but also as leaders, innovators and agents of change.

Key message 3: Gender and social inclusion must be integrated into regional water information systems in order to move from commitments to measurable results, foster evidence-based decision-making and strengthen accountability.

-----Valuing Water to Transform West Africa-----