

Opening Speech by Mr Patrick Okafor, Deputy Permanent Delegate of Nigeria to UNESCO

Excellencies,

President of Kyoto University,

Representative of UNESCO Director-General, (Assistant Director-General, Natural Sciences),

Distinguished participants,



Ladies and Gentlemen

I feel greatly honoured to share with you my perception of this symposium and the UNESCO-IHP activities from the perspective of someone from a UNESCO Member State Permanent Delegation and what in my personal opinion is of utmost importance to my country, Nigeria, on water quality and waste water management in the context of Post-2015, SDGs.

Please permit me to sincerely acknowledge and welcome the organization by UNESCO-IHP in collaboration with Kyoto University of this symposium, which is yet another opportunity by UNESCO-IHP to galvanize ideas from scientists, policymakers and other stakeholders on the development of Scientific, Technological and Policy Innovations for improved Water Quality Monitoring in the Post-2015, SDGs Framework.

Since water is a shared responsibility, the collaboration of all stakeholders is essential to adequately address its challenges and this informs why a platform like the UNESCO-IHP International Initiative on Water Quality (IIWQ) is important, to facilitate knowledge sharing and experience exchange on tackling water quality problems among countries. My country therefore commends and supports UNESCO's activities and projects under this Initiative.

Allow me to emphasize further the importance of water to the general wellbeing of the society. As we are all aware, life cannot be sustained without water, since it is linked with all socio-economic and other developmental issues including hunger, poverty, health, education, energy, gender equality, ecosystem integrity and climate change. It is on this premise that the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council declared water a human right.

Unfortunately, factors such as uncontrolled population, urbanization and environmental degradation have continued to make this resource inadequate in quantity and quality in all parts of the world including Africa.

Nigeria as a developing country is not left out of these challenges, the magnitude of which has increased in recent times due to reduced supply from public sources. Consequently, water supply in Nigeria, to a large extent is now driven by the private sector to bridge the gap created by reduction in public supplies. It is therefore necessary that appropriate monitoring policies be put in place to regulate the activities of these suppliers.

To address these challenges, Nigeria has identified the development of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) and research on water issues as an antidote and this informed the establishment of the Regional Centre for Integrated River Basin Management (RC-IRBM), a UNESCO Category 2 Centre in Kaduna, Nigeria.

Ladies and Gentlemen, permit me again to appreciate UNESCO-IHP for successes recorded in the implementation of its Phased Programmes, which are in agreement with the Africa Union Development Goals Agenda on water.

I also wish to welcome the commencement of Phase VIII of the Programme of which UNESCO-IHP assigned one of its themes to each of the various Category 2 Water Centres, including the RC-IRBM in Nigeria for implementation. I am happy to inform this distinguished gathering that an official of RC-IRBM is here to make a presentation on the topic of this symposium.

As the MDGs will soon be replaced by the SDGs, a number of conceptual and implementation challenges, especially on how water and waste water quality could be monitored, measured and assessed have emerged. It is therefore significant that appropriate policies are put in place to monitor the attainment of this target through the forging of a close working collaboration and partnership between scientists and policymakers as well as other relevant stakeholders.

I wish to however, advise that whatever monitoring framework to be adopted by this symposium should ensure enough flexibility to reflect the peculiarities and developmental levels of all countries and regions.

Provisions for adequate technical assistance and capacity building for developing regions, particularly Africa, in the use of the monitoring framework is also advocated.

On this note, I wish to reiterate calls by some Member States to strengthen UNESCO-IHP activities, including technical assistance and capacity building on STI policies on waste water management to meet the needs of the post-2015 Agenda.

In conclusion, I wish you a successful deliberation and fruitful Symposium outcomes.

Thank you for your attention.

Mr Patrick Ozulonye
Deputy Permanent Delegate
Permanent Delegation of Nigeria to UNESCO
1, rue Miollis,
Paris
France

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