

REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN
PAIX – TRAVAIL - PATRIE

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MINISTERE DE LA PROMOTION
DE LA FEMME ET DE LA FAMILLE

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REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON
PEACE – WORK - FATHERLAND

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MINISTRY OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT
AND THE FAMILY

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**FORUM FOR FEMALE WATER AND SANITATION
PROFESSIONALS.**

**Speech by the Minister of Women's Empowerment
and the Family.**

Conference Centre Yaoundé, Cameroon

8 February 2026

- **The Members of the Government of the Republic of Cameroon;**
- **Honourable President of the African Water and Sanitation Association;**
- **Executive Director of the African Water and Sanitation Association;**
- **Honourable Chairwoman of the Association of Female Water and Environment Professionals of Cameroon (AFPEEC);**
- **Honourable President of the Association of Young Water and Sanitation Professionals of Cameroon (AJPEAC);**
- **Dear Representatives of Partner Institutions,**
- **Dear women professionals in the water and sanitation sector, dear young people;**
- **Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;**

Permit me to begin by extending a warm welcome to you here in Cameroon, Africa in miniature, located in the heart of the Dark Continent, which is so dear to us and which we all share.

I am particularly honoured to take the floor today and also pleased to see that this audience, which is both diverse and impressive is made up of prominent figures and intellectuals from across Africa and around the world, who have come together to take part in this major event.

Indeed, the International Congress and Exhibition of the African Water and Sanitation Association is a privileged forum for consultation, that addresses issues related to water and sanitation, two major challenges with vital implications for populations across Africa.

It provides us with a relevant framework to reflect upon and structure the involvement of youth and women in resolving social issues that still plague our nations and hinder our socio-economic development.

Dear members of the African Water and Sanitation Association, if there was still any doubt about this, allow me to affirm that your organisation is a tangible proof that the answer to our multifaceted problems lies, above all, in the pooling of our resources, our intelligence, and our expertise.

I therefore wish to extend my warmest congratulations to you for this remarkable initiative, while expressing my deep gratitude to the Local Organising Committees of the Youth Forum and the Women Forum for granting me the honour of presiding over the official opening ceremony of these two important meetings.

Distinguished members of the Government,

Dear Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is sad to note that, more than two billion people are still deprived of water worldwide, and more than 400 million Africans still lack access to a safe source of drinking water.

According to the World Health Organisation, approximately 80% of diseases in developing countries are linked to water quality and poor sanitation. Unfortunately, this situation disproportionately affects early childhood, women, and girls.

In times of prolonged water scarcity, the heavy burden of collection falls on our mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters.

This reality has become so common in our communities that it is often taken for granted, yet it remains deeply alarming. It robs young girls of their fundamental right to education and exposes them to risks that undermine their safety and dignity. This worrying reality underscores the urgent need to ensure universal access to safe drinking water and to quality and sustainable sanitation services.

Deeply sensitive to these challenges, the African Water and Sanitation Association (AAEA) is committed to supporting governments in finding lasting solutions and has chosen to involve youth and women professionals in this quest for solutions. Through the establishment of two dedicated professional networks, the AAEA is actively working to lead the sustainable transformation of the water and sanitation sectors in Africa.

Dear members of the Network of Female Water and Sanitation Professionals,

This 8th of February 2026 is your day.

Looking back on the history of your network, I am impressed by your many achievements, particularly **the celebration of your 10th anniversary.**

This is a unique milestone; the world will remember that it was here, in Cameroon, that you laid the foundation for an even stronger, more structured, and more influential network.

This commitment reminds us conveniently that it is not simply about feminising governance, but rather about enriching it with the intelligence, skills, and expertise of women.

In any case, equal opportunities are no longer an option, but a fundamental right. A right that must strengthen in us the sense of duty and responsibility, that of valuing female expertise in sectors as vital as water and sanitation.

By addressing the under-representation of women in these strategic sectors, you give more resonance to the advocacy we have long championed in favour of female leadership, respect for women's rights, and more broadly, the promotion of human rights.

This anniversary edition, themed "**A Decade of Bold and Impactful Female Leadership: Women at the Heart of the Transformation of the African Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Sector,**" is therefore a true boon. It offers you the opportunity to take stock, to look to the future, to build the sustainability of your actions.

Dear young professionals of Water and Sanitation, Your massive presence on this day is eloquent proof of your commitment to lift our continent out of poverty and, more specifically, out of the water stress that our populations experience daily.

As participants in this 7th Forum of Young Professionals in Water and Sanitation, you have decided to centre your discussions on innovation and boldness, appropriately reflected in your theme: "**Innovate, Influence, Impact: Bold actions by Young People for Water and Sanitation for All.**" I would like to praise the courage and determination that so characterizes African youth, of which you are undoubtedly the finest examples.

Now is the time to fully deploy your expertise, ingenuity, and creativity.

**Distinguished guests,
Dear women professionals in the water and sanitation sector,**

Honourable members of the government,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We all have a role to play in ensuring that professional networks of women and young people continue and strengthen their efforts to transform the water and sanitation sectors.

Let us dare to believe in their potential and not hesitate to give them the support they need to achieve their ambitions and aspirations.

With these words, I officially declare opened the two meetings of today, namely the Forum of Women Professionals in Water and Sanitation and the Forum of Young Professionals in Water and Sanitation.

Thank you for your kind attention.