



INITIATIVE FOR RESEARCH,
INNOVATION AND ADVOCACY
IN DEVELOPMENT

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PUBLIC STATEMENT ON 2026 AFRICA DAY

The **Initiative for Research, Innovation and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD)** proudly joins Africans across the continent and in the diaspora in commemorating Africa Day 2026, marking the **63rd anniversary** of the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now the African Union (AU).

Africa Day remains a powerful symbol of the continent's shared history, collective resilience, and enduring aspiration for unity, dignity, and sustainable development. It is also an opportunity to reflect on our progress and recommit ourselves to the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa.

This year's African Union theme “**Year of Water Sustainability: Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063**” is timely, urgent, and transformative. Water is not merely a natural resource; it is the foundation of life, public health, food security, environmental sustainability, economic productivity, and human dignity. Access to safe water and sanitation is therefore central to achieving social justice, inclusive growth, peace, security and sustainable development across Africa.

In the past 63 years, Africa has recorded significant milestones in political liberation, democratic governance, regional cooperation, economic reform, and institutional development. Continental initiatives such as the **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)** continue to demonstrate the immense potential of African integration, unity, and shared prosperity.

Yet, despite these achievements, millions of Africans still lack access to clean drinking water and safe sanitation systems. Climate change, environmental degradation, rapid urbanization, weak infrastructure, and poor governance continue to threaten water security across the continent. In many communities, especially rural and conflict-affected areas, women and children bear the greatest burden of water scarcity and water insecurity.

IRIAD believes that the challenge of water sustainability is not only environmental, it is fundamentally developmental, political, and ethical. Water insecurity fuels poverty, disease, inequality, displacement, and conflict. Conversely, equitable access to water and sanitation strengthens education, healthcare delivery, agriculture, livelihoods, gender inclusion, and social stability.

As Africa advances toward the aspirations of Agenda 2063, sustainable water governance must become a continental priority and a shared responsibility among governments, civil society organizations, private sector, and citizens.

On this Africa Day 2026, IRIAD calls on African governments, leaders, policymakers, governance institutions, private sector, and citizens to take bold and coordinated action toward securing water sustainability and advancing inclusive development across the continent.

IRIAD specifically is **Asking** for:

- **Increased Investment in Water and Sanitation Infrastructure:** African governments must prioritize sustainable financing for water supply systems, sanitation facilities, irrigation infrastructure, wastewater management, and climate-resilient technologies, particularly in underserved communities.
- **Strengthening Governance and Accountability:** Transparent, accountable, and people-centered governance is essential to ensuring equitable access to water resources. Public institutions must uphold integrity in the management of water-related policies, budgets, and development programmes.
- **Climate Action and Environmental Protection:** Africa must intensify efforts to address climate change, desertification, pollution, and ecosystem degradation that threaten water availability. Sustainable environmental management is critical to safeguarding future generations.
- **Innovation, Research, and Community Participation:** Governments and development actors should support local innovation, research, indigenous knowledge systems, and community-driven solutions that promote efficient and sustainable water management practices.
- **Regional Cooperation and Pan-African Solidarity:** Water security transcends national borders. African states must strengthen regional partnerships and transboundary water cooperation to promote peace, integration, and collective prosperity under Agenda 2063.
- **Youth and Women Inclusion:** Young people and women must be placed at the center of water governance, environmental sustainability, and development planning. Their leadership, creativity, and participation are essential to building resilient communities.

As we celebrate 63 years of African unity, integration, and development, IRIAD reaffirms its commitment to strengthening democratic governance by advancing public accountability, active citizenship/citizens' participation, women's rights and gender

justice, and strengthening the capacities of governance institutions to be responsive, responsible, accountable, inclusive, effective and ethical

Africa's future depends not only on economic growth, but also on our collective ability to protect and equitably manage the resources that sustain life. Ensuring sustainable water availability and safe sanitation systems is indispensable to achieving the aspirations of Agenda 2063 and building a continent where prosperity is shared by all.

On this Africa Day, let us renew our commitment to an Africa where every citizen has access to clean water, where communities thrive in dignity and peace, and where the ideals of Pan-Africanism continue to inspire collective progress and transformation. Together, we can build an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena.

**#AfricaDay2026 #Agenda2063 #SafeWaterForAll #AfricaAt63
#AfricaUnityAndProsperity #PanAfricanism #SustainableDevelopment**

Signed

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ABOUT IRIAD

The **Initiative for Research, Innovation, and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD)** is an interdisciplinary knowledge, policy, and advocacy hub committed to developing a critical understanding of governance processes and regimes through research, documentation, policy engagement, public education, and impact advocacy to inform policies, advocacies, and other forms of interventions. Whilst promoting and encouraging active citizenship through citizens' engagement, participation, and representation in democratic governance.

IRIAD is committed to strengthening democratic governance by advancing public accountability, citizens' participation, women's rights and gender justice, and

strengthening the capacities of governance institutions to be responsive, responsible, accountable, effective and ethical

Knowledge| Innovation | Inclusion|

#Advocacy #Results #Impact

...promoting electoral knowledge, accountability, inclusion, and integrity