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PRESS RELEASE

EAST AFRICAN MINISTERS TO MEET ON FUTURE OF LAKE TANGANYIKA

Bujumbura, 19 July 2013: Ministers and Permanent Secretaries of five East African Nations will meet today to discuss an initiative to improve the water, sanitation and environmental conditions in the Lake Tanganyika Region.

The meeting, convened by the East African Community and UN-Habitat, will seek endorsement and ownership of the feasibility report for the programme in fifteen identified cities and towns. It will include the ministers of water and environment from the five countries that share the basin; Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zambia.

Attendees will also consider measures to assist with the process of resource mobilization for the programme.

Rapid urbanization is now placing an enormous burden on the towns around Lake Tanganyika, undermining the ability of local governments to manage infrastructure and related environmental services leading to increasing levels of pollution and environmental degradation. Urbanization, however, provides opportunities to promote dynamic and well planned urban settlements that could provide centres of economic development, efficient infrastructure and increased employment opportunities.

In response to a need for a common regional theme of improving water supply, sanitation, the environment and related livelihoods of the populations around the Lake, UN-Habitat, in collaboration with COMESA, Lake Tanganyika Authority (LTA) and the Governments of Burundi, Tanzania, Rwanda, Zambia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, have prepared a feasibility report for a Lake Tanganyika Water Supply, Sanitation and Environmental Management Project (LT-WATSAN).

In the run up to the meeting, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General and the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Dr. Joan Clos said: "Lake Tanganyika is facing increasing environmental threats, one of which is caused by poor sanitation in the expanding towns and non-existent or poor management of solid waste. There is a need for a strong collaborative effort, similar to the one UN-Habitat has coordinated in Lake Victoria with the Lake Victoria Region Water and Sanitation Initiative. We should take this opportunity to find the way to mobilize resources that will impact in the quality of life of millions of people."

The Feasibility Report is the culmination of work carried out between August 2011 and December 2012, beginning with the project identification phase from August to November 2011, the subsequent project preparation phase between January and June 2012 and the feasibility assessment phase between August and November 2012.

The report presents an, integrated short and medium term investment plan for regional water supply, sanitation, solid waste and environmental interventions for fifteen towns in the Lake Tanganyika Basin.

The Programme aims to provide a phased approach to the improvement of water supply, sanitation and environmental management, and will benefit an estimated 1.25 million persons in the selected towns.

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