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Letter dated 17 October 2013 from the Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that pursuant to General Assembly resolution [67/204](#), entitled “Implementation of the International Year of Water Cooperation, 2013”, a high-level international conference on water cooperation was successfully held on 20 and 21 August 2013 in Dushanbe. More than 120 high-level country delegations, international and regional organizations, civil societies and scientific and business circles attended the conference and contributed to discussions on ways and opportunities to improve water cooperation at all levels.

The conference also provided an opportunity to discuss and develop new measures for accelerating the efforts aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals and providing recommendations for further actions for the post-2015 development agenda, including sustainable development goals related to water and sanitation. The participants in the conference identified a number of priority areas in order to strengthen dialogue and partnership and developed several recommendations on effective approaches to the management of water resources and to the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda related to water resources.

Two days of interactive discussions and exchanges of views resulted in the adoption of the following outcome documents of the conference, copies of which are transmitted herewith:

- Dushanbe Declaration of the High-level International Conference on Water Cooperation (annex I);
- Dushanbe Action Plan on Water Cooperation (annex II);
- Chair’s Summary of the High-level International Conference on Water Cooperation (annex III).

* Reissued for technical reasons on 18 December 2013.



I should be grateful if the present letter and its annexes could be circulated as a document of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 19.

(Signed) Sirodjidin **Aslov**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex I

Declaration of the High-level International Conference on Water Cooperation

Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 21 August 2013

We, representatives of Governments, international and regional organizations and civil society met in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on 20 and 21 August 2013 at the High-level International Conference on Water Cooperation to support the implementation of United Nations General Assembly resolution [67/204](#), entitled “Implementation of the International Year of Water Cooperation, 2013”, and to promote actions at all levels to advance cooperation on water. In doing so,

We recognize that the cooperative development and management of transboundary water resources at the basin level is essential for broad-based sustainable social and economic growth, overall human development, poverty and hunger eradication, public health, food security, energy security, environmental protection, disaster prevention, sustainable urban and rural development, resilience to climate change and, importantly, peace and stability, and reaffirm our commitment to water as a driver of development and means for promoting trust and cooperation;

We acknowledge that Governments play a key role in managing water across competing demands and encourage stronger dialogue, as appropriate, at the local, national and regional levels to promote the cooperative development and management of water across boundaries and sectors for the benefit of all stakeholders, in accordance with the norms of international law;

We encourage Governments and communities that share surface water or groundwater resources to consider the outcomes of the high-level panel discussions and technical sessions at the High-level International Conference on Water Cooperation, to be reported in the Chair’s Summary, including specific steps to cooperatively manage these resources, such as institutional arrangements, involving joint assessment, planning, monitoring and information-sharing mechanisms, legal frameworks, river basin organizations, mediation and dispute settlement; creating incentives for cooperation, including financing and investment and cost- and benefit-sharing; and capacity-building, including strengthening the scientific understanding of the water cycle through cooperation in joint observation and research and the voluntary sharing of knowledge and technology on mutually agreed terms and conditions. We particularly note the importance of indigenous knowledge and of all stakeholders, including women and children, as leaders of change. We also underline the importance of dialogue on water and disasters at various levels;

We highlight the importance of achieving the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals in a timely manner and, noting the International Decade for Action, “Water for Life”, 2005-2015, call for the acceleration and focusing of development cooperation and efforts on the areas and countries that face challenges to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

We note the discussions and recommendations of the global thematic consultations on water with regard to the post-2015 development agenda and recognize the importance of managing the multiple uses of water resources for human well-being, sustainable socioeconomic development, increasing resilience to

extreme events and maintaining ecological integrity. We also recognize the importance of sustainable access to adequate sanitation and adequate quantities of acceptable quality water for sustaining livelihoods, ensuring protection from pollution and public health. We recommend that issues pertaining to water resources, drinking water, sanitation and wastewater be given due consideration in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda.

We note with appreciation that many actions have been suggested during the High-level Conference, including voluntary commitments to advance water cooperation. We encourage stakeholders at all levels to consider additional steps they might take in order to ensure that the benefits of water are fully realized by all in an equitable, cooperative and sustainable manner. We also encourage the Conference organizers to compile the outcomes of the panels, sessions and plenaries and to make them available.

Finally, *we express* our sincere appreciation to the Government of Tajikistan for hosting the High-level Conference and for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to all participants. We also appreciate the assistance and support provided by all international and regional organizations, including several United Nations agencies.

Annex II

Dushanbe Framework for Action on Water Cooperation

The High-level International Conference on Water Cooperation offered a platform for participants to present specific proposals for action that would enhance water cooperation at various levels and scales and in various sectors. During plenary sessions, participants in high-level panels and special focus events put forward proposals, which are to be considered voluntary and non-binding. These represent an important, concrete outcome of the Conference, and Governments, international organizations and other relevant stakeholders are encouraged to refer to the proposals herein summarized as the Dushanbe Framework for Action, for inspiration and follow-up.

Priority areas for action in water cooperation include the following:

1. Those addressing the needs of the poor, most vulnerable and marginalized, especially in countries that are not on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goals;
2. Those addressing productive and sustainable uses of water to create shared benefits across geographic and sectoral boundaries;
3. Those addressing the implementation of integrated water resources management involving key sectors, such as food, energy, health and navigation, which often compete for water;
4. Those increasing resilience to ecological stresses, climate variability and disasters, as well as the challenges associated with demographic shifts and socioeconomic development;
5. Those promoting integrated strategies to address all forms of water pollution, including wastewater management;
6. Those that promote sustainable cities through cooperation between local governments, stakeholders and service providers in line with the principles of integrated urban catchment management;
7. Those that strengthen the capacity to monitor progress in water cooperation.

The enabling mechanisms for action in water cooperation may include the following:

8. Mobilize financing for cross-sectoral, transboundary and community cooperative water management and operations;
9. Foster South-South exchange of best cooperative practices;
10. Support platforms for inclusive stakeholder and public participation in decisions, including the full range of civil society and academia, the private sector and international organizations;
11. Invest in enabling women, youth and marginalized groups to meaningfully participate on an equal footing through the facilitation of peer learning and exchange;

12. Recognize that water has the potential for building trust and collaboration through concerted dialogue;

13. Improve governance by strengthening legal and regulatory frameworks and enhancing accountability and transparency, and through reliable and timely access to data and information;

14. Strengthen coordination and capacity for joint planning and decision-making across sectors and levels of governance;

15. Support the continued, concerted involvement of the United Nations system in assisting the implementation of water cooperation and partnerships to progress towards achieving internationally agreed water-related targets and goals.

Actions across basin and sectoral boundaries should endeavour to:

16. Recognize that recurrent and extreme events (such as floods and droughts) may generate opportunities to encourage joint data gathering and sharing and create appropriate joint activities, projects, organizations and agreements to anticipate, avoid and manage such events;

17. Leverage the need for data on water to enhance cooperation, promote joint observation and research and encourage knowledge-sharing, capacity-building and technology transfer under mutually agreeable conditions;

18. Encourage the use of consensus-building, planning and decision support tools that build capacity to jointly assess challenges and opportunities, manage trade-offs and implement solutions;

19. Strengthen dialogue and cooperation and take measures for the mutually beneficial and rational use of transboundary water resources on the basis of accepted norms, principles, agreements and international legislation, to accommodate competing and divergent interests, taking into account the specific characteristics and circumstances of the basins in question, including the establishment of joint bodies.

Specific proposals for action raised during the Dushanbe Conference

1. The Government of Tajikistan proposed the establishment of an international centre on water diplomacy in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, connecting/working together with similar institutions across the globe.

2. The Government of Tajikistan announced that it will propose to the General Assembly of the United Nations that it declare an international decade for water cooperation.

3. The Women for Water Partnership, on the basis of the outcomes of the Gender Forum, proposed a “Women for water” fund to enable women’s meaningful participation in decision-making at all levels.

4. The Conference participants proposed regular dialogues on water and disasters at the global level. In order to concretize this proposal, participants in the special session of the conference on water and disasters proposed that the General Assembly discuss these topics.

5. At the request of the participants in a special focus event of the conference, the World Bank, Vox Naturae, the Global Water Partnership, the International Centre for

Integrated Mountain Development and the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health proposed to proceed, in collaboration with other interested parties, in securing the necessary governmental and funding support to launch the “Ice Circle” at a planned round-table meeting in Iceland in early 2014. Through its collaborative platform, multi-donor trust fund and representative role, the Ice Circle will monitor and mitigate the loss of ice masses, build the capacity of affected communities to adapt, study and minimize the impact of short-lived climate pollutants on glaciers, and ensure that concerns relating to the state and impact of changing snow and ice regimes are represented on international agendas.

6. Given its contribution to human development, Governments, development banks and donors are encouraged to continue investing in water and sanitation and expect high rates of return in the medium term.

7. With the engagement of local communities, Governments and international organizations are invited to carry out specific analyses of the economic benefits of water cooperation for each case and situation that may need them.

8. A unified database and clearing house related to water and ecosystem services should be developed and implemented at the level of international organizations to support those working on watersheds and various decision-making processes.

9. The private sector, Governments and international organizations should work together to keep building capacity, including through specific higher education programmes, to prepare a new generation of water managers with broader knowledge and skills.

10. Governments and international organizations should provide specific funding to ensure the meaningful participation of women in water-related decision-making at the local, national, regional and global levels, as was the case for the Dushanbe Conference.

11. A mechanism to enable exchange of best practices on water laws, regulations, standards and budgets should be supported at the level of international organizations to further contribute to capacity development.

Annex III

Chair's Summary of the High-level International Conference on Water Cooperation

The High-level International Conference on Water Cooperation was held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on 20 and 21 August 2013, pursuant to General Assembly resolution [67/204](#), entitled "Implementation of the International Year of Water Cooperation, 2013", to promote dialogue and mutual understanding and to strengthen partnership and cooperation on water issues among all stakeholders at all levels.

High-level delegations and representatives from 147 States, international organizations and international financial institutions took part in this gathering alongside representatives of local government, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and the private sector.

The Conference built on the outcomes of the High-level Interactive Dialogue of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, held on World Water Day, 22 March 2013, in New York and the official World Water Day event held in The Hague, which were dedicated to water cooperation, the theme of the International Year.

The Conference focused on four main themes:

1. Water cooperation for human development;
2. Water cooperation for economic benefits;
3. Water cooperation for ecosystems;
4. Water cooperation across boundaries.

The Conference also focused on the following four cross-cutting issues:

1. Water cooperation and gender;
2. Water cooperation and capacity-building;
3. Water cooperation and sectoral synergies;
4. Triggers and catalysts for water cooperation.

A discussion on different aspects of water cooperation was also organized within the Gender Forum, entitled "Empowerment of women: foundation for successful transnational water cooperation", as well as 20 special focus events organized by global, regional and national actors and the thematic exhibition "Water unites us".

Sincere appreciation was expressed to the Government of Tajikistan for hosting the Conference and for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to all participants, as well as for the assistance and support provided by the United Nations and other international and regional organizations.

Conclusions of the first and second high-level plenary sessions

Participants recalled the International Year of Fresh Water, 2003, the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", 2005-2015, the International Year

of Water Cooperation, 2013, and the Sanitation Drive to 2015. They noted that 862 days remain until the completion of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Life”, 2005-2015.

It was highlighted that the Conference was part of a series of events held during the International Year of Water Cooperation, beginning with the UN-Water annual conference held in Zaragoza from 8 to 10 January 2013, followed by the launch ceremony of the International Year at the Headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on 11 February in Paris and continuing with World Water Week, held in Stockholm from 1 to 6 September, and the Budapest Water Summit, held from 8 to 11 October.

The Conference also fed into the political process related to the sustainable development goals, providing substantive inputs related to water and sustainable development.

Principles

Participants reaffirmed that water sits at the core of sustainable development and its three dimensions and is closely linked to a number of key global challenges, as is stated in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

They also reaffirmed the critical importance of water cooperation for the maintenance of peace and stability and for sustainable development, including poverty and hunger eradication, public health, food security, energy security and environmental protection.

Finally, they recalled the general principles of water cooperation, such as planning, sharing information, resolving disputes peacefully, etc.

Means of implementation

The existence of different tools of water cooperation, such as legal frameworks, institutional arrangements, information-sharing mechanisms, joint assessments and research, incentives for cooperation, mediation and dispute resolution mechanisms, cost- and benefit-sharing and financing, was recognized by several participants.

The importance of human resource development, including education and training, exchange of experiences and expertise, scientific development, knowledge transfer and technical assistance for water cooperation, involving also the strengthening of institutional capacity, such as through river basin organizations, and including planning, water management and the monitoring of water resources, was reiterated many times.

The importance of cooperation for improving access to and transfer of appropriate technologies was generally stressed, especially but not exclusively for water-use efficiency, as well as for water treatment, recycling and reuse.

The provision of adequate support and investment by local and regional stakeholders, national Governments, international partners and the private sector was broadly recognized as critical to advancing water cooperation.

Role of stakeholders

It was acknowledged that Governments play a key role in securing water for competing demands. However, the quest for a water-secure world is a common responsibility and can only be achieved through water cooperation at the local, national, regional and global levels and through partnerships with a multitude of stakeholders ranging from citizens to policymakers and the private sector.

The role and responsibilities of different actors, including Governments, regional and local authorities, international organizations, civil society, academic institutions, the private sector, local communities, indigenous peoples, women, elders, youth, families and individuals, in ensuring sustainable management of water resources were fully recognized.

Participants noted the important role of water cooperation among all stakeholders, particularly local community organizations, for achieving access to safe drinking water and sanitation for all, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.

There are many vulnerable and marginalized groups, each with its own needs and facing different barriers to achieving equitable access and thus requiring differentiated solutions. It is important for policymakers and all the actors involved in policy implementation, such as regulatory agencies, stakeholders and service providers (whether public or private), to dedicate time and resources to reviewing whether vulnerable and marginalized groups are being included and whether their particular needs are being taken into account. In many cases, adequate solutions require an integrated response, combining policies and ensuring collaboration across public agencies.

Issues for present water cooperation and for guiding future cooperation

Mounting pressure on water resources, regional shifts in precipitation due to climate change and the retreat and disappearance of glaciers, which are projected to accelerate through the twenty-first century, are altering the seasonality of water flows and threatening to reduce water availability and irrigation and hydropower generation potential.

The importance of the timely achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals, as well as of establishing ambitious and achievable targets and indicators for a sustainable development goal on water as part of the post-2015 development agenda, was highlighted. The following water-related goals were proposed:

1. Universal access to safe and sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene services;
2. Appropriate levels of treatment for used water and wastewater before it is returned to nature or reused in agriculture or other productive activities;
3. A significant improvement in the productivity and efficiency of water use in agriculture, industry and at the household level and a significant reduction in water loss.

It was stressed that countries must collaborate to increase access to clean water and sanitation and improve water management for irrigation and productive uses,

which has the potential to lift millions out of poverty and hunger. Effective and inclusive water cooperation at all levels — local, national, regional and international — is essential for effective water governance and thus to achieving key water-related objectives and targets.

More guidance for future cooperation can be found in the Dushanbe Framework for Action, which was developed during the Conference.

Conclusions of the High-level Panel on Water Cooperation for Human Development

It was reaffirmed that cooperative management and development of shared waters can lay a basis for broad-based human development. Managing water resources and the uncertainties of its destructive as well as constructive powers is a fundamental means for enabling socioeconomic growth and ecological resilience. Allocating and reallocating water is a continual process to meet changing social needs as societies grow and prosper. Cooperation is the best means to manage these changes peacefully.

Key contribution to human development

Water, sanitation and hygiene contribute substantially to human development, affecting 75 per cent of the variables of the human development index. Investment in water and sanitation has a high rate of return (\$8 for each \$1 invested). Middle-income countries, such as Costa Rica, consider public investment in sanitation and water as the key contribution to social and economic development bringing about higher levels of GDP.

Equity

Equal access to water and sanitation is central to sustainable human development and is particularly essential for social equity and gender equality. It is about giving equal chances to every human being, enabling them to realize their productive potential. Millions of children drop out of school each year because they have to spend their time fetching water, or because there are no segregated sanitation facilities, and more than 300,000 children die each month owing to lack of access to clean water and safe sanitation.

Engagement of stakeholders

Panellists also emphasized that cooperation on water and sanitation requires the involvement of multiple stakeholders at all levels — community, national, regional and global — and that good water and sanitation governance and political will are as important as the availability of water and sanitation services.

Water and sanitation in the post-2015 development agenda

Panellists recognized that access to water and sanitation is improving and that it is an increasing priority for Member States. The Millennium Development Goals have elevated the importance of water and sanitation and helped to demonstrate that investments in water and sanitation contribute directly to the goals of poverty

eradication and children's health. Sanitation targets have lagged behind, however, and panellists underscored the importance of the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General's Call to Action on Sanitation to use the next two years to close this gap. All panellists agreed that water and sanitation need to feature prominently in the post-2015 development agenda.

Conclusions of the High-level Panel on Water Cooperation for Economic Benefits

Additional benefits from benefit-sharing in water cooperation and cross-sectoral approaches

There are many examples of benefits from cooperation: cooperation on early warning systems and sharing shelters across coastal communities and urban authorities in Bangladesh have helped to decrease drastically the number of lives claimed by floods over the past 20 years; in the Zambezi river basin, coordinated operation of hydropower facilities between countries will provide an additional 23 per cent of power generation compared with uncoordinated operation. Benefits from multipurpose investment projects, such as those in the Kagera river basin shared by Burundi, Rwanda and western Tanzania, are three times higher when multisectoral benefits are considered than when power benefits are considered alone.

Institutional arrangements that have been able to capture cross-sectoral synergies

River basin planning strategies (as opposed to single-sector or single-project planning) and the river basin organizations responsible for this can achieve better outcomes and can better manage impacts. Such approaches enable cumulative impact assessments and strategic river basin planning for optimization of the use of the resource and better management of environmental and social impacts. Key ingredients for capturing economic benefits from cross-sectoral cooperation are the preparation of a strategy for multipurpose development and appropriate institutions with sufficient capacity to manage resources, elicit cooperation and deal with changing circumstances. Experience has shown that an important catalyst for action is user engagement. Water management and planning processes where users are involved have proved to facilitate, sustain and catalyse long-term cooperation within each country. International institutions can have a key role as catalyst when acting as neutral third parties, bringing expertise and funding. Strong legal instruments can serve to catalyse and sustain cooperation under commonly agreed principles and frameworks.

New monitoring technologies to enable realization of benefits

We need to invest in connecting and using new monitoring technologies. Newer technologies and innovations in information-sharing can provide both rich databases to enable the realization of the economic benefits of shared waters and facilitate dissemination of that information transparently. The use of newer technologies — for example, an emerging wider array of satellites and related monitoring systems — still requires an extra step to fully engage the economics research community, which would enable stakeholders to better visualize the economic value and feasibility of benefit-sharing (often in real time).

Political feasibility of benefit-sharing

The political feasibility of economic benefit-sharing is paramount. The basic ingredients for recognizing and sharing economic benefits from shared water resources include the following: information about the resource; resource predictability, which requires adequate information; political stability and the feasibility of benefit-sharing; the potential for the creation of jobs and economic growth; and the engagement and endorsement of the communities involved. The mere technical feasibility of a benefit-sharing approach does not ensure its success.

Economic benefits for poor communities and bottom-up approaches

Poor communities depend on water resources and environmental services for their survival. Historically, such people have used environmental goods and services such as water, wood, fish, wetland products and services free of charge. A bottom-up approach has been demonstrated to work best and facilitates trust-building among those who are to share economic benefits. The focus on local users is the starting point for water cooperation. There is a need to include community-led and incentive-driven solutions rooted in the reality of poor men and women.

Site-specific economic analysis

Situation-specific economic analyses need to be conducted to support decisions around economic benefit-sharing. There is a range of models available for sharing economic benefits, but there is no magical one-size-fits-all version. The elaboration of economic benefits and the underlying trade-offs are always situation- and case-specific. This means that an economic analysis must be carried out for each situation and with the engagement of all stakeholders, particularly local communities.

Conclusions of the High-level Panel on Water Cooperation for Ecosystems

Water cooperation facilitates the protection of the environment, the sources and quality of water resources, the reduction of flood risk and the provision of other services provided to mankind through the sustainable functioning of ecosystems. A new approach is needed to integrate ecosystem services into planning systems and provide a platform for addressing trade-offs in development across all sectors — water, energy and agriculture — and to better integrate the benefits of natural and built infrastructure. Participants acknowledged that investing in natural infrastructure enhances water security.

Bridge the implementation gap

Incentives are needed to realize the commitments to environmental protection that have already been made at the policy level: a need to bridge the implementation gap. There must be community engagement in water and ecosystem matters. The importance of convincing authorities to invest more in maintaining the environment and the services it provides was highlighted.

Ecosystems are part of the solution

Ecosystems should no longer be treated as an afterthought, but seen as part of the solution that requires the involvement of a broader range of partners in the planning process. Incorporating ecosystem considerations across different planning systems (centralized versus decentralized) and sectors (such as water-food-energy) is necessary. The balance, benefits and interconnectivity between traditional infrastructure and “natural infrastructure” need to be realized in sector strategies and development plans.

Do not forget about natural infrastructure

Natural infrastructure should be considered more prominently in the overall management of water for agriculture, energy production, conserving ecosystem services and improving resilience to climate change and the treatment and reuse of wastewater. It was highlighted that environmental education, including a better understanding of the value of water and ecosystem services, should be placed on the front burner. The importance of broadening current mindsets related to water and ecosystems, and thus addressing the importance of youth education on water, the environment and ecosystem services, emerged clearly from the panel.

Develop payments for ecosystem services

There is a need for further assessment and development of systems of payment for ecosystem services and their broader application in water resources management policy and strategy. There is a need to educate and inform about the value of ecosystem services for addressing various water problems. It is important to provide a unified database and exchange of experience related to water and ecosystem services that could support those working on watersheds and various decision-making processes. There is a need to showcase the value of investment in ecosystem services, link it up with the role of water and clearly display the mutual benefits that would result from such investment.

Conclusions of the High-level Panel on Water Cooperation across Boundaries**Building common understanding and data-sharing**

Challenges to water cooperation often exist within a broader economic, social and political context that must be taken into consideration. Starting points for cross-boundary cooperation include developing a common understanding of the challenges and opportunities and using joint capacity-building and data-sharing as a means of building trust.

Legal and institutional mechanisms

River basin agreements and associated institutional mechanisms are essential platforms for the joint management of resources, based on sound considerations with regard to needs and opportunities. Relevant international conventions on water are important legal instruments for advancing and guiding the cooperative development and management of shared surface water and groundwater.

Cross-sectoral approaches

By applying holistic and cross-sectoral approaches, identifying the differing specific needs and potentials of countries in various sectors, such as agriculture and energy, as well as in water provision, the total “basket of benefits” that cooperation can yield can be broadened and made more attractive, using longer planning horizons than are typically applied today, which is essential for the sustainability of water resources.

Improving the capacity of stakeholders for meaningful cooperation

To build the political will for such dialogue, women, youth and stakeholders at all levels must play an active advocacy and decision-making role. In this regard, capacity-building should be reinforced, including through improved higher education, to prepare a new generation of water managers with broader knowledge and skills (technical as well as legal, social and economic).

Conclusions of the High-level Panel on Water Cooperation and Gender

The Gender Forum, entitled “Empowerment of women: foundation for successful transnational water cooperation”, took place the day before the conference. More than 150 participants, including more than 100 women from around the world, participated in this event. Its outcomes fed into the High-level Panel and are reflected in the conclusions below.

The fundamental role of women in water management was considered, given their role in their families and communities and the importance of strengthening their leadership in water policy and decision-making to achieve more effective implementation of water cooperation.

Social capital

The professional and traditional roles of women represent significant social capital that can and should be used for effecting the change in water governance that is needed for social and economic development and environmental integrity, as well as for bridging the gap between stakeholders and bringing about cross-sectoral and transboundary exchange and cooperation.

Achieving gender equity in water cooperation

In order to achieve gender equity, there has to be equitable allocation of the costs and benefits of water cooperation, both social and economic. The greatest positions of influence are at the grass roots: women in communities need to be empowered to articulate the most pressing local needs and to adequately inform decision makers bottom-up. To achieve meaningful participatory approaches for better water cooperation requires investment in levelling the playing field for informed decision-making. It requires a change in mindset to view women as actors and agents of change rather than as victims and a vulnerable group.

Inclusiveness

Water cooperation should begin and end with women's full inclusion at all levels. There needs to be a critical mass of women in positions of influence in water management at all levels, which requires targeted investments in women's human capital.

Concrete actions

It is necessary to create a "Women for water" fund to support women's projects and programmes in water management, with a scholarship fund to support the training of women water professionals. Capacity development at all levels is crucial for ensuring gender equity and the mainstreaming of gender. The success of the Gender Forum created expectations for building on this success with a follow-up national water conference in Tajikistan (a working conference with the Women for Water Partnership playing a key role).

Conclusions of the High-level Panel on Water Cooperation and Capacity-Building

Effective capacity development for change

Capacity development is an essential stepping stone for water cooperation. Capacity-building should encompass advanced professional training, as well as professional and organizational development, so as to respond to a complex and fast-changing environment. It is the skill of recognizing and addressing change, challenges and chances proactively that must be added to the world of technical solutions. To achieve impact, capacity-building has to stress the links between the competence of individuals, the performance of national organizations and regional institutions in relation to the legal and regulatory framework, dialogue and the establishment of data-sharing and communication platforms.

Target for capacity development

To be effective, capacity development for cooperation needs to be directed to all stakeholder groups, including indigenous peoples and marginalized and vulnerable groups, promoting gender equality, democracy and integrity. Given the particular role of local and regional authorities, their capacity to fulfil their responsibilities should be strengthened as appropriate. A mechanism to enable exchange of best practices on water laws, regulations, standards and budgets should be supported.

Capacity to improve data and information-sharing

Capacity to use and apply that information to accurately inform decision-making is required to ensure that, at the national and international levels, effective water cooperation is not hampered by a lack of data on the quantity, distribution and quality of available water resources, as well as on standards.

Financing capacity development

Political and financial support from Governments contributes to ensuring sustainable capacity development for water cooperation.

Approach to capacity development

A multidisciplinary and integrated approach is essential to grasp the many facets of water cooperation, cutting across a wide range of actors, disciplines and scales.

Conclusions of the High-level Panel on Sectoral Synergies

Challenges for water security

Water security faces the challenges of increasing water scarcity, water-related disasters and declining water quality. In this challenging water security environment, positive sectoral synergies can bring overall benefits from water resources sustainably.

Single-sector approaches do not help

Single-sector approaches in the past have not helped to address the issues of competing water uses and users.

Sectoral synergies increase benefits

Sectoral synergies are key to enhancing the overall benefits from the water available and to managing it sustainably. In particular, the water-food-energy nexus has been a central topic in many recent international forums and development dialogues.

Integrated water resources management

Integrated water resources management has been acknowledged as the appropriate approach to solving the competition among users, as it is flexible and inclusive. It offers flexibility of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, but the approach cannot be successful without strong political commitment, good governance and responsive institutions supported by the relevant laws, which are key to sustainable water management.

Political commitment and good institutions

Achieving results depends on political commitment, good water governance, responsive institutions and capacity-building at all levels, including formal education and professional training.

Continuity and results

Continuous engagement is essential for water cooperation and results-based actions.

Conclusions of the High-level Panel on Triggers and Catalysts of Water Cooperation

The key message from this High-level Panel was that there was a need to promote incentives and create a win-win scenario for all partners in water

cooperation, as well as to engage in the motivations and sell the clear benefits in order to fundamentally change behaviour and gain high-quality cooperation around water. In order to reach this aim, the Panel provided three main suggestions.

Raise awareness of benefits

Awareness needs to be raised and focus placed heavily on the mutual benefits of water cooperation: economic benefits, environmental protection, preserving water resources, risk management, health, commitments to agreements, promoting peace and security, etc. The fear of losses (in terms of both economic assets and lives) from disasters and the need for risk management strategies at community, national, regional and global levels were identified as triggers for cooperation, along with the experience of unsuccessfully trying to solve these problems alone. Water cooperation can be regarded as a way to undertake positive and constructive diplomacy, particularly functional and second-track diplomacy, since sometimes it is the only substantive possibility for dialogue among parties.

Build policy on good science

Exchanges of data and information and the results of new technology need to be used to create more knowledge around water cooperation in order to ensure more evidence- or science-based decision-making: essentially, “build policy on good science”. The panellists focused much of the discussion on the increasing role of science, especially how information exchange and the use of new technologies, such as satellite imagery, were providing further evidence of the benefits of water cooperation. Education and more knowledge on the part of citizens and other stakeholders about water-related issues were regarded as drivers for change, leading to more understanding and the potential for partnerships and cooperation.

Engage with other actors and sectors

There is a need to engage with other actors (private businesses, civil society) and sectors (health, agriculture and education, among others) to create momentum and a higher level of demand for water cooperation. The discussion also touched on issues around groundwater, where the lack of cooperation among countries and sectors is particularly felt.
