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**Sustainable development: implementation of Agenda 21,
the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21
and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable
Development and of the United Nations Conference on
Sustainable Development**

**Letter dated 26 August 2015 from the Permanent Representative of
Tajikistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to transmit the outcome documents of the High-level International Conference on the Implementation of the International Decade for Action “Water for Life”, 2005-2015, which was successfully held in Dushanbe on 9 and 10 June 2015 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the seventieth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 20 (a).

(Signed) Mahmadamin **Mahmadaminov**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* Reissued for technical reasons on 2 February 2016.



Annex to the letter dated 26 August 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Declaration of the High-level International Conference on the Implementation of the International Decade for Action “Water for Life”, 2005-2015

We, representatives of governments, international organizations, local governments and civil society met in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, between 9 and 10 June 2015 at the High Level International Conference on the implementation of the International Decade for Action “Water for Life”, 2005-2015.

In furtherance of United Nations General Assembly Resolution [A/69/215](#) entitled “International Decade for Action, ‘Water for Life’, 2005-2015, and further efforts to achieve the sustainable development of water resources”, this Conference aimed at evaluating progress achieved in the implementation of the Decade and at continued progress for achieving internationally agreed water-related goals using a comprehensive approach.

This Conference builds on the outcomes of previous events, particularly the 2010 High-Level International Conference on midterm comprehensive review of the implementation of the International Decade for Action “Water for Life”, 2005-2015, held in Dushanbe, 2012 Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the 2015 UN-Water Annual International Zaragoza Conference, the High Level Interactive Dialogue in the framework of the Sixty-Ninth Session of the United Nations General Assembly, the Seventh World Water Forum held in Daegu and Gyeongju and the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Sendai, as well as the outcomes of the International Year of Water Cooperation, 2013. In doing so:

We salute the momentum gained and important achievements made during the Water for Life Decade and the role that the Decade has played in facilitating the achievement of the internationally agreed water-related goals and particularly Millennium Development Goals;

We express appreciation for the role of the United Nations for its support to the development and implementation of the Decade and for setting up mechanisms through UN-Water, such as the UN-Water Decade Programmes, and for utilizing existing instruments, such as the World Water Development Reports and UNSGAB, that proved to be effective and reliable tools and contributed to the achievements of the Decade;

We acknowledge that much progress has been achieved during the Decade, particularly in terms of implementation of integrated water resources management plans, water cooperation, level of project implementation, the involvement of women as important stakeholders and the development of the global water community, and specifically on monitoring, private sector involvement, knowledge, advocacy, awareness raising, intergovernmental and interagency coordination in a UN context and stakeholder participation, which has been facilitated by improved knowledge and advocacy raising efforts on specific Decade themes;

We acknowledge that today the water community is less fragmented and more able to engage in a coordinated manner, but that there are several gaps, including, inter alia, the need to develop Water Efficiency Plans and to address emergent water issues such as water-related disasters and water environment problems including waste water management, that resulted from discussions about the implementation of the Decade from national, regional and global perspectives, as well as from discussions about progress and achievements, lessons learned and best practices;

We express concern that sanitation still lags behind despite improvements made since the International Year of Sanitation, 2008 and the “Sustainable Sanitation: 5-Year Drive to 2015”; also, the drinking water target has not been achieved evenly within and across urban and rural areas, large and small countries, richer and poorer households, households and non-household settings, gender and age group and there is huge variability in terms of water quality, affordability, efficiency, capability and durability of both management and infrastructure;

We are convinced that to keep the momentum gained, to fill the gaps that emerged during the Decade, as well as to contribute to the achievement of internationally agreed water-related goals, including the water-related goals and targets proposed by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations General Assembly, requires renewed, additional and sustained efforts of the international community;

We consider of primary importance to fully achieve internationally agreed drinking water and sanitation targets in a sustainable manner, to promote the respect of human rights obligations to safe drinking water and sanitation recognized by the United Nations General Assembly in 2010, and to focus our efforts on this key driver of human development, health and well-being, because inadequate water and sanitation services still pose a huge toll on health, particularly diarrheal disease; it is essential to aim for universal sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation services in all homes, schools, health centers and workplaces;

We exhort the international community to promote green economy in a context of sustainable development and poverty eradication and identify solutions along the water-food-energy-environment nexus through multipurpose and integrated water resources planning and management that also takes mining, extractive industries and tourism into consideration, to better understand and work for common answers and results to handle scarce water resources;

We encourage promoting measures that tackle global challenges, such as poverty, biodiversity loss, emerging diseases, humanitarian crises, urbanization, the impacts of natural disasters, food security, climate change, as well as small island and mountain development, which affect and are affected by water resources; adaptation to climate change through water is of particular importance for global discussion and actions including in COP 21 in Paris in December 2015;

We stress the importance of financing and governance, considering the impact of the financial and economic crisis that hit several countries, the challenges emanating from increased population, rapid urbanization and improved income levels, the difficulties of all countries, particularly Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States, the need for improved water resource governance and legal frameworks to ensure much needed sustained investment and financing, as well as

the importance to provide efficient and transparent financial mechanisms to support civil society initiatives;

We also acknowledge the importance of water cooperation across sectors and at all levels, including transboundary, as one of the conditions to achieve water related goals, socio-economic growth and prosperity and public health and the important role of multilateral and bilateral arrangements, basin institutions, including aquifers, and other cooperative institutional platforms to catalyze action;

We highlight the importance of implementing and monitoring the proposed water-related aspects of the Post-2015 Development Agenda in a comprehensive, integrated and inclusive manner;

We acknowledge that governments have the responsibility to ensure the sustainable management of water resources while taking into account competing demands and the interests of other stakeholders; it is important therefore to encourage stronger dialogue, as appropriate, and meaningful stakeholder participation at the local, national and international levels with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders including women and children;

We take note that improvements as far as water is concerned often require long term planning, mobilization of financial resources, implementation and management, as well as, inter alia, the promotion of integrated water resources management, risk management in water supply from catchment to consumer, improved scientific understanding of water resources, technology sharing, capacity building of human resources and institutional structures, education and training, better shared and open data and indicators disaggregated by marginalized groups, particularly for women and children;

We encourage governments and other stake-holders to consider the outcomes of the high level plenary sessions, implementation panels, post-2015 round tables, side events and pre-conference events of this Conference, to be reported in the Chair's Summary, and to translate, to the extent possible, the visions contained therein for the post-2015 water agenda into concrete actions;

Moreover, we urge the international community to launch new initiatives to support the implementation of the proposed dedicated water goal in the Post-2015 Development Agenda; address emergent water issues; improve planning, coordination and implementation of water-related actions by the UN system; and consider the potential for a new International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development" proposed by Tajikistan at the Seventh World Water Forum in Korea to keep the momentum gained during the Water for Life Decade;

Finally, we express our sincere appreciation to the Government of Tajikistan for hosting this Conference and for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to all participants and recommend the Government of Tajikistan to submit this Declaration accompanied by the Chair's Summary of the Conference to the United Nations General Assembly.

CHAIRS' SUMMARY of the High Level International Conference on the implementation of the International Decade for Action "Water for Life", 2005-2015

The High Level International Conference on the implementation of the International Decade for Action "Water for Life", 2005-2015, met in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on 9-10 June 2015, pursuant to United Nations General Assembly Resolution [A/69/215](#) entitled "International Decade for Action, 'Water for Life', 2005-2015, and further efforts to achieve the sustainable development of water resources". Its objective was to comprehensively evaluate progress achieved in the implementation of the Decade, identify gaps and recommend steps that would advance international efforts towards achieving internationally agreed water related goals.

High level delegations and representatives from 145 member states, international organizations, regional organizations and international financial institutions took part in this gathering alongside representatives of local governments, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and the private sector. In total, about 1,900 individuals took part in two days of discussion about one of the most pressing issues in today's changing world.

The Conference built on the outcomes of the High Level Interactive Dialogue of the Sixty-Ninth Session of the United Nations General Assembly, held in New York on 30 March 2015, for the purposes of a comprehensive review of the progress achieved in the implementation of the Decade, including best practices and lessons learned relevant to the achievement of sustainable development, as well as other previous events.

At the opening ceremony of the Conference, the President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon highlighted how water has become a global priority and the importance of a shared vision to achieving meaningful results. Moreover, he mentioned problems related to the management, use and protection of water resources in Tajikistan. The President also noted the need to build on the results of the Water for Life Decade and to continue to mobilize efforts to ensure the sustainable development of water resources, including achieving water related Sustainable Development Goals. He therefore proposed to declare a new International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development".

The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon highlighted the need for further consolidation of the efforts of the international community to solve water problems and supported Tajikistan's call for a new water decade. He expressed confidence that the Dushanbe Conference will be another positive step in that direction. The Conference was also addressed by the Prime Ministers of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Gabon and by the Deputy Prime Ministers of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Statements were also delivered on behalf of the President of the United Nations General Assembly, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, as well as other dignitaries, who gave a special focus to discussions.

In the first plenary session, statements were delivered by the heads of 50 official delegations. The main discussions then continued within two High Level Implementation Panels were therefore organized on the International Decade for Action "Water for Life", 2005-2015, at the regional and global level:

1. Regional perspectives;
2. Progress, achievements, lessons learnt and good practices.

International and regional experts delivered reports and presentations that reflected almost all water issues. The ensuing discussions affected all regions of the world at all levels. On the second day, six forward looking High Level Round Tables were convened by nine co-organizers on the following water related issues for the post-2015 development agenda:

1. Water and sanitation;
2. The water-energy-food-environment nexus;
3. Global challenges from a water perspective;
4. Financing and governance;
5. Water cooperation as catalyst to achieve water related goals;
6. Strengthening an integrated approach towards water related Sustainable Development Goals.

Discussions on different aspects of implementation of the International Decade for Action were also held within four Pre-Conference Events on the following themes:

1. Water and children;
2. Water and women;
3. Water in Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States;
4. Water and mountains.

Moreover, nine Side Events were organized by global, regional and national actors. These activities created an additional platform for wider discussion on various water related issues and priority themes of the Conference.

An important highlight of the Conference was the International Exhibition “Water for Life”, where 25 organizations at the international, regional and national level showcased their experience. This event attested the presence of enormous potential to address urgent water issues.

The International Photography Exhibition “Voices of the Water for Life Decade” showed how, during the Decade, while better water supply and sanitation improved the lives of people in all regions around the world, many challenges remain unsolved, particularly in Africa.

The Conference also included an exhibition of drawings by children of Tajikistan. Looking at water through children’s eyes helped participants realize how deeply water related problems affect livelihoods and encouraged them to make further efforts towards their solution.

The Conference was widely covered by the media. Millions of people in Tajikistan and beyond were able to monitor the progress of this important international event, obtain the necessary information, keep abreast of the global water agenda and, to some extent, be part of it.

The outcome of the Conference was the Declaration of the High Level International Conference on the implementation of the International Decade for Action “Water for

Life”, 2005-2015, reflecting the key points of the discussions and a number of important conclusions and recommendations. In particular, this document stresses the importance of the Decade and the results achieved, including the role of the Decade in promoting efforts to achieve water related goals, and calls for continued and greater coordinated action by all stakeholders at all levels to support the post-2015 development agenda. In this regard, the Declaration touches upon various aspects of the management, use and protection of water resources as far as water supply and sanitation, food, energy, environment and, more generally, sustainable development is concerned.

The Declaration also calls upon Member States and other stakeholders to promote a greener economy; to take measures to achieve resilience to the impacts of global challenges; increase funding; improve governance; strengthen cooperation, especially at the transboundary level; and take other concrete steps to address emerging water problems. The Declaration was widely supported by the participants of the Conference. One delegation made reservation to a certain paragraph of the document.

Several high level representatives expressed support and keen interest in the new initiative of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan to declare a new International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, aimed at strengthening the achievements of the Water for Life Decade and at facilitating the implementation of water related Sustainable Development Goals.

The Conference was a clear success, largely thanks to the joint and coordinated efforts of all parties, who contributed to the noble goals of the International Decade for Action “Water for Life”. The Government of Tajikistan will submit the Declaration, accompanied by this Chair’s Summary, to the United Nations General Assembly at its Seventieth Session.

The reporting from the panelists reflected challenges and opportunities faced by all regions — from the least to the most developed; from the water rich to the water poor — each with their own experiences on improving national water management. While government commitment has grown and in many cases the policy and regulatory environment has improved, fragmentation in water governance remains and often implementation and institution building lag behind. There is distinct progress with the supply of drinking water (with increased use of water and increased wastewater as an effect), but significant inequities remain between rich and poor and between urban and rural populations. Rural areas, for example, lag behind in comparison with urban areas. While there are some developments also with regard to sanitation, here challenges remain considerable.

Latin America

Available resources are distributed unevenly over the continent. Legislation is in place, but implementation and institutions need to be strengthened. There are positive experiences from tariff increases and direct subsidies to the poor.

Asia and the Pacific

The region is very diverse with regard to the economic situation as well as access to water. A very strong urban growth leads to specific issues.

Western Asia

A water-poor region with considerable problems with regard to water supply and sanitation, including deficient transboundary cooperation. Many countries fall below the defined level of water scarcity and the economic impact of water use is low. Moreover, 27 million refugees and displaced persons are a significant challenge also with regard to water supply and sanitation.

Africa

Political ownership increased, for example with various initiatives and declarations made by African Ministers' Council on Water, such as the African Water Facility and the Africa Water Vision. Transboundary cooperation moves forward thanks for instance to the Southern African Development Community's Revised Protocol on Shared Watercourses and developments in the Senegal and Zambesi river basins. Some progress on drinking water supply was made, but the situation is worsening with regard to sanitation. While most of African crop production is rainfed, more irrigation is needed.

Europe

Transboundary development in many parts of the region is made on the basis of the 1992 United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Water Convention. Improvements in equitable access to water and sanitation were noted together with initiatives on capacity building.

Central Asia

The International Fund for the Saving of the Aral Sea and its institutional system are a good example of regional cooperation, in particular as far as its work to improve the socio-economic situation for the people living in the basin is concerned.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE HIGH LEVEL PANEL "WATER DECADE IMPLEMENTATION: PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS, LESSONS LEARNT, BEST PRACTICES"

The initial impetus of the Decade was immense. The global water community saw the Decade providing the framework for bringing together the many fragmented initiatives both within the United Nations and by other actors. The fact that the Decade was agreed through a Resolution of the General Assembly provided the mandate for the United Nations agencies to support and for the member countries to engage in it. This initial impetus led to the preparation of a complex plan of action of the United Nations Secretary General with pledges from United Nations entities and with an initial decision on the priority themes for the Decade. The first 2003 World Water Development Report entitled "Water for People, Water for Life", one of the first Joint Monitoring Programme report launched in 2005 and entitled "Water for Life: Making it Happen", as well as the 2006 Human Development Report

entitled “Beyond Scarcity” provided a sound knowledge base at the beginning of the Water for Life Decade.

Drinking water supply and sanitation, women participation and local water cooperation

There has been progress in access to improved drinking water and sanitation services. Since 1990, more than 2.3 billion people have gained access to an improved source of drinking water and from 1990 to 2012 almost 2 billion people gained access to a latrine, flush toilet or other improved sanitation facilities, representing 64% of the global population. Investments in water, sanitation and health projects and programmes have increased. We are now finally focusing more and talking more openly about sanitation and open defecation. Having clear targets and monitoring them have been instrumental in driving action. Benefits of improving access to water and sanitation are now better documented and acknowledged. High level global advocacy efforts have brought about more awareness at the political level of the importance of water, sanitation and health investments, driving donor coordination and commitments for water, sanitation and health. We know what “no one size fits all” means for water and sanitation, as solutions need to be adapted to local contexts. Hygiene can be one of the most effective and cost-effective actions against disease. We know about the need to address inequalities and the need for incentives and capacity building to do so. We have learned that we need to focus on effective asset management, the sustainability of services and the need to increase and improve financing, governance and accountability. We have learned the difference the Human Right to Water and Sanitation has made. We have also learned what women have gained and how essential women’s participation is, as well as the role of local governments and local stakeholders as we scale up and ascend the ladder of water supply and sanitation.

Integrated water resources management and water cooperation

There has been progress in the implementation of integrated water resources management. Cooperation on transboundary waters is also increasing. There has been a greater recognition of the importance of both these themes throughout the Decade including the ratification of the UN Convention on the Law on Non-navigational Uses of Transboundary Watercourses and the opening of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Water Convention to all countries. We have seen the need to consider water scarcity to ensure sustainable development. There is more awareness of the importance of water quality and the opportunities derived from its improvement. We have increased our understanding of the connection between water and energy and we recognize how vital water is for food security in all countries. There has been a greater recognition of the importance of managing the interdependencies between water, food, energy and the environment to identify new opportunities for growth and to reduce new risks that may arise from these interdependencies. There is greater understanding of the need to manage natural systems and a clearer role for an ecosystems approach and better understanding the impact of climate change. We learned about what works for enabling water cooperation, that institutions and agreements matter and about practical tools to enhance water cooperation.

The role of global processes and actors

We have seen the transformative power of global monitoring, reporting and information gathering. We have seen how the private sector acknowledges water as a shared problem and has found a role in global processes. We have seen a change in paradigms and have been able to develop and share our knowledge on global challenges and policy responses. High level advocacy during the Decade has proved to be successful at creating political engagement and at maintaining the momentum for political action at global level. We have seen the creation of a dedicated political process for water and improved inter-governmental coordination on water issues, as well as a greater understanding of the need for stakeholder engagement and supporting partnerships for a better future. We have also seen how the Decade has helped the improvement of inter-agency coordination within the UN and with global partners and the importance of global awareness raising and communication.

Key challenges of the Decade

Ten years is a long time. There is a need for milestones to sustain the process. Different types of milestones are useful: political, outreach, communication. The High Level International Conferences, the UN-Water Zaragoza Conferences, the World Water Days and the International Years have been essential. Decades may more explicitly create a political process for regularly taking stock and reporting on key implementation commitments and actions. There needs to be a process to ensure accountability of the different actors in relation to their roles and planned actions. Leadership and support structures are essential for the decade process to be effective. Leadership among Member States needs to be more clearly identified. Decades may help create a forum to support better donor coordination at global level. The work at country level during the Decade needs to be analyzed. Member States have not been engaged through national committees and the logo users have otherwise provided impetus at national level. Branding of actions should be pursued consistently by the United Nations and other stakeholders. A clearer strategy in this regard is necessary.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE HIGH LEVEL ROUND TABLE “WATER BEYOND 2015: WATER AND SANITATION”

Inadequate sanitation becomes a global impediment for sustainable development. The World Health Organization assesses human losses at a level of 280,000 people and 280 billion dollars because of predominantly diarrheal infectious diseases. Poor sanitation also causes environmental degradation as more than 80% of latrines are not properly managed thus polluting groundwater and up to 90% of collected wastewater goes untreated into the environment. It is also common that financial resources allocated to sanitation do not produce the desired outcomes due to sector fragmentation and lack of coordination among players and financial institutions. MDGs for sanitation are significantly behind the ones on drinking water and this requires immediate attention and quick action by all concerned parties.

Rethinking sanitation

It is important that governments put sanitation substantially higher into their country priorities, develop appropriate monitoring mechanisms, sanitation strategies

and investment projects that will address needs. It is important to look beyond access and just collection of wastewater. The entire chain of sanitation, wastewater collection and utilization of wastewater treatment products has to be thought through at the design and financing stages to guarantee the sustainability of sanitation in the long run. While planning sanitation actions, it is important to look outside of the sector and address sanitation needs in coordination with education, health and urban development.

Successful experiences

Experiences from Malaysia, Brazil and other countries confirm that adequate sanitation is feasible and doable. What is required are clear and transparent rules and frameworks established by governments that bring together the financial resources and technical expertise of the state, municipalities, businesses and users. For example, in the early 1970s, Malaysia had only a limited number of sanitation facilities, while now it has almost universal coverage with sewerage sanitation due to government leadership in the sector, its proper financing and using skills of commercial entrepreneurs that transformed the country into a world leader in the sector.

Changing usages

Behavior change in relation to toilet usage and hygiene is required among many other things. Understanding proper sanitation is a common goal for most communities, municipalities and countries. It is important to provide information about the dangers associated with open defecation, poor hygiene and inadequate attention to sanitation, so that these practices become socially unacceptable.

Cost-efficient solutions

While addressing sanitation needs, it is important to recognize the cost efficiency of sanitation actions. Some technologies can be too costly in immediate terms. There are sound alternatives to sewers and wastewater treatment in urban areas. Sanitation marketing and access to microcredit are important in rural areas and provide affordable and sustainable solutions that can help those currently practicing open defecation.

Attracting domestic capital investment

Mobilizing additional sources of funds from domestic capital markets is important to go forward. This requires improved utility governance, financial performance and reaching out to lenders. This is essential to reduce reliance on government or donor funding to meet the financing needs of the sector.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE HIGH LEVEL ROUND TABLE “WATER BEYOND 2015: THE WATER-ENERGY-FOOD-ENVIRONMENT NEXUS”

The Decade helped broaden the discussion from almost exclusively water experts to stakeholders also from other sectors, as well as the general public. The concept of integrated water resource management and, most recently, the emergence of the

so-called water-energy-food-environment nexus facilitated reaching out to key players, particularly in the energy, agriculture and environmental sectors. The challenge of climate change helped realize how connected all these problems are and how solutions in one sector are linked to solutions in other sectors. This is why dialogue among relevant sectors and levels is fundamental. It is increasingly evident that intersectoral dialogue must be based on a salient, reliable and legitimate knowledge base. Joint monitoring and observation platforms play therefore a crucial role.

Identifying opportunities and risks

The Nexus is about identifying new opportunities for growth and responding to new risks emerging from the interactions between water, energy, food and the environment. For example, water for food issues can be mitigated by looking wider and trying to cover water shortages by increasing water use efficiency, shifting to supplemental irrigation, increasing productivity, improving soil fertility, crop diversification and water saving. Water deficit due to shortage of water for power generation can be mitigated by introducing small hydropower and other renewable energy sources and reconsidering ownership of power stations, including the involvement of the private sector.

Institutional arrangements at all levels

Institutional arrangements are key at all levels. River basin organizations have to be strengthened to introduce integrated water resource management, nexus analyses and assessing nexus impacts on ecosystem services. Local, national and regional processes that promote integrated planning and management are critical. Comprehensive interconnected policies, institutions, intersectoral dialogues and planning, as well as regional cooperation can transform conflict and competition for water into win-win situations. It is recommended to strengthen intersectoral dialogues and regional cooperation on water, energy, food and environment nexus and involve stakeholders from the energy sector along with water, agriculture and environment experts and other stakeholders into nexus discussions.

Data and data management

Sound data and data management processes are essential. Proper data collection and monitoring systems have to be in place and information exchanged in order to make proper accounting of resource use efficiency and budgeting. The system has to allow avoiding double accounting of resources, evaluating sectoral impacts and making trade-off analyses. It is recommended to prioritize institutional development and capacity building for nexus analyses and to continue establishing systems to monitor, collect and exchange proper data with the agreement of all key stakeholders.

Technology and safeguards

Technology and safeguards have a role. Emerging technologies can help improve the benefits between sectors and support better planning and management of resources. Social and environmental safeguards could help ensure cross-sectoral planning and management.

Incentives

Incentives are necessary. Significant bureaucratic impediments exist. Steps should be taken to incentivize the uptake of new technologies and reduce the risks for adopting novel approaches. From this perspective, it is essential to develop visions for the future of the water-energy-food-environment nexus for the main rivers of Central Asia.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE HIGH LEVEL ROUND TABLE “WATER BEYOND 2015: GLOBAL CHALLENGES FROM A WATER PERSPECTIVE”

Across the post-2015 agendas, issues of water scarcity and water management coupled with climate change related disasters are emerging as a critical global challenge. Key themes of localizing preparedness and response and empowering communities to take action in managing these risks are being repeatedly voiced in the context of disaster risk reduction (2015 Sendai Conference), the Sustainable Development Goals, climate change (2015 Paris COP-21) and the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. Failure to recognize and act on these issues could have widespread implications, particularly with regard to food security, energy shortages, conflict and the spread of disease. The management of water is particularly relevant in mountainous areas, the source of over half the world’s drinking water. Unless we start protecting our headwaters and pay proper attention to the state of water in mountainous areas, we cannot guarantee adequate future water supply for the world’s population.

Water is a source of cooperation

Water has potential of being as a source of life for up and downstream, high and lowland inhabitants. The potential of water becoming a source of tension and conflict, as illustrated in several conflicts around the world, was also discussed. It was widely agreed by the participants that the water can serve as a source of cooperation and reconciliation by providing a solid path for conflict resolution and peace.

Poverty and distribution of wealth

Global changes (social, economic, environmental) and their linkage to poverty, exacerbating the extent of the problem. The issue of distribution of costs and benefits has been highlighted in the context of mountain countries not getting the benefits they deserve and entitlements for their stewardship service over ecosystem goods and services they provide for downstream.

Ecosystem goods and services

Many participants highlighted the need in capturing the full value of the ecosystem goods and services provided by water related ecosystems including mountains (as defined in the proposed SDG 6.6), scaling up schemes such as payments for ecosystem services and other economic instruments for rewarding and compensating the poor and marginalized from uplands. Capacity building and cross-learning have been prioritized to this regard.

Emergency preparedness

In terms of increased vulnerability, there is a consensus on the need to improve the level of preparedness and short term immediate responses to frequent emergencies. One of the key highlights the participants noted was to ensure interlinkages of emergency preparedness and humanitarian response with development processes.

Integrated planning and regulation

Participants also talked a lot about the need for planning and regulatory frameworks to be intersectoral, employing holistic and integrated approaches for managing the resource base, take into account the specific needs of regions and solid understanding of facts. For this, the importance of quality and accessible data has been emphasized for understanding water cycles in case of disasters and the state of the resource as far as water management is concerned. This is particularly important to avoid conflict and solve existing ones.

Stakeholder participation

Participants also highlighted the importance of involving local communities, civil society, the private sector and relevant stakeholders in designing risk mitigation, preparedness and response activities, addressing development challenges in mountain areas by learning from their vast experience and by localizing climate adaptation, risk management and responses, development plans and strategies.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE HIGH LEVEL ROUND TABLE “WATER BEYOND 2015: FINANCING AND GOVERNANCE”

The key messages that emerged from the roundtable focused principally on financing, though the need for good governance as a framework to enable financing and more generally to support and improve water resources management and sustainable development was also highlighted as central. Particular aspects of governance were mentioned, amongst other things: the rule of law, accountability, transparency, institutions, legal mechanisms, education and corruption. Achieving development goals, whether the Millennium Development Goals, the Sustainable Development Goals or other goals within the water sector requires financial resources and governance frameworks. Where these are insufficient or non-existent, the development and implementation of projects may be significantly hindered.

Appropriate pricing

Appropriate policies for financing are required. Pricing was highlighted as a key policy. In this regard, attention should be paid not just to capital investment and its recovery but also to the costs for maintenance, operation and renovation. Ideally, a tariff structure focusing on full cost recovery should include the following five elements: all capital investment is incorporated into the cost; financial costs include maintenance, operation and renovation, while striving for economic efficiency; equity, recognizing the willingness and ability to pay of population; affordability, which is essential for water and sanitation, particularly for low income populations; simplicity to facilitate better compliance.

Cost recovery and political willingness

However, full cost recovery is generally constrained by prevailing political and social environment, with limited political willingness to allow economically sound tariffs to be set. In addition, inadequate controls and maintenance and poor institutional arrangements prevent significant reduction in nonrevenue water. Generally, governments are unable to meet the financial gap and hence the deferred maintenance requires new rehabilitation projects that may include improvements and modernization as well.

Tariffication options

Pricing is reflected through tariffication, which determines how much water users pay for obtaining water services. Different options are possible, as demonstrated by the example of countries in Latin America, and depend on a variety of factors. Tariffication needs to be sustainable, efficient and equitable (considering low-income populations) to ensure the stability of the system and its sustainability. In certain environments, such as cities, there may be different water service providers including private ones. This raises the need for a regulatory framework to ensure equity for vulnerable populations. Sustainability through appropriate pricing is crucial, as moderate pricing does not enable cost recovery and can lead to waste.

Funding schemes

Indeed, despite providing a majority of funding, states are not always able to provide full funding and public-private partnerships are a model that has become increasingly used to attract funding from the private sector. However, such schemes need to be appropriately regulated and the adequate model needs to be chosen for a particular situation. When involving the private sector the goal should be to achieve a balance between sustainability and equity. This will depend on the context and the country's readiness and ability to adopt such schemes in a manner that allows that balance.

Gender equality and empowerment

Cross-cutting issues also require attention and an important one is gender. Water, sanitation and health activities should take into account the perspective of women and girls to improve their capabilities: the lack of sanitation and access to clean and safe water affects the ability of women to generate income and girls' schooling. Gender equality and empowerment are necessary to achieve future goals in the water sector.

Water governance and education

Finally, investment should not focus only on infrastructure but also on governance and education. Even if there is a dedicated water Sustainable Development Goal and the funding for it, human resources are necessary for its implementation.

Recommendations

The different speakers and participants of the roundtable made several recommendations through their presentations and comments: projects should be designed to be financially sustainable and equitable; projects should be sensitive to

gender and behavioral issues, needs or preferences; transparent participatory projects improve governance; policies should be all encompassing vis-à-vis different sectors as well urban and rural needs; a legal framework to create an enabling environment should be established.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE HIGH LEVEL ROUND TABLE “WATER BEYOND 2015: WATER COOPERATION AS CATALYST TO ACHIEVE WATER RELATED GOALS”

One of the main initiatives in the framework of the Water for Life Decade was the 2013 International Year of Water Cooperation. It was coordinated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for UN-Water and it provided a platform for wide dissemination of best practices on water cooperation and for the creation of awareness about existing tools for water diplomacy. Its messages reached a large variety of stakeholders, particularly young people, creating adequate environment to continue the work on water cooperation within the Sustainable Development Goals and in the follow-up to the Water for Life Decade.

New attitude in cooperation

A new attitude on water cooperation that aims at developing a holistic approach considering transdisciplinarity by providing innovative methods and tools, particularly in areas such as monitoring and data collection with gender and youth participation. This is something important that needs to be promoted. The benefits from cooperation on water are clear: it opens up new opportunities for growth and it helps reduce risks. When countries work together, they can realize greater economic benefits and strengthen regional integration, peace and security. Honest engagement with a transparent process to reach amicable solutions is needed. Cooperation, between various sectors, states, countries will be critical to our achieving the post-2015 development agenda. International conventions and existing regional and basin agreements can serve as useful tools to guide discussions and to help riparian countries.

Capacity, education, knowledge and data

Data and indicators are crucial to assess the progress of past and upcoming development goals. Data on river and aquifer systems is often weak or non-existent, so disputes are more frequently based on myths and misunderstandings rather than facts. Decisions on the management of shared water resources must be based on the best science available. All key stakeholders need to be involved in the data collection and data analysis process so that all the parties have confidence in the information that is available to them. The key to building trust is facilitating data and information exchange among riparian countries of transboundary basins and aquifers. It implies the joint development of sound water information systems.

Investment on the ground

There should be investment in joint projects that demonstrate the benefits of cooperation. Nothing drives cooperation better than real, concrete, on-the-ground results. Focus on realistic goals and mutually beneficial outcomes is essential. Coupled with an integrated water resource management approach and based on

concrete technical solutions, the development of science-policy interface can contribute to find optimal options for investment programs at the transboundary level.

Institutions and water governance

Water governance is necessary to manage water resources sustainably. Water governance should serve the purpose of the sustainable development vision of each country. Institutions, such as basin commissions that can secure integrated river basin planning as the basis to realize integrated water resources management objectives, are needed. To make water governance work, we will need to cooperate more effectively.

Water, a tool for diplomacy

Water diplomacy can push politicians and people to understand why water is important by building trust and enhancing dialogue. Diplomats are being increasingly engaged in water resource related issues and they can play a better role in fostering water cooperation. Diplomats, technicians, scientists and politicians can build a dialogue on water diplomacy considering that this dialogue has to be based on sound science and technology. This is particularly important for Central Asia. Using water diplomacy to cooperate with other sectors is a key for water, energy, food and environmental security.

Recommendations for future action

The wise use of water requires collaboration among countries through dialogue and agreement on cooperation modalities based on sound science. We must join forces so that water cooperation becomes an everyday reality, rather than a source of confrontation. To make this happen, it is necessary to mobilize international cooperation to improve knowledge and foster innovation to address water security challenges, strengthen the science-policy interface to reach water cooperation at local, national, regional and global levels and develop institutional and human capacity for water cooperation and sustainability.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE HIGH LEVEL ROUND TABLE “WATER BEYOND 2015: STRENGTHENING AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TOWARDS WATER RELATED SDGS”

In the development of the post-2015 development agenda, it is very clear that water serves as the foundation for ecological stability, economic development, human health and wellbeing. Further, it is also obvious that water is not the only crosscutting SDG. Arguably, most if not all of the SDGs have important linkages to and synergies with one another. At the same time, it is conceivable that there could also be conflict, competition or inconsistencies across SDGs concerning water that need to be taken into account. These realities underscore the importance of taking integrated and comprehensive approaches to implementing the water and other SDGs that capture such synergies, deliver win-win approaches that leverage progress on two or more SDGs and optimize efficient use of resources.

Integration challenges

The panel came to the conclusion that achieving integration in the design and implementation of SDGs is easy to say but quite difficult to achieve in practice. It is understandable that integration leads to optimization of limited resources, but few real-life examples exist.

Global cooperation and climate change

There is a heightened need to realize global cooperation on water related Sustainable Development Goals, particularly when we consider the impacts of climate change on the global water cycle and water distribution.

Agricultural practices

Within the context of national circumstances, as the largest sectoral user of water, the agriculture sector in particular must be held accountable for water use efficiencies. This should take into account the fact that current industrial-scale agricultural practices are in many cases unsustainable with respect to soil health and impacts on water.

Energy transition

The energy sector must be held accountable for water efficiencies in energy and a transition to clean energy, including hydropower. Such transition should be undertaken in a manner that does not compromise water quality, environmental integrity, community access or disaster mitigation.

Coordination with the World Water Forum

The international water community is advised to coordinate SDG implementation for water related goals with the Implementation Roadmap and Action Monitoring System adopted by the 7th World Water Forum in Korea, in itself strongly linked to SDGs. There was clear support for the proposal from the President of Tajikistan to launch a new International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development.”

International Year of Water and Women

The roundtable also expressed clear support for the Women for Water Partnership proposal to designate 2017 as International Year of Water and Women, twenty-five years after the adoption of the third Dublin principle, including the establishment of a global Women’s Water Fund.

**CONCLUSIONS OF THE PRE-CONFERENCE EVENT
“CHILDREN’S WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE FORUM”**

The preparation process of the Forum engaged twenty-six adolescents from Tajikistan, who received advocacy and media training to become young citizen journalists and to produce short advocacy videos called One Minute Junior on water, sanitation and health issues in May 2015. The training has enabled them to become ambassadors-mentors. One month later, they welcomed other participants aged twelve to eighteen, including thirteen participants of the Children’s Water Forum in Korea and winners of a water, sanitation and health drawing competition from

Tajikistan, as well as twenty-one international participants from Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bolivia, Brazil, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, South Korea, the Philippines, Ukraine, the United States and Zambia.

The Forum gathered around sixty adolescents from twelve countries to understand and contribute to global discussions on water, sanitation and health issues and solutions. Participants were able to identify intersectoral linkages that would lead to development of accessible and sustainable services. The aim of the Forum was to provide opportunities for children and adolescents to advocate for all boys and girls everywhere to have access to water, sanitation and health in all phases and places of life, including home, community, school and during disasters.

The Forum trained participants on particular advocacy skills for example through production of One Minute Junior videos and citizen journalism through social media. With these skills, they should be able to continue being engaged in and contributing to global discussions not only on water, sanitation and health, but also to the debates related to proposed Sustainable Development Goals.

The Forum helped adolescent participants to develop a call to action, which was presented at the closing plenary of the High Level International Conference on the implementation of the International Decade for Action “Water for Life”, 2005-2015. The Call reaffirmed their commitment to play a strong role as they can “facilitate peer-to-peer learning and to use social media to promote, with super speed, messages on the rights of all children and young people to WASH.”

The Children’s Water, Sanitation and Health Forum also aimed at creating links “beyond borders” among adolescents and at encouraging their participation in regional and global discussions on issues that matter to them. This experience of bringing adolescents together proved that joint discussions connected them more during the days that they spent together and would keep them “connected” as part of a broader global community.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE PRE-CONFERENCE EVENT “WOMEN WATER FORUM”

This event gathered more than 180 women and men from twenty-nine countries and five continents to discuss the theme of women for a water-secure world under the post-2015 global agenda for sustainable development. Participants included representatives of national and international institutions and organizations, politicians, water experts, academics, community activists and media representatives. At the end of a whole afternoon of discussions, an outcome document was produced.

This document recalled that the international community is commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and negotiating the post-2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Twenty years ago, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were adopted as milestone agreements firmly anchoring the objective of gender equality within a human rights framework. The Beijing Platform for Action includes specific commitments on Women and Environment with a focus on the right to water for all.

Participants urged governments, non-governmental organizations and private actors to join efforts in the implementation of the Dublin Principles by involving as many

women as possible from the earliest stages of policy and project design to contribute to their implementation, management, control and assessment. However, despite progress made on these commitments, they expressed concern that women and girls globally invest 40 billion hours per year to fetch water for the fundamental needs of their families, that girls and women continue being exposed to the threat of violence when accessing unsafe water and sanitation facilities and that one third of girls globally rarely go to school during menstruation due to lack of adequate sanitation facilities.

As United Nations Member States finalize the Sustainable Development Goals, it is crucial that Sustainable Development Goals, link achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls (SDG 5), on one hand, with ensuring access and sustainable water and sanitation services for all (SDG 6), on the other hand, as well as Sustainable Development Goals linked to financing, monitoring and risk and disaster management need to be based on gender disaggregated data and indicators. We need to ensure that all human beings — women and men, girls and boys — stand at the center of concern for sustainable development.

The outcome document then raised a number of issues. In its conclusion, it invited to raise the profile of women's involvement on an equitable basis in water sector and proposed a United Nations Water and Women Year for 2017 and a United Nations Water and Women Day, i.e. twenty-five years after the adoption of the Dublin Principle III on 31 January 1992; it also called the Conference to commit for the establishment of a dedicated Women for Water Fund; finally, it encouraged the participating countries to commit to this initiative and to report at the next international water related fora on the progress achieved.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE PRE-CONFERENCE EVENT “FORUM ON WATER IN LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES AND SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES”

The Forum reviewed and investigate the specific considerations of Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States with regard to a broad range of water issues, both in terms of challenges and opportunities. The Forum participants discussed inter alia approaches to ensure sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation as essential components of a pro-poor economic growth strategy and the new post-2015 sustainable development paradigm. Moreover, this Forum also provided an opportunity for Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States to assess the progress and achievements, lessons learnt and best practices of the International Decade for Action “Water for Life”, 2005-2015, and how that trajectory relates to the post-2015 Development Agenda and further efforts to achieve the sustainable development of water resources.

Progress towards achieving Millennium Development Goals in Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States has been uneven. Among Least Developed Countries, some have physical water scarcity and are ill positioned to respond to challenges related to climate change as well as adequately implement the Millennium Development Goals. Some countries have water resources but there are challenges related to economic water scarcity in which available funding restricts the possibilities of meeting the needs for their agricultural and industrial activities or challenges related to transboundary water resources. Many other countries have

sanitation and water quality challenges, which makes it unavailable for practical use.

Small Island Developing States possess specific challenges. Even in atoll islands, there is rapid urbanisation and the underlying infrastructure is aging and often unable to cope with new stresses. Climate change plays an important role in exacerbating the situation. There is rising sea levels and 75% of Small Island Developing States are being affected, adversely impacting groundwater resources through intrusion of seawater into aquifers.

The physical scarcity of water resources requires a better system for managing this resource, especially where the resource base is declining. There is a need to protect its quality. With industrialization and population growth, there are problems of pollution. There is a need to clarify priorities and target specific problems and specific populations.

There is a water, sanitation and hygiene unfinished agenda for Least Developed Countries in Asia. It is estimated that there is a 0.5 to 2.5% of GDP loss due to lack of sanitation. In matters of sanitation, most African countries have not managed the sanitation crisis. At the Dakar AfricaSan Conference, proposals were made about ways to realise access for sanitation for all in Africa by 2030, stop open defecation and improve efficiency and sustainability of services.

The mandate for action, internationally and regionally, exists in the form of commitments and conventions; however, action lags behind because of lack of political will, lack of appropriate human and institutional capacity or both. There is a need to improve monitoring and honesty in reporting and perhaps “a whip being put on us”. There is a need for champions and for countries to keep to what they have committed to do. Benchmarking and gap analysis by peer review can be part of the process. Investment and financing, monitoring and accountability, technology and behaviour change, as well as knowledge and cooperation are all parts of the solution.

Support through South-South cooperation is a key tool to address poverty and inequality, involving stakeholders and linking training and capacity building with access to international markets.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE PRE-CONFERENCE EVENT “WATER AND MOUNTAINS FORUM”

The Forum brought together more than 120 among government representatives from across Central Asia and from around the world at various levels, civil society groups, development agencies and researchers to explore the links between mountains and water and the contextual issues for sustainable mountain development, including climate change and its impacts on mountain agriculture, nutrition and health, the role of women in mountain ecosystem stewardship, integrated watershed management and disaster risk mitigation. Examples from across the region and around the world were presented.

Eight sessions with forty-four presentations and group discussions moderated by subject-matter experts from the global mountain community offered multiple perspectives on the challenges facing mountain communities.

Issues explored included food security and creating conditions for entrepreneurship and better livelihoods, particularly among women; methods for conflict-resolution about pasture management, water and access to resources including frameworks for encouraging proactive participation by communities in the design of solutions; sustainable land management practices and the necessary governance mechanisms for achieving sustainable land management; land-use management practices and the need for integrating disaster risk mitigation into these systems; design and delivery of knowledge management solutions about water and mountains that offers not only technical solutions and platforms, but the capabilities to help transform information into action on the ground, designed by and for the communities it is intended to benefit; multidisciplinary and cross-cutting approaches to research problem formulation and project delivery and the requirement to strengthen communication between research and policy.

The Forum produced a declaration and concluded that priority actions should be to diversify food systems by supporting mountain farmers and encouraging climate-smart agriculture; promote participatory governance of natural resources in watersheds; upscale sustainable land management practices, including community-based climate risk mitigation plans; introduce equitable benefit sharing and compensation mechanisms to properly reflect the services provided by mountains for all; enable better knowledge exchange between practitioners, communities and researchers; invest in decision-support tools and programs that integrate the concerns of mountain communities by working directly with them; place sustainable mountain development concerns in development plans and use international meetings and conventions to emplace mountain issues in sustainable development goals and actions.

CONCLUSIONS OF SIDE-EVENTS

Eight side events were held by various stakeholders in the evening of the first day of the Conference. The water themes that needed more focused attention were addressed and discussed in smaller groups. This further extended the number of issues covered during the Conference.

The side events gave an additional opportunity to discuss in an open manner and with multistakeholder participation water related issues and views for further steps to be undertaken to continue efforts to ensure sustainable water management, transboundary cooperation, capacity building and institutional development.

The side events offered a comprehensive range of topics aimed at promoting sanitation and water education, water management, the critical importance of water for sustainable development, conservation of biodiversity, as well as policy-making, promotion of new technologies and services in wastewater management and water transportation, gender and equity issues with regard to access water resources and conflict resolution. Participants also talked about a new international water decade that could build on the progress achieved and the best practices of the previous decades and develop effective measures to meet the development agenda beyond 2015.

The side events were organized by national governments, national agencies, regional and international organizations, including UN agencies, international financial institutions, non-governmental organizations and academia. The speakers

and panellists included ministers, heads of international agencies, UN representatives and scholars.

A number of findings and recommendations emerged from deliberations, which reflects a time of great change in the water sector and beyond with important advances in achieving the internationally agreed goals for water supply and sanitation services, as well significant progress made in integrated water resources management and water cooperation. Tajikistan, as a host of the Conference, organized an event entitled Informal Consultation on the Newly Proposed International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”. The New Decade should strengthen and enhance the progress achieved during the “Water for Life” Decade and create a good platform for the consolidation of efforts aimed at better management of water issues for the post-2015 period.

Overall, participants were adamant that a different process from that of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should not be set up. The goals of the new Decade should be the SDGs. In this respect, participants emphasised the need to consider a focus on scarcity, sanitation, efficiency (productivity), ecosystems, WASH and wastewater. Some participants considered it necessary to include the importance of groundwater and of nature and rivers, the risks for and from water and the nexus issues, including the interlinkages among the different goals.

For the New Decade to be effective, it may need to start with a 10 Year Plan and have clear delivery mechanisms. These could include establishing benchmarks and opportunities to take stock — a political process — including measures for follow-up after the Decade to 2030. It needs to include country-level implementation mechanisms to support action and multistakeholder platforms at different levels (governments, the private sector, NGOs and civil society in general).

In general, greater coordination and inclusiveness should be achieved: flexibility, adaptation to local circumstances, and pro-actively working with all relevant stakeholders are crucial if interventions are to be sustainable and effectively reach the intended beneficiaries. Support for the Decade will have to consider the need for technology promotion and dissemination, knowledge generation and improving accessibility of information, advocacy and communication actions and support through incentives and the establishment of guidelines (standards for rivers for example). Access to knowledge, as well as generating new information relevant to the water related SDGs needs to be supported. There need to be regional level actions and a consideration of the need for improved multi-donor coordination, as well as Champions and Goodwill Ambassadors. Facilitating country level commitments and their follow-up, as well as donor coordination, by strengthening existing initiatives and supporting new ones at global and regional levels, are of utmost importance.