



2nd ASIA-PACIFIC WATER SUMMIT Water Security and Water Related Disaster Challenges: Leadership and Commitment

A Summary of Focus Area Sessions (FASs)

19 May 2013
CMICE, Chiang Mai, Thailand

Focus Area Session 1 (FAS1): Economic, Food and Water Security (FAO & UNESCAP)

Focus Area Session 1 (FAS1) on Economic, Food and Water Security noted there have been remarkable achievements in economic growth and in reducing hunger and poverty. However, unsustainable growth patterns have left millions poor and hungry. To eradicate hunger and poverty by 2025 and ensure economic, food and water security we must adopt knowledge-based green growth. This requires reviewing socio-economic objectives through a water lens, adopting policy instruments including pricing and payment mechanisms for ecosystem services, supporting investments to boost ecosystem and water productivity, maintaining water quality across all sectors and supply chains, returning water to the environment, and recognizing the increasing role of the private sector. We must also address the water-food-energy nexus. There needs to be a convergence of water, food, energy, land and climate policies which include addressing critical aquifers. Governance, dialogue, trans-boundary cooperation, including for drought management are key for political stability, equity and balancing trade-offs between sectors. Green growth needs to be inclusive, based on participatory decision-making and achieve equitable outcomes for all communities, from mountains to seas.

Focus Area Session 2 (FAS2): Urban Water Security (UN-HABITAT & PUB)

The Focus Area Session 2 (FAS2) on Urban Water Security recognised the goal of universal access to water and sanitation by 2025 and that access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation is a basic human right and a fundamental aspect of human security. A lack of access to safe water and sanitation is a human made disaster which is causing major health risks and human loss, as well as undermining socio-economic advancement. The FAS highlighted the need for a paradigm shift from “waste water” to “used water”, and the importance of IWRM, Water Demand Management, proper sludge treatment, national policies, enhanced capacity of local authorities, community engagement, stronger partnerships with various actors, and knowledge sharing: learning from others experiences, adapting, replicating and scaling up. It was noted that combating this disaster also requires political commitment, increases in national budgets, innovative technologies and financing mechanisms for wastewater management, and creating conducive environments for attracting private finance to ensure sustainable delivery.

Focus Area Session 3 (FAS3): Environment Water Security (IUCN)

Focus Area Session 3 (FAS3) on Environmental Water Security recognised that nature performs critical services which provide livelihoods, support production, lower disaster risk and build climate change resilience. Investing in natural infrastructure enhances the environmental contribution to water security by ensuring adequate and timely flows of clean and safe water to sustain freshwater and estuarine ecosystems. River restoration is a key opportunity to use investment in natural infrastructure to help secure reliable, clean supplies of water for cities and to help ensure healthy lives for people. Cooperation is the basis for sustainable solutions for water security. These should incorporate investment in natural infrastructure for the protection of upper catchments for downstream benefits, within or across political borders, and take into consideration the interest of all stakeholders. Natural infrastructure should be used alongside methods to improve the efficiency of water use in agriculture, the operation of energy infrastructure and the treatment and re-use of wastewater to provide integrated solutions for urban and rural development and for water, energy and food security. Ultimately, healthy ecosystems help to secure water for household, urban, economic, food, and risks and resilience needs.

Focus Area Session 4 (FAS4): Household Water Security (UNESCAP)

The Focus Area Session 4 (FAS4) on Household Water Security looked at the linkages, tools, and policy issues for different components of household water security. It highlighted that universal access to water supply and to sustainable sanitation in the region by 2025 needs regional commitment and leadership, legal frameworks and training systems. To ensure safe water, sanitation and hygiene it is necessary to adopt results based monitoring and assessment, support data collection systems, scale-up public-private partnerships, and enable diversified financing modalities based on multi-sectorial collaboration and using an outcome-based approach. Policy frameworks, new business opportunities, and innovative and appropriate technology and management must conform to local conditions and should ensure affordable sanitation facilities and pathogen free discharge to the environment. Strengthening further commitments to the wastewater revolution in the Asia-Pacific region also requires putting greater emphasis on resource recovery in wastewater management, and the adoption of appropriate centralized and decentralized management systems in urban and rural settlements.

Focus Area Session 5 (FAS5): Water Risks and Resilience (ICHARM)

In Focus Area Session 5 (FAS5) on Water Risks and Resilience it was recognized that water is life but that water is also a threat to life. Measured by the number of people affected, over 90% of disasters are water-related with the Asia-Pacific region sharing more than 80% of the toll. Water-related disasters are increasing in number and severity, hampering sustainable development. It is imperative that the global community urgently and comprehensively address water-related disasters. The Asia-Pacific region will benefit significantly from this and therefore should take a lead in the process. A clear-cut target on water and disasters in post-2015 is necessary if we are to achieve a significant acceleration in concrete regional cooperation and field-level actions in the region. The establishment of such a target will be technically challenging but with support from the scientific community and participation by multi-stakeholders it is possible. FAS5 supports the proposal made at the UN Special Thematic Session on Water and Disasters to establish regular discussion process on water and disasters.

Focus Area Session 6 (FAS6): IWRM Process for a Water Secure World (UNESCO)

Focus Area Session 6 (FAS6) addressed Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). Panellists covered a wide range of issues, representing the complexity of the global water challenge and recognising that we need new ways to approach water issues. It was acknowledged that the post-2015 agenda needs to address global water challenges and establish measurable targets on IWRM beyond the present water supply and sanitation targets in the MDGs. In order to build transparent and trusted water plans we must advocate for an inclusive approach. Real water democracy, as well as top down and bottom up approaches are essential for implementing IWRM in river basins and aquifer systems. The IWRM approach must also be translated into easy to understand texts alongside education and capacity building to ensure wide implementation. UNESCO's Spiral Approach to IWRM and the bench marking work of Global Water Partnership, ADB, NARBO and other partners should be adopted at all levels. The water planning books launched by UNESCO, AusAid, ADB and WWF during FAS6 also provide much needed knowledge base for better management of river basins.

Focus Area Session 7 (FAS7): Water-related Disaster Challenges (ONWFMP, Thailand)

In response to increasingly threatening water-related disaster and accordance with previous APWF's commitments, lesson learnt, as well as, our intensive discussion, the participants of Focus Area Session 7 (FAS7): Water-related Disaster Challenges has agreed to: Take immediate action to support adaptation of water management to account for climate change; Take immediate action to develop database, forecasting and warning systems, being prepared is cheaper than disaster recovery; Revise the existing action/ development plan and take urgent and effective action to prevent and reduce the risks of flood, drought and other water-related disasters and to bring timely relief and assistance to the victims; Formulate incident Action Plan to take full account of providing support for the victims to be self-reliant and able to survive for at least three days following a disaster; Improve governance, efficiency, transparency and equity of water management. Encourage public participation by providing access to related information, and mechanism for people to report the situation and take part in water management, as well as development; and, Enhance people's ability to perceive the danger, respond to warnings and make decisions following the disaster.