

Highlights of the Asia-Pacific Synthesis and Commitment Session at the 6th World Water Forum on 16 March 2012, Marseille, France

■ Opening

- Mr. Yoshiro Mori, President of the APWF opened the session thanking all for their support and participation for Asia Pacific Regional Process and preparation the Second Asia Pacific Water Summit. He noted that water related disaster has played a big role in the Asia Pacific Region underscored by the recent events in Japan and Thailand and that the impacts of the events had regional and global impacts. He appreciated that water related disaster would be highlighted at the coming Second Asia Pacific Water Summit and that APWF members needed to continue to emphasize the importance of disaster risk management.
- Mr. Ravi Narayanan, Vice Chair of the APWF Governing Council thanked the President for his support and co-chaired the meeting.

■ Regional synthesis: presentations by the target coordinators

- (a) Mr. Bert Diphorn from UN-Habitat noted that good progress had been made with access to drinking water and that the MDG has been reached ahead of schedule, however, it was also noted that the absolute number of people without access was going up. Urbanization is a trend that will continue and provides an opportunity to provide better services for people who will be in a more dense living environment. However, big issues still remain including improved demand management, reducing non-revenue water, waste water treatment, and a pro-poor rights based approach to services.
- (b) Mr. Thierry Facon from FAO explained that a very interactive process took place with regard to discuss and development of the theme and target. A few key issues emerged: (i) hunger is more complex and price are volatile so that a multi-sector approach is needed; (ii) the complexity needs to be explored in a detailed manner and not avoided; and (iii) and there cannot be overall water security until agricultural water security is solved due to the importance of food security and the impact of agricultural water use on the environment and overall water use.
- (c) Dr. Ramesh Vaidya from ICIMOD highlighted the work under disaster risk management focusing on the Hindu Kush due to its importance for water throughout Asia and the risks that it poses. There are three key messages from the work where improvements and solutions can be made and these include: (i) improved technology and analytical tools; (ii) enhanced regional cooperation, and (iii) capacity development for all activities.
- (d) Dr. Sang young Park from KWF highlighted the work focusing around the condition for success for capacity development featured activities ongoing in Northeast Asia and included case studies from China, Korea and Japan. The goal of this work is that by 2018, Asia Pacific countries will have centers for climate change research and water

resources management training. Korea is committed to providing this through development of a water education center.

- (e) Mr. Toshihiro Sonoda from UNESCO emphasized that promotion of IWRM is an important goal that needs continuous development in the Asia Pacific Region and there was a preparatory meeting in February 2012 in Bangkok to discuss this. Establishing the institutional foundation is critical and this can come directly through strengthening river basin governance throughout Asia Pacific, which is being supported through such organizations as NARBO. Lessons include the need to recognize the overall variability of water not just climate change; using traditional knowledge for solutions: and looking beyond a sector approach.
- (f) Prof. Victor Dukhovny from ICWC explained that Central Asian countries face particular challenges which include the coming challenges of climate change; the demographic, economic and social changes taking place in Central Asia; and the need to resolve water resources management issues from the Amu Darya River, especially in light of the growing needs for Afghanistan. To address all of these issues, improved regional cooperation; improved data and its management; and an adaptive approach especially for climate change is needed.
- (g) Dr. Kim Tae Hyung and Ms. Ermina Sokou from UNESCAP emphasized that there must be an overall transformative approach to the economy on the way business is conducted to address water challenges and a simple sector approach will not be enough. There were many good solutions presented as a part of the work and the important lesson is that the local context and local resources need to be taken into to consideration. Universal access to water supply and sanitation is achievable by 2025; however, financing is needed even though the overwhelming economic benefits are clear.

■ Presentation on the Asia Water Development Outlook (AWDO)

Ms. Naomi Chakwin from ADB gave an overview of AWDO that will be officially released later this year. This is the second version of the AWDO produced under the ADB and APWF. The AWDO highlights water security across five key dimensions (i) Household Water Security - satisfying household needs for safe drinking water services and hygienic sanitation; (ii) Economic Water Security - maximizing productive use of water in agriculture, energy and industry, (iii) Urban Water Security - making cities vibrant and livable; (iv) Environmental Water Security - restoring healthy rivers; and (v) Water-Related Disaster Resilience - building resilient communities. An index has been developed to help measure water security in each of these dimensions. The AWDO also has 10 key messages for decision makers: (i) setting and implementing policies for demand management; (ii) water, food and energy are inextricably linked and setting clear productivity targets are needed; (iii) introducing groundwater regulation and self-management; (iv) adopting a service-oriented model can deliver better results from public investments in irrigation for sustainable O&M and management; (v) implementing a process and institutions for integrated water resources management (IWRM) in river basins will increase the return on public investment in water storage, productivity, and conservation and are best matched to the emerging challenges of increasing water scarcity and climate change; (vi) investing \$1 in clean water and comprehensive sanitation “from toilet to river” can unlock as much as \$8 to \$12 dollars in health and economic benefits; (vii) eighty percent of the region’s rivers are classified as being in poor health, and engaging the private sector in stewardship of water resources and market-based approaches can reduce pollution; (viii) investing in flood

forecasting and early warning systems that reach the “last mile” helps save lives; (ix) make water everybody’s business by promoting local collective action in rural communities to increase access to safe drinking water and sanitation, and (x) implementing a combination of structural and non-structural approaches for disaster risk management can significantly reduce the cost of public investment.

■ **Announcement about 2nd Asia-Pacific Water Summit**

Mr. Chaiporn Siripornpibul of the Thai Government greatly appreciates the support of APWF and the opportunity to host the second Asia Pacific Water Summit. Due to the recent floods in Thailand, however, the Thai government needs time to organize the summit and anticipates hosting the summit in 2013 with strong support from the prime minister.

■ **Regional commitment: panel discussion**

- i. The Chair, Mr. Narayanan opened the panel and posed questions to the panelists. In general, the panel endorsed the targets, solutions and messages that have been put forward under the 6th WWF Asia Pacific Regional Process and that form the basis of the Message from Bangkok for the Second Asia Pacific Water Summit.
- ii. Some of the thoughts from the panelists included: (i) a need to focus on political will from decision makers is critical to getting reforms and providing indices and benchmarks are effective tool to influence decision makers; (ii) the importance of the water related disaster to the region and the fact that while disasters maybe local, they have regional and global impacts so that more emphasis must be placed on regional cooperation as the framework for disaster risk management; (iii) civil society plays an important role and needs to be included in all water related dialogue for sustainable solutions; (iv) women play a very important role for water resources and they need to have their profile raised in all water related issues; (v) the current dialogue and solutions for water resources management and water supply and sanitation encompass the needs of the Pacific island nations, however, the ability and options for these countries to adapt to climate change and pending water resources challenges are much more limited than other countries so they need special attention; (vi) cities will continue to grow and be the center of innovation and providing water services for much of the world’s population, and continued efforts are needed with regard to demand management through improved pricing, regulation and engaging stakeholders; and (vii) it is important that the environment and ecosystem services continue to play a central role in all water resources discussions.
- iii. The audience and panel had the following thoughts: (i) the original Message from Beppu is important, however, the Message from Bangkok should avoid repetition and be bold and forward looking in its approach, but there may be some messages that need to be repeated; (ii) it is very important to support leadership of not only today’s leaders, but there has to be an emphasis on tomorrow’s leaders for water issues and education and science have to play a key role for this; (iii) the message and solutions most support local actions but also have a regional dimension; and (iv) specific activities should be addressed but need to be done in an integrated fashion.

- iv. It was also agreed by all participants that the postponement of the Second Asia Pacific Water Summit presents an opportunity to keep the process alive for further discuss and refinement of the Message from Bangkok at events such as the Singapore Water Week; Stockholm International Water Week; and through upcoming APWF Governing Council meetings.

■ **Presentation on the 7th World Water Forum in Daegu, Korea in 2015**

Dr. Eun-Kyung Park closed the session and thanked the APWF for its strong efforts in organizing the 6th WWF Asia Pacific Regional Process. All agreed that APWF and Asia Pacific will play a very important leadership role for the upcoming 7th WWF that will be held in Korea and more importantly in it commitment to advancing solutions for the coming challenges in meeting water security for all.

Annex: Final program of the Asia-Pacific Synthesis and Commitment Session