

**Report of the session on**  
***'Better Governance : Inclusive Approach through good practices on***  
***Water Governance and IWRM'***  
**at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Asia-Pacific Water Summit**  
**13:30-15:00, 11 December, 2017 at Sedona Hotel, Yangon, Myanmar**

## **I. Background**

Water needs to be managed successfully in consideration of ecosystem and biodiversity for sustainable development. The concept of Ecohydrology, which is an interdisciplinary study on relationship between water and ecosystem to improve water security, is now being widely discussed. To make it happen, integrated and holistic approaches such as Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) have been discussed and implemented for the last few decades. The success of such approaches rely on our ability to address and solve complex problems, taking into account the contributions and views of all stakeholders concerned and empowering all levels to take required actions in a coordinated manner and applying appropriate and applicable approaches in structural and non-structural stages based on our ability to ensure effective and equitable Water Governance. With all of the above in mind, Network of Asian River Basin Organizations (NARBO) together with National Water Resources Committee (NWRC), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) convened the session on 'Better Governance : Inclusive Approach through good practices on Water Governance and IWRM' between 13:30-15:00 on 11 December, 2017 in Yangon, Myanmar as one of the thematic sessions of the 3rd Asia-Pacific Water Summit (3APWS). The session explored Asian Water Governance which fitted Asian conditions and assisted to achieve SDGs 6, especially 6.5 and practical actions on Water Governance in the field in consideration of 'OECD Principles on Water Governance'<sup>1</sup> through the discussions.

As a preliminary discussion, NARBO and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) with Asia-Pacific Water Forum (APWF) organized a side event at the Environmental Ministerial Summit on the theme of 'Impactful Investments in Water Efficient Infrastructures: Inputs to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Asia-Pacific Water Summit (Strengthening Integrated Water Resource Management Processes and the Practitioners' Network)' on 7 September, 2017<sup>2</sup>.

The side event served to identify key regional issues, agreeing on the following recommendations towards the 3APWS such as 1) Necessity of promoting effective investment in water-related infrastructures on IWRM, 2) Crucial role of international networks and of promoting technologies that meet the "3 Apps"<sup>3</sup> and 3) Importance of adopting a practical, applicable and appropriate approach towards improvement of the current situation by considering sustainability

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/governance/oecd-principles-on-water-governance.htm>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.narbo.jp/topics/ESCAP\\_side\\_Bangkok.html](http://www.narbo.jp/topics/ESCAP_side_Bangkok.html)

<sup>3</sup> '3Apps' consisted of appropriate and applicable approach and introduced at the 6th NARBO General Meeting in February, 2017.

and ecosystems, including a call for a prompt action to develop capacity of the staff to enable Water Governance among relevant institutions.

## **II. What was discussed and recommended at the session**

The session was jointly chaired by Mr. Htun Lwin Oo, Secretary, National Water Resources Committee (NWRC) and Director General, Directorate of Water Resources and Improvement of River Systems (DWIR), Ministry of Transport and Communications and Dr. Keizrul bin Abdullah, Senior Advisor and former chairperson of NARBO. Mr. Hideshi Sasahara, Vice-Secretary General of NARBO and Director, International Affairs Division, Japan Water Agency (JWA) -moderated the session. Approximately 100 participants joined the session in the presence of H.E. Thant Sin Maung, Minister of Ministry of Transport and Communications, Myanmar and Eng. N. A. Sisira Kumara, Secretary, Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources, Sri Lanka.

Mr. Htun Lwin Oo offered the opening remarks on behalf of the host country and welcomed the participants. U Htun Lwin Oo told the overview of water resources management in Myanmar by explaining the role of NWRC and some features of Asia such as vulnerability to flood by referring to ESCAP and ADB report and expressed his expectation for the fruitful discussions for possible solutions.

Following the above opening remarks, Dr. Keizrul bin Abdullah also offered the opening remarks, talking about Water Crisis in Asia by focusing on Water Governance. Dr. Abdullah introduced the brief history of the global discussion on Water Governance and brief description about the background of the session.

On behalf of the session organizers, Mr. Hans Dencker Thulstrup of UNESCO offered the remarks representing UNESCO. Mr. Thulstrup told the necessity of implementation of sustainable water solutions at the local, regional and global levels and solutions that transcend the social, economic and technical spheres and that promote inclusivity and equity with creativity, new advances in scientific knowledge, discovery and innovation through cooperation across sectors and disciplines – facilitated by a reinforced interface between science, policy and society. Mr. Thulstrup concluded the speech by stressing the importance of the refining and upscaling of these emerging local approaches and knowledge of the interrelations between environmental conditions and the state of water resources – in order to inform and enhance water management at local, national and regional levels through the development of multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Presentation session was moderated by co-chairs, and 8 speakers made presentations on Water Governance by focusing on 1) Fitting respective local conditions and fostering domestic businesses, 2) Developing quality infrastructures for materializing sustainable water management, and 3) Sharing experiences and knowledge which enable us to find a certain hint to resolve issues.

Mr. Ponh Sachak, Director General of Technical Affairs, Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology (MOWRAM), Cambodia shared experiences and knowledge on water resources management in Cambodia by introducing the role of its river basin committee and action plans of

flood and drought reflecting climate change. Mr. Sachak emphasized the necessity of development of quality infrastructures for sustainable water management through appropriate operation and maintenance of infrastructures.

Dr. Tadashi Matsumoto of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) talked about 'OECD Principles on Water Governance' and introduced how it supported implementation of Water Governance. Dr. Matsumoto appreciated NARBO's contributions to OECD Water Governance Initiatives and told the expectations to current activities of OECD Water Governance Initiative by sharing the contributions from NARBO.

Dr. Anthony Sales of Department of Science and Technology, HELP Davao Network, Philippines shared the experience with major outcome of the activities at the Davao River Basin and stressed the necessity to customize and localize actions and plans to suit the existing norms and capacities and collective engagement and commitment of all stakeholders concerned. HELP Davao Network has developed the customized and localized UNESCO's IWRM Guidelines for Davao City and Davao Region which was a relevant input to water education initiatives and used for practical work. As new actions, Dr. Sales introduced the activities on Water Sustainability Science to help achieve sufficiency in water supply in the region by adopting water harvesting and recycling.

Mr. Md Khairi Selamat, Division Director, Department and Irrigation and Drainage, Malaysia introduced the experience of Water Governance activities through integrated River Basin Management in Malaysia. Mr. Selamat shared the practical problem solving initiative by making use of the shut down mine as a large scale pond for water storage and emphasized the importance of the relationship between government, public and private sectors and NGOs.

Mr. Agung Wicaksono of Jasa Tirta 1 Public Corporation (PJT 1), Indonesia shared the actions to tackle challenges with integrity at river basin level and stressed the importance of implementation of IWRM and coordination among multi-stakeholders and improvement of Hydro-Information system within the basin by referring to 'OECD Principles on Water Governance'. Mr. Wicaksono concluded the presentation by telling key messages such as the necessity of prioritization of implementation of integrity on Water Governance and collective action plans by all stakeholders in the basin.

Dr. Zaw Lwin Tun, Director, Irrigation and Water Utilization Management Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, Myanmar shared activities at the Bago River Basin by sharing ecological water quality criteria. Dr. Tun summarized his speech by emphasizing the necessity of monitoring the situation and appropriate and applicable approaches to implement the sound ecosystem management.

Mr. Win Hlaing, Director, Directorate of Water Resources and Improvement of River Systems (DWIR), Ministry of Transport and Communication (MOTC), Myanmar shared the Water Governance in Myanmar. Mr. Hlaing told that Myanmar water management was based on sound scientific evidence and valued a bottom-up approach and introduced the National Water Policy of Myanmar and the Ayeyarwady Integrated Basin Management Project (AIRBMP). The AIRBMP is composed of 1) Water Resources Institutions, Information and Capacity Building, 2) Hydromet Observation and

Information Systems Modernization and 3) Ayeyarwady River Navigation Enhancements and aiming to strengthen integrated, climate resilient management and development of the Ayeyarwady River Basin and national water resources and to contribute to the development of integrated river basin management on the Ayeyarwady River. Mr. Hlaing summarized that

Mr. Tadashige Kawasaki, Deputy Director, Water Resources Engineering Department, Japan Water Agency (JWA), Japan shared the comprehensive approach at the downstream of the Ara River Basin for land subsidence caused by excessive pumping up of ground water in the 1960s. Mr. Kawasaki stressed the importance and necessity of wholistic approach on water resources management in the basin at all levels.

Following the presentation session, plenary discussion was held. Mr. Paul, representative of the Netherlands made comments on Water Governance in Myanmar and told the watershed management in Myanmar which had issues on not only erosion but also socio-economic aspects. Mr. Paul summarized the comments by stressing that Water Governance was a tool to achieve stability of the region.

H.E. Thant Sin Maung offered remarks and told the river management in Myanmar as the Vice-President of NWRC. Thant Sin Maung explained the history of major rivers in Myanmar, the history of tackling of the issues of sedimentation through primarily the river bank protection to secure and improve the navigation and told the necessity of river training and channel management. He touched upon the presentation by Mr. Kawasaki and emphasized the necessity of improvement of Water Governance and water-related issues and concluded by telling the expectations to the discussion, especially result oriented recommendations.

Eng. N. A. Sisira Kumara also made comments and shared the current situation of water resources management in Sri Lanka which was highly affected by the climate change. Sri Lanka is now increasing the capacity of reservoir to cope with large scale floods and promoting catchment management for groundwater recharge. Secretary told that the summit was a good and useful opportunity to get a lot of knowledge and subject on water management and concluded the comments by telling the appreciation to NARBO activities in Sri Lanka.

At the end of the session, Mr. Hary Suprayogi, Director, River and Coastal Development Department, Ministry of Public Works and Housing, Indonesia gave the closing speech on behalf of the NARBO Chairperson. Mr. Suprayogi talked about overview of Water Governance in Asia by touching upon the discussion at the session by stressing the necessity of addressing the challenges with an innovative approach based upon the experience of Indonesia such as the strategic plan for the construction and development of 65 dams and rehabilitation of irrigation canals for improvement of food security through IWRM approach. Mr. Suprayogi also shared NARBO's achievements in the field of IWRM in Asia and '3 Apps' and the 'Voice of Asian Water Practitioners' which was summarized after the discussions at the 6<sup>th</sup> NARBO General Meeting as a commitment of NARBO. Mr. Suprayogi emphasized the necessity of wholistic approach and concluded the speech by telling

that Asia is a driving force in the world on economy and pointing 3 key words in thinking of water issues in Asia which consisted of 1) Rapid economic growth with dynamism, 2) Population growth and 3) Water-related disasters.

At the end of the session, Mr. Htun Lwin Oo, co-chair of the session summarized the discussion by identifying the following 3 key messages and concluded the session.

- 1<sup>st</sup> : *Water Governance is the foundation of sustainable development*, determining the efficiency and equity of water resources management and use. Improved Water Governance requires building of mutual trust at all levels through cooperation, transparency, sharing of experiences and the adoption of integrated approaches as introduced at 'OECD Principles on Water Governance'.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> : Data, approaches and their applications in consideration of Ecohydrology, international cooperative platforms have the potential to play an indispensable role in promoting and supporting Water Governance and the achievement of SDG6.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> : Necessity of development of 'Quality Infrastructure' for sustainable development through best-mix of structural and non-structural approaches which fit local conditions.

Mr. Htun Lwin Oo also emphasized the success of the session through fruitful discussions and identified 'Who does what' and delivered the words of many thanks to the presenters and audiences as well as other contributors to the session and closed the session.

The session was completed in success. Key messages of the session were incorporated into 'Yangon Declaration', especially in the issue of 'Governance and inclusive development'. The key messages with "IWRM Guidelines for Practitioners" reflected the result of the discussions and case studies which were collected through NARBO's network and refined in the 'Follow-up workshop' on 13 December, 2017. Those key messages will be shared at the 8<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum to be held in March 2018 in Brazil and other future international events aiming to contribute to the achievement of what was mentioned in 'Yangon Declaration' and SDGs 6<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/water-and-sanitation/>