

Report of the Activities at High-level International Conference on Water Cooperation (20-21 August, 2013, Dushanbe, Tajikistan)

Outline of the Conference

The UN General Assembly recognized the necessity of solving the issues of effective freshwater and declared 2013 the International Year of Water Cooperation through the Resolution 65/154 accepted by a consensus on 20 December 2010. The Resolution also includes convening the High-level International Conference on Water Cooperation. The Government of the Republic of Tajikistan has coped with the issues on water cooperation. Based on this background, the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan is pleased to host the High-level International Conference on Water Cooperation on 20-21 August, 2013 in Dushanbe, the capital city of the country.

The Conference was convened to discuss improvement of water cooperation, especially in a transboundary level, through advocating the successful policies and best practices, wider public participation, encouragement of policy makers to promote water cooperation at all levels for contribution to achieve the internationally agreed goals on water. In addition, it was an opportunity to discuss and develop new measures aimed to accelerate the efforts on achievement of MDGs and recommendations for further actions after 2015 including contribution to development of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related with water.



Photo of opening event on 20 August, 2013 at Dushanbe, Tajikistan

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Approximately 900 delegates from over 70 countries have participated in the conference. H.E. Mr. Emomali Rakhmon offered opening remarks and welcomed the delegates and told that 'Tajikistan has always been in favor of mutually beneficial cooperation and good neighborly relations. We understand clearly that only civilized cooperation and political will can ensure for all of us a progress in this direction. Tajikistan is completely ready for such cooperation'. Afterwards, the President of the 68th session of the UN General Assembly, H.E. Mr. John Ashe recited the message by the UN Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon. Moreover, the UN Under-Secretary General, H.E. Mr. Wu Hongbo, Prime Minister of Thailand, H.E. Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra, Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan, H.E. Mr. Jantoro Satybaldyev, Prime Minister of Mozambique, H.E. Mr. Alberto Vaquina, UNESCO Director General, Ms. Irina Bokova, UN Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Rebeca Grynspan, Special Representative of the World Bank, Mr. Mahmud Muhidin, President of the World Water Council, Mr. Benedito Braga, and the President of organization "Women for Water Partnership", Ms. Alice Bouman-Dentener have spoken at the plenary session of the Conference.

At the end of the conference, the Dushanbe Declaration was released as a result of the conference.

NARBO's Activities

i ; Special Session on Water and Disaster

"Special Session on Water and Disasters" was organized by International Centre on Water Hazard and Risk Management (UNESCO-ICHARM), Network of Asian River Basin Organizations (NARBO), Asia Pacific Water Forum (APWF), and High-level Experts and Leaders Panel on Water and Disasters (HELP/UNSGAB) as one of the special focus events of the High-Level International Conference on Water Cooperation on 20 August 2013.

Following the opening remarks by Mr. Ravi Narayanan, Chair of the APWF Governing Council, and Dr. Keizrul Bin Abdullah, Chairperson of NARBO, the statement by H.E. Mr. John Ashe, President of the 68th Session of the UN General Assembly, was delivered by H.E. Dr. Paulette Bethel, Chef de Cabinet of the President Elect on his behalf.

At the latter half of the session, the High Panel Discussion with nine ambassadors was conducted and discussed on their countries' experiences in addressing water and disasters, and what issues on water and disasters should be discussed in the future UN General Assembly. As a result of the discussion, we

agreed following points.

- Water related disasters to be addressed include not only floods and droughts but also degradation of water quality, including water pollution and acidification
- Water related disasters and their linkages with socioeconomic issues and development. Disasters are costly and often take away development gains.
- Water and disasters to be addressed in post 2015 development agenda and post Hyogo Framework. These processes need to be closely related.
- Infrastructure and adaptable technologies, including information sharing, prediction and forecasting
- Dealing with uncertainties and variability, climate change impacts and adaptation
- Reducing vulnerability through enhancement of governance systems, and capacity building for effective response, preparedness and mitigation mechanisms
- Financing water and disasters effectively through innovative mechanisms, including effective utilization of Public Private Partnerships
- Focused discussion on vulnerable countries such as small island states
- Disaster prevention for conflict resolution

Result of the session is incorporated into the Dushanbe Declaration on 'We also underline the importance of dialogue on water and disasters at various levels' and contributed to the conference.



Photo of the special session on water and disasters on 20 August, 2013 at Dushanbe, Tajikistan

ii ; High Level Panel on Water Cooperation and Sectoral Synergies

Integrated water resources management (IWRM) is recognized globally as an approach to managing water issues holistically. However, interest of each water sectors is different in general, and opportunities for synergistic investments and operations are limited in many

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river basins. IWRM offers a set of principles and processes to facilitate decision-making, planning and investment at all levels. New approaches to water, food and energy based on a better understanding and more systematic recognition has the potential to improve the production and sustainable management. Policy makers and water sector stakeholders need to enhance policy coherence, adjust existing legal and institutional arrangements and establish legal frameworks to maximize benefits and synergies across sectors.

Based on these backgrounds and the message from the Bonn 2011 Conference which discussed ‘Water, Energy and Food Security Nexus – Solutions for the Green Economy, the post-2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)’, the session discussed the consequences of competition for water among different sectors and the opportunities for water cooperation and synergetic approaches for optimal benefits.



Photo of the HLP on Water Cooperation and Sectoral Synergies on 21 August, 2013

The session was organized by ADB and UNESCAP, and chaired by Mr. Ian Makin, ADB. Following the opening remarks, Dr. Ania Grobicki, Executive Secretary offered the presentation about activities of GWP. Intensive discussion on leadership, water & green economy, groundwater climate change based on the stakeholder participation in IWRM process were conducted among panelists and participants.

Dr. Keizrul bin Abdullah talked about how to increase the attention to water of political leaders based on his experiences. In addition, he insisted that we should invite political leaders to the field and come on board to water sector together and let them see what is happening in the fields. He also stressed the necessity of involvement of private sector in implementation of IWRM, especially in funding. Mr. Ravi Narayanan, Chairperson, Asia-Pacific Water Summit (APWS) told the importance of Political commitment and introduced the summary of the 2nd APWS



and insisted to be more focused on groundwater on IWRM.

We recognized that water security faces the challenges of disasters, declines of natural resources and so on, and challenges of Asia such as 1) Water quality, 2) Implementation of act, 3) Clean freshwater resources, 4) Resilience to disaster and 5) Transboundary.

At the end of the session, we summarized the session by introducing the message consists of 1) Water is renewable, but many obstacles, 2) Necessity of sustainable management and 3) Water coverage for all.

Result & Way Forward

Through the conference, necessity of water cooperation, water security, human and economic development and addressing issues of water and disasters is well received, and much actions and projects will be seen as a result of the international conference. Furthermore, IWRM is expected to contribute to the 2015 Post MDGs agenda by identifying the clear target.

Thanks to the contribution of the Chairperson of NARBO, NARBO contributed the discussions and making the contents of the 'Dushanbe Declaration' and influenced to the discussions among the water society.

However, how to implement what we agreed is not clear. Therefore, as a network of the practitioner of IWRM, NARBO will improve IWRM by considering these messages and fill the gaps of viewpoints between politicians and researchers and practitioners for achieving water security by delivering the actual situation of practitioners at ground level.