

Budapest Water Summit 2016

Messages

30 November 2016

Water connects - Actions for the 2030 Agenda

The Budapest Water Summit Messages summarize the outcomes of the thematic sessions and the deliberations of the civil society, science, youth and women fora that took place during the Summit.

In 2015, a new water era began. A new paradigm emerged where water is now clearly recognized as central to fulfilling a transformative agenda for sustainable development, building prosperity and human well-being. Water is fundamental for the achievement of inter alia the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework. The SDG on water and sanitation and its related targets embrace the many ways in which water is utilized, managed, conserved, treated and protected throughout the entire water cycle. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development addresses pressing water-related issues: universal and equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation, pollution, water quality, water scarcity, water use efficiency, equitable allocation, maintenance of the integrity of water-dependent ecosystems, resilience and social equity. These water issues are inter-related and interdependent and must be addressed in a systemic and globally-consistent manner. Water investments, from both public and private financial resources, are absolutely essential to achieve sustainable development.

Water is the most critical natural asset. The world has arrived at a critical point where this strategic resource can no longer be taken for granted. Water must be embedded within policies related to the entire 2030 Agenda. Climate change, urbanization, economic growth, pollution, demographic changes, land-use changes, degradation of ecosystems, energy, health and food security all impact water. Water and the benefits it provides underpin the jobs of more than 3/4 of the world's workforce and accelerate economic growth. On the other hand, water stress is amplifying social and political tensions. It can contribute to the eruption of major conflicts, civil wars and result in mass migration. These realities require policymakers to view these issues, including from a water perspective.

Water is a critical global issue. While water is managed at a local, basin and regional level, it is a global issue because its ramifications are global—interconnected through the planetary water cycle and global economy -- and is now a strategic resource worldwide. Water, through the hydrological cycle and global value chains, embedded in agricultural and other traded goods, utilized in mining and industry for producing global commodities and products, is essential for energy production. Mitigation cannot and is no longer managed alone within local political and/or market boundaries. Policies and crises on one side of the world can impact water resources all over the globe. Because a water crisis is a global challenge, a global response is needed. The “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” calls for coordinated global solutions to global water challenges. A new global political water architecture is needed to ensure a consolidated and strong political governance for water within the SDGs and other international agendas.

Water is an enabler and an inter-connector. Water highlights the interconnectedness of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals and offers opportunities for synergies and integration of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Water also connects countries sharing rivers, lakes and groundwater, which they depend on for their development, and has traditionally been a connector rather than a divider or source of conflict. Only by recognizing an integrative approach to water resources management based on the acknowledgement of the central nature of water makes it possible to achieve the objectives set forth in this transformative agenda and ensure peace. Through such integration, the ways in which water is governed and managed can reconcile the competing uses of water and safeguard this limited and fragile resource for present and future generations.

Action on water is an absolute and ethical imperative. Increased water-related vulnerability and insecurity of populations worldwide demand an urgent response. Deficient infrastructure for water storage as well as a lack of access to safe water and sanitation is not acceptable. Equitable, efficient and human rights compliant allocation of water between users and uses is essential. Special attention needs to be addressed urgently to the most vulnerable in the more isolated or compromised areas with a specific attention to women and youth. The pollution of water cannot be continued. The destruction of water supplies during armed conflicts for the purpose of denying sustenance to the civilian population is unlawful and intolerable. The world leadership must work on these issues to ensure that water becomes and stays a top priority for all decision makers and other stakeholders and is a source of peace and prosperity and not conflict. Acting now is a matter of human dignity, justice and survival. Waiting to act is no longer an option.

The transformation to a water-secure world offers opportunities that require the following actions:¹

- Mobilise human, institutional, technical and financial means in order to achieve all the water-related SDG targets by 2030. Revise, amend and strengthen national policies accordingly to align with the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement;
- Promote the SDGs' water-related targets to foster ownership by governments and water stakeholders and to ensure that SDGs are translated into national and local action plans. In this context, it is essential to commit to accelerating the implementation of the human rights to water and sanitation by ensuring that they are translated into national law, and that rights-based roadmaps or action plans are developed;
- Recognize that water can be an accelerator for the circular economy;
- Support national governments to implement the SDGs, the Paris and Sendai Agreements and the New Urban Agenda of Habitat III;
- Enhance the political-technical cooperation and coordinate policies on water with those on economy, energy, climate change, health, food and biodiversity conservation to improve and foster effective, efficient, resilient and inclusive water governance and integrated water resources management based on coordination across ministries and sectors and all levels of government embracing the participation of all water stakeholders and users, including local communities;
- Increase coherence across water-related policies through sound legislation, regulation, institutional arrangements, enforcement, integrity and transparency;

¹ For a comprehensive list of proposed solutions, see Budapest Water Summit 2016 Policy Recommendations annexed to these Messages.

- Establish or revitalize appropriate local, regional, national, basin-level and transboundary institutions that address the allocation and sustainable use of water in a fair, transparent and equitable manner. Create mechanisms for meaningful participation of all stakeholder groups and increase public financial investments;
- Ensure and enhance women's real involvement in all phases of water management to ensure the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda;
- Acknowledge and enhance the contribution of youth in governance transitions, decision-making processes and the transfer of knowledge by mainstreaming youth organizations as partners at all stages of project cycles to achieve the SDGs;
- Develop a mechanism/partnership to support initiatives of young people;
- Ensure proper implication, participation and training of women and youth;
- Invest more and rethink all the sources, quantity and the allocation mechanism of finances to support the central role of water to ensure the economic viability of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- Increase support for water and sanitation investments, particularly the mobilization of local capital;
- Work towards the development of a new generation of water leaders, scientists and practitioners by creating effective/inclusive coordination and knowledge sharing mechanisms; inclusion in water governance processes and project implementation cycles;
- Establish and/or strengthen regional-level, basin-level and/or transboundary institutions to foster peaceful and effective cooperation around water and enhance the application, effective implementation and accession to UN water conventions;
- Encourage new methods of dispute and conflict resolution to assess and evaluate shared benefits and responsibilities for planning and operation of transboundary water infrastructures;
- Recognize that water storage, multi-purpose reservoirs, infrastructure as well as non-structural measures, developed and managed with complimentary natural infrastructure and demand management, should be again at the centre of societies' ability to adapt to climate change, enhance resilience and secure water supply for its multiple uses, hand in hand with enhancing water efficiency;
- Increase capacity development efforts at all levels in the water sector with a focus on vocational training to ensure water professionals are ready to face current and future water challenges;
- Strengthen the capacity to monitor water-related SDG targets, improve and enhance water-related data collection and analysis efforts at all levels, employ new methods and techniques such as big data and crowdsourcing, and invest politically and financially in open water data access and availability including from civil society and citizens;
- Reduce water-related risks and strengthen resilience and increase the preparedness of societies necessary to adapt to climate change by raising public awareness and information through disseminating lessons learnt and best practices;
- Facilitate sound decision-making based on integrated scientific understanding innovative technologies and approaches and traditional knowledge;
- Increase national level commitments to solving badly neglected water pollution by increasing wastewater treatment, restoring polluted water bodies and addressing pollution prevention at its source in all forms. Once treated adequately, used water needs to be recognised as a valuable resource. Encourage the reuse of treated water especially where it can be used to mitigate water scarcity;

- Create new business models that incentivize long-term financial sustainability of the delivery of water services while ensuring affordable access to water and sanitation and while simultaneously protecting, enhancing and sustaining land and water-based ecosystems;
- Strengthen existing international science platforms to increase technical assistance;
- Facilitate sound decision-making based on integrated scientific understanding, innovative technologies and traditional knowledge;
- Co-produce knowledge and research to strengthen the science-policy interface ensuring research goes beyond academia and enables decision makers and civil society to achieve the water-related SDGs. Develop and co-design effective solutions and promote technology transfer towards a sustainable water future for humans and nature;
- Strengthen the coordination and accountability on water within the UN system to give a more effective answer to global challenges and implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement; and
- Recognize the need for an appropriate intergovernmental platform on water and sanitation as a follow-up to the suggestions of the BWS2013 outcomes and of the United Nations Secretary-Generals' Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB). A fit-for-purpose intergovernmental mechanism for water is needed to strengthen water in 2030 Agenda and to support policy guidance and norms. In addition, follow-up and to review progress on achievement of water targets in the 2030 Agenda in support the work of the High Level Political Forum. The mechanism should provide an arena for regular dialogue and sharing experience on water between national governments and be an entry point for stakeholders at the global level.