

HIGH LEVEL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR ACTION “WATER FOR LIFE”, 2005-2015

Report on the Side event: Informal Consultation on the Newly Proposed International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”

9th of June

Organization:

The side event was organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Energy and Water Resources of the Republic of Tajikistan. The event was co-Chaired by H.E. the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan: S. Aslov who made a presentation on the issues for discussion, and by H.E. Shamshad Akhtar, ESCAP Executive Secretary, who provided insights on major challenges ahead and commented on the inputs from the consultation. The session was moderated by Josefina Maestu, Director of the United Nations Office to support the International Decade for Action “Water for Life”2005-2015.

Description:

The UN General Assembly decided to dedicate the years 2005 to 2015 as the International Decade for Action “Water for Life”. The primary goal of the “Water for Life” Decade was to promote efforts to fulfil international commitments made on water and water-related issues by 2015. The International Decade for Action has been a time of great change in the water sector, and beyond, with important advances in achieving the internationally agreed goals for water supply services and for sanitation as well significant progress in Integrated Water Resources Management and Water Cooperation. While significant steps forwards have been made, achieving the goals of the “Water for Life” Decade has requires sustained commitment, cooperation and investment on the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon proposed “to announce new International Decade of Action under the motto “Water for Sustainable Development”. A new Decade would be a pragmatic step to help build support and momentum for rapid start-up on implementation of the proposed water Sustainable Development Goal.

Objective of the side event:

This side event aimed to discuss with participants in the event in an open manner what the mandate of the new Decade should be and how to ensure that its is implemented effectively and that Member States and other stakeholders fully engage in it.

H.E. S. Aslov highlights

Achievements of the 2005-2015 Water for Life Decade

The Decade has been a time of great change in the water sector, and beyond, with important advances in achieving the internationally agreed goals for water supply services and for sanitation as well significant progress in Integrated Water Resources Management and Water Cooperation. We have also observed better coordination on water policy at global level both within the United Nations and between member states, and most importantly there has been a rise in global awareness and involvement of the civil society in the process. During the decade there was prepared a long term strategy and plan of actions at global level and, most importantly, a political process was established. The Decade also contributed to improved coordination and a less fragmented international water community. During the Decade member states, UN entities, global organizations, business and other Civil Society organizations have actively engaged in pursuing the objectives of the Decade. It is worth mentioning that Decade also contributed to improved engagement of different global stakeholders. It also helped making the connection between governmental and non-governmental actors, as well as created a space for some global groups such as women, youth, business and academia. In addition, relevant structures and mechanisms have been created that strengthened inter-agency coordination in the course of the Decade. We have seen at a global level the transformative power of global monitoring, reporting

and information gathering; we have seen a change in paradigms and have been able to develop and better share knowledge on global challenges and policy responses.

Remaining gaps

Despite significant achievements in meeting the MDG target on drinking water, there was little progress on solution of sanitation issues across the globe. It is also important to note that today still near 750 million people do not have access to clean drinking water and there are still 2.5 billion people without relevant access to basic sanitation. If we take into account the fact that the world population will increase to more than 9 billion by 2050, the water demand will increase accordingly. Furthermore, due to the impact of climate change more than 50% of the world's population will face water scarcity. This situation requires the international community to undertake coordinated efforts and adopt both urgent and long-term measures.

Expectations for a new Decade

By proposing this initiative, the Tajik side is confident that the new Decade will strengthen and enhance the progress achieved during the "Water for Life" Decade and will create a good platform for consolidation of our efforts aimed at further management of water issues for the post 2015 period. Our knowledge and experienced gained during the "Water for Life" Decade will enable us to take joint effort for lifting the barriers in our way to achievement of all water related goals. This knowledge and experience provide valuable guidance for dealing with the remaining challenges in the new post 2015 sustainable development agenda.

- Greater coordination and inclusiveness is important. Flexibility, adaptation to local circumstances, and pro-actively working with all relevant stakeholders are crucial if we want our interventions to be sustainable and effectively reach the intended beneficiaries.
- The support of knowledge generation and dissemination, ensuring access to this knowledge, as well as generating new information relevant to the water related SDGs needs to be supported.
- The support of existing and new initiatives for facilitating country level commitments and their follow up, as well as donor coordination by strengthening existing coordination initiatives at global and regional level, are of utmost importance.

Inputs from the participants

Overall, participants were adamant that we should not set up a new process that differed from the process of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The goals of the new Decade should be the SDGs. In this respect participants emphasised the need to consider a focus on scarcity, sanitation, efficiency (productivity), ecosystems, WASH, wastewater. Some participants considered it necessary to consider the importance of groundwater, the importance of nature and rivers, the risks for and from water and the Nexus issues, including the interlinkages among the different goals.

For the new Decade to be effective, it may need to start with a 10 year Plan to 2025 and have clear delivery mechanisms. These could include establishing benchmarks and opportunities to take stock – a political process - including measures for follow up after the Decade to 2030. It needs to include country-level implementation mechanisms to support action and multistakeholder platforms at different levels (private, NGOs, governments and society).

Support for the Decade will need to consider the need for technology promotion and dissemination; knowledge generation and improving accessibility of information; advocacy and communication actions and support through incentives and the establishment of guidelines (standards for rivers for example). There needs to be regional level actions and a consideration of the need for improved multi-donor coordination as well as Champions and Goodwill Ambassadors

The strategy for proceeding with the new Decade includes the submission of the Chair's summary and declaration to the General Assembly in the fall, and deliberate about the new Resolution in the context of the Friends of Water Group of the UN General Assembly. It would be important to involve the funding partners and overall build on the momentum gained, acting promptly to have a resolution passed. We should not lose the momentum gained during the "Water for Life" Decade; on the contrary, we have to accelerate this process.