

UN-Water Side event on the pre-publication results of the Status Report on the Application of Integrated Approaches to Water Resources Management

4 May 2012, New York

Participants

Mr. Thomas Stelzer, ASG UN-DESA/ Secretary CEB

Ambassador Csaba Kőrösi, Permanent Representative of Hungary

Mr. Henri de Cazotte Special Advisor to Executive Coordinator Brice Lalonde,

Ms. Kenza Kaouakib-Robinson, Secretary UN-Water (**Moderator**)

Peter K. Bjornsen is Director of the UNEP-DHI Centre on Water and Environment,

Veerle Vandeweerd, Director of the Environment and Energy Group (EEG), UNDP

Ms. Hermina Johnny, Programme Expert UN-Water

Water is one of those areas for which we cannot deny the cross-sectoral relevance and importance. On May 4, we gave a brief look into one of the many achievements of UN-Water's collective work, demonstrating concrete contributions to the Rio+20 preparatory process. Chapter 18 of Agenda 21 from UNCED 1992 called for "the application of integrated approaches to the development, management and use of water resources."

In 2005 UNCSD asked UN-Water to produce status reports on the progress of water resources management for their CSD meeting in 2008 and 2012. In this regard, UN-Water tasked UNEP as a member of UN-Water, to lead a UN-Water Task Force on Water Resources Management and establish a Working Group to prepare the status report for the Rio +20 2012 conference. The event presented and discussed the pre-publication results of the UN-Water Status Report on the Application of Integrated Approaches to Water Resources Management, which analyses responses to a comprehensive global survey of more than one hundred and thirty countries. The Report itself will be officially launched on 19 June on the occasion of the 'Water Day' at the Rio+20 Conference.

Ms. Kenza Kaouakib-Robinson, Secretary of UN-Water, welcomed the participants, thanked the panellists for their collaboration in making this event a success and gave a brief introduction of UN-Water, its work, and its strong coordinating capabilities as a functional network of the High Level Committee on Programmes, for all aspects of freshwater and sanitation. In her opening remarks, Ms. Kaouakib-Robinson pointed out that so far, UN-Water has achieved very positive results in terms of coordination and cohesion of activities in the area of water for sustainable development with direct input and involvement from countries. This, she noted, reflects the success of coordination of the work of the Members and Partners of UN-Water in responding to the needs of countries. Ms. Kaouakib-Robinson highlighted that we currently live in an interdependent world for which one nation's problem cannot be solved alone, requiring collective action from both the UN-System and other important stakeholders with the engagement and involvement of countries themselves. She recognized that there was not a "one size fits all band-aid solution" to problems faced by individual nations as it

pertains to water and that future action must take into account all three dimensions of sustainable development with a particular focus on creating an enabling environment for the hard to reach pockets of society, particularly the bottom billion, including rural populations, women and other vulnerable groups. She emphasized that we need to recognise and highlight the essentiality of addressing the right to the progressive realization of universal access to safe and clean drinking water and basic sanitation services. She concluded her remarks by stating that she was very happy with the interaction with the Friends of Water group that has grown from a small number to over 70 strong members. Without this interaction, no real difference can be seen in countries on the ground, she stated. Ms. Kaouakib Robinson stressed that she was happy to see the dialogue continue into the future and for the betterment of the water sector in general and invited the audience to further continue this discussion at the UN-Water day on June 19, 2012.

Mr. Brice Lalonde, Executive Coordinator of the Rio+20 Secretariat was unable to attend due to a last minute bureau meeting that was called to decide on the way forward. He designated his special advisor Mr. Henri Cazotte, to represent him during the session.

Mr. Henri Cazotte, Special Advisor to Executive Coordinator Brice Lalonde, reflected on the role of water in the preparation for the Rio+20 Conference. He underlined that the model and prototypes of a water goal already exists and can be incorporated into the Zero draft compilation document. He noted that there is a specific target around the idea of efficiency of water for agriculture, for nature, and for cities. He underscored that water is essential for our ecological infrastructure. He pointed out that the Means of Implementation (MOI) section of the zero draft still needs to be organized to collectively reflect factors for collaboration. Very often there are different ministries dealing with water issues leading to fragmentation. He insisted that one ministry should be responsible for water and dealing specifically with issues for water for sustainable development. He underlined that there was a stronger responsibility to push the water theme forward in Rio. He said that we need a long term perspective and a long term agenda where the political force is there and maintained. Water resources are not simple; there is increased competition. He went on to say that water resources can address a number of poverty issues. Mr. Cazotte spoke briefly about the dialogues, organized by the Brazilian government that will take place in Rio on seven thematic areas of which Water is one of them. He highlighted that Rio will be a UN Member State driven conference bringing together outside system perspectives from key actors including major groups. He concluded that it was interesting to see that the section on water in the compilation document includes a broad range of thematic issues.

Mr. Peter Bjornsen, Director, UDC-UNEP gave a presentation on the results of the Status Report on the Application of Integrated Approaches to Water Resources Management. He underscored that the results from over 130 countries show that there has been widespread adoption of integrated approaches to water resource management with significant impact on development and water management practices at the country

level. Mr. Bjornsen pointed out the following key messages and recommendations from the report:

1. Since 1992, 80% of countries have embarked on reforms to improve the enabling environment for water resources management based on the application of integrated approaches as stated in Agenda 21 and affirmed in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.
2. Water-related risks and the competition for water resources are perceived by a majority of countries to have increased over the past 20 years.
3. Countries that have adopted integrated approaches report more advanced infrastructure development but further efforts are needed to ensure appropriate levels of coordination.
4. Countries report a gradual but positive trend in financing for water resources development and management with more diverse sources of finance, but little progress on payment for water resources services.
5. Countries report improvements to the institutional framework together with improved policies, laws and systems over the past 20 years. This has led to better water resources management practices bringing important socio-economic benefits.
6. Integrated approaches to water resources management and development are critical for progress towards a green economy.

Mr. Bjornsen suggested that countries were encouraged to develop specific goals targets and timeframes for preparing and implementing a programme of action and financing strategy to take their integrated approaches to water resources management forward in accordance with UNCED 1992 and subsequent global agreements. He went on to say that UN-Water is committed to facilitate and coordinate a global reporting mechanism on national water resources management. Specific findings of the report demonstrated the need for: creating an enabling environment, establishing governance and institutional frameworks, applying management instruments, further developing infrastructure, financing for development of water resources, multiple uses of water resources, and development impacts of improved water resources management. There are common challenges among countries and these challenges have increased and become more severe over the last couple of years. He concluded his remarks by highlighting the strengths and limitations of the survey and urging Member States to use the findings to inform their negotiations on the zero draft.

H.E. Ambassador Csaba Körösi, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the United Nations, on behalf of the Friends of Water, highlighted the inseparable character of the access to safe water and sanitation; necessity of water recycling; availability of new and affordable technologies for sanitation; need for integrated water management; necessity for regulated and monitored transboundary cooperation; improvement of risk reduction and emergency preparedness; need for proper educational programs. He further indicated the need for a sustainable development goal on water and sanitation. He stated that workshops of the Steering Committee of Friends of Water Group (SCFWG) were attended by seventy member states. He underlined that the SCFWG was ready to support

UN-Water in advocating for and implementing, through its implementing members, policies on integrated water resources management. He stated that effective management of natural resources requires a common strategy in order to ensure quality of life, protection of natural resources as well as sustainable economic development and competitiveness in the long term.

Ms. Veerle Vandeweerd, Director of the Environment and Energy Group (EEG) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) congratulated the drafting team and noted that it was important that the results of the Report be presented now as it has the potential to inform the Rio+20 process. She highlighted the link between water, poverty reduction and sustainable development. She also mentioned the recent trend that has seen sanitation issues being removed from the sustainable development agenda despite the importance of the issue and the need for increased attention. Ms. Vandeweerd noted that investment and planning in infrastructure are necessary to increase resilience of countries to climate change and uncertainty. She brought the attention of participants to the fact that Agenda 21 provides a well-framed structure to make progress on water, and that there is no need to ‘reinvent the wheel’ in Rio+20. She stated that academia and civil society’s opinions are important in the early stages of the process. She concluded by mentioning the Rio Dialogues, being co-hosted by UNDP and the Brazilian Government, which hopes to substantially increase the participation of Civil Society Organisations in an organized and constructive way, especially the voting on the recommendations that will be proposed.

During a Q& A session, H.E. Ambassador Sirodjidin Aslov underlined the importance of transboundary waters and rivers and of General Assembly resolution A/RES/65/154 designating 2013 as the International Year of Water Cooperation. He spoke of the side event on water cooperation organized by the Steering Committee of the Friends of Water Group, held on 21st June 2012. He also underscored the importance of the Water for Life decade 2005-2015. Francois Guerquin, Coordinator of the UN Secretary General’s Advisory Board for Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB) emphasized that we need not reinvent the wheel. The Water Courses Convention¹ needs thirty-five signatories, and we currently have over twenty. Mr. Guerquin, urged Member States to sign the convention so that we have a legally binding instrument to move this agenda forward.² Mr. Guerquin spoke of the importance of wastewater and of the political will necessary to devise and implement a target on national wastewater policy by the year 2020.

Speaking on the human right to water and sanitation, a representative from UNAMA mentioned that the human right means that water will only be available, but will it be available to those who cannot afford it. Another speaker representing the NGO

¹ The Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses of 1997. See General Assembly resolution 51/229, annex, *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 49 (A/51/49)*.

² Note: After this meeting, Denmark has become the 25th signatory, bringing down the number of required ratifications to ten Member States needed for entry into force of this Convention.

group brought forth the discussion on grey water and natural methods for treating it. Overall, the side-event addressed a comprehensive array of issues pertaining to water for sustainable development. There was an extensive and geographically balanced representation from Member States. There were high level participants directly from differing Ministries that enhanced the discussion and brought forth sound ideas on how to better manage water resources for the betterment of all. The side event was well attended with over sixty participants representing important stakeholders. Member States were highly represented from Brazil, Denmark, Hungary, Finland, Mexico, and Tajikistan to name a few. The number of participants and the engagement around the issues presented has shown the high level of importance that Member States are giving to the issue of Water for Sustainable Development and the desire to work together and move forward in developing goals and targets in this area. The report's pre-publication results will certainly serve in guiding member states in the next round of negotiations scheduled to take place during the last week of May 2012.

Mr. Thomas Stelzer, ASG UNDESA, Secretary CEB, gave the wrap up of the session and provided a roadmap on the way forward. He emphasized the importance of UN-Water and its strong capacity as a functional network of the UN System's Chief Executives Board for Coordination's (CEB) High Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP). He underscored that UN-Water has played a key role in increasing its engagement in global policy dialogues and in articulating clear deliverables for the inter-governmental processes, including the concrete case of Rio+20. He spoke of the powerful products of UN-Water such as the World Water development Report, the progress report of the Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) and the Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water (GLAAS) report. Mr. Stelzer emphasized the role of UN-Water in the Secretary General's CEB in advising the Secretary General on Water as a thematic area of Sustainable Development. He concluded with a strong call to countries to continue collaborating closely with UN-Water.

If you require any further information on this side-event, please feel free to contact Hermina Johnny, Programme Expert on Water (johnnyh@un.org),
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