



Recognition of Outcomes, High Level Forum – World Water Day The Hague, 22 March, 2013



We, the High Level Forum, assembled in The Hague on World Water Day 2013, recognize the key outcomes and recommendations of the Thematic Consultation on Water in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, as presented in the advance summary of the consultation's synthesis report. We discussed water cooperation as an essential means to achieve a water secure world.

This process has allowed for an inclusive and bottom-up approach that encouraged all stakeholders to help construct a new sustainable development framework that is measurable, realistic and inter-generational that will promote an equitable and sustainable use of water for growth and development. People from 185 Member States, and 8 non-Member States/territories, have participated through social media and meetings at the national, regional and global levels. It engaged a wide range of stakeholders from national authorities, civil society, youth and the private sector in the discussion on the role of water in a future sustainable development framework. A synthesis report, that will soon be available for public comment, provides a comprehensive view of the outcomes of the consultation.

Lessons learnt and remaining business

Today, 783 million people still remain without access to an improved water supply. Billions use water that is unsafe to drink. The current MDG target on sanitation will be missed by a significant margin as more than 2.5 billion people still lack improved sanitation. Open defecation is still practiced by 1.1 billion people. Lack of sanitation is holding back progress in other areas including child and maternal health, girls' education, nutrition, gender equity and economic growth. One of the greatest challenges the world faces today is that so many people are deprived of the basic human right to safe drinking water and sanitation. This situation needs continued and strengthened attention in the post-2015 development framework.

Despite being situated within the goal of environmental sustainability, the MDG target for water and sanitation does not address the wider water agenda as called for at Rio+20, including water resources and wastewater management and issues of water quality, which are crucial for sustainable development. Access to water, sanitation and hygiene, food and energy production, disaster risk reduction, industrial development and healthy ecosystems rely on the availability of clean water managed in a sustainable manner.

Water, like many development issues, is a creeping problem, not one that may stimulate significant change in a short amount of time. The recognition of this should underpin a new sustainable development agenda that will address these incremental changes.

Significant water-related challenges remain. Water pollution continues to grow and more than 80% of used water is discharged to nature untreated. This is not only a threat to the environment, economic development and human health, but also a waste of valuable resources.

Over 1.7 billion people currently live in river basins where water use exceeds recharge, leading to the desiccation of rivers and depletion of groundwater. The pressures on and pollution of water resources that

more and more countries are experiencing will undoubtedly increase by 2030. Higher rates of urbanization will mean a growing demand for drinking water and industrial use with consequent higher waste disposal and treatment. Feeding a world of eight billion people will require more water for food. The demands for energy will more than double and at the same time, extreme events, droughts and floods will also increase.

Conclusions

Based on participants' contributions to the Thematic Consultation on Water it is clear that:

- Water is a key determinant in all aspects of social, economic and environmental development and must therefore be a central focus of any post-2015 framework for poverty eradication and global sustainable development.
- Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, Water Resources Management and Wastewater Management and Water Quality are all indispensable elements for building a water-secure world.
- If water issues are not addressed adequately in the Post-2015 Development Agenda this would not only mean a water crisis, but several other crises in water-dependent sectors. Water security will be of growing importance on the political agenda.
- Governments play a key role in securing water for competing demands; however the quest for a water-secure world is a joint responsibility and can only be achieved through water cooperation at local, national, regional and global level and through partnerships with a multitude of stakeholders ranging from the citizens to policy makers to the private sector.
- Building water-related capacity development, both at the individual and institutional levels, will be fundamental in the realization and implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

The way forward

On the eve of the consultations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the world must first achieve and then build on and go beyond the MDGs and existing commitments. The new agenda needs to encourage an integrated approach expressed in universally agreed goals which are simple, measurable and able to focus policies, resources and all partners on delivering concrete outcomes that improve people's lives and protect their future and environment.

There must be ambitious goals and targets which take account of unfinished business and the emerging and future challenges. These goals must inspire and create incentives for a change in behaviour to manage and allocate resources in a sustainable way whose benefits reach every person without discrimination.

- The world must aim for universal access to safe and sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene services.
- Ground and surface water should be monitored and governed sustainably and in an integrated manner to satisfy human needs while respecting ecosystem requirements.
- All used water and wastewater should be collected and treated before it is returned to nature and managed under principles of pollution prevention and reuse.

Based on the overwhelming participation of stakeholders during the Thematic Consultation on Water, and our own deliberations, we, the High Level Forum, welcome the advance summary of the consultation's synthesis report and recognise that water is a prerequisite in the future development framework in order to attain vital economic, equity, employment, health, educational, agriculture/food and energy benefits and for maintaining ecosystems services and supporting resilience to climate change.

We commit ourselves to bringing these messages to the attention of relevant fora, such as the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.