



World Water Day Bulletin

A Summary Report of the World Water Day 2011 (WWD 2011)

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SUMMARY OF WORLD WATER DAY 2011: WATER FOR CITIES – RESPONDING TO THE URBAN CHALLENGE: 22 MARCH 2011

World Water Day 2011 (WWD 2011) convened in Cape Town, South Africa, on 22 March 2011. Under the theme of “Water for Cities: Responding to the Urban Challenge,” participants gathered to hear addresses from dignitaries, as well as take part in panel discussions on water and sanitation infrastructure in Africa, and the role of local government in bridging the water and sanitation gap.

Interspersed with performances by local musicians, participants were presented with key facts, including that the urban population grows by two people every second and 27% of the urban population in the developing world does not have piped water in their homes. With these issues at the fore, discussions focused on where the gaps lay and how best to address these problems through: urban planning; public-private partnerships; using the expertise of local governments for effective implementation; and the necessity of adequate funding and political will.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WATER AND URBANIZATION ISSUES

Freshwater is a finite resource that is imperative for sustainable development, economic growth, political and social stability, human and ecosystem health, and poverty eradication. While water issues have long been on the international agenda, the debate over how to meet the growing global demand for freshwater has intensified in recent years, over 850 million people currently lack access to safe drinking water, while about 2.6 billion lack access to adequate sanitation.

UN MILLENNIUM SUMMIT: At the UN Millennium Summit held at UN headquarters in New York, in September 2000, world leaders adopted the Millennium Declaration, which inspired eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with 18 targets, including the target to halve the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water by 2015.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON

FRESHWATER: The International Conference on Freshwater convened in Bonn, Germany, in December 2001, in preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). The Conference addressed: equitable access to and sustainable supply of water for the poor; strategies for sustainable and equitable management of water resources; integration of gender perspectives; and mobilization of financial resources for water infrastructure.

WSSD: During the WSSD, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in August-September 2002, world leaders expanded the MDG target on safe drinking water by also agreeing to halve the number of people lacking adequate sanitation by 2015. Other water-related targets in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation included the commitment to develop integrated water resource management (IWRM) and water efficiency plans by 2005. Governments, lending agencies and international organizations also launched several voluntary partnerships and initiatives in the areas of water and sanitation.

2005-2015 INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR ACTION - “WATER FOR LIFE”: Organized by the UN, the International Decade focuses on the implementation of water-related programmes and projects and on strengthening cooperation on water issues at all levels. Priorities include: access to sanitation; disaster prevention; pollution; transboundary water issues; gender; capacity building; financing; and IWRM. Africa is identified as a region for priority action for the Decade.

CSD-17: The seventeenth session of the UN Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD-17) held in New York, US, during May 2009, addressed *inter alia*: the importance of water for agriculture; sound water management; implementing sustainable and efficient water resource development and management schemes; and safe water access for rural populations.

REPORT OF WORLD WATER DAY 2011

Johan Kuylentierna, Stockholm Environment Institute, welcomed delegates to WWD 2011, and introduced a cultural programme with a performance by Cape Town Opera. This was followed by Rolf Stahlhofen, UN-HABITAT Messenger of Truth, singing “Water is Life,” to commemorate WWD 2011.

Edna Molewa, Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs, South Africa, underscored the importance of dialogue on water issues as it has cross-cutting implications for all aspects of life, including health, food security and the economy. She emphasized the need for adaptation, solutions and technologies in the face of climate change and associated water scarcity. She acknowledged the challenges of ensuring the provision of clean water given urban migration and said that African countries must manage demand for quality water and infrastructure.

His Royal Highness, Willem-Alexander, Prince of Orange, and Chair of the UN Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB), highlighting the increase in dwellings without access to adequate water and sanitation in urban settlements has increased, pointed to the UN General Assembly’s adoption of a resolution (A/RES/65/1) to halve the sanitation gap by 2015 under the MDGs as well as the Sharm el-Sheikh commitments adopted by the African Union (AU) at the eleventh AU Summit, which provide impetus to tackle these problems. He said his role on UNSGAB is to create awareness at the highest political level.

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L-R: HRH Prince Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands, Chair of UNSGAB; Edna Molewa, Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs; and Tim Kasten, UN Environmental Programme

Tim Kasten, UN Environment Programme, said the exchange of ideas and sharing of solutions with people was the greatest benefit of WWD 2011. He stressed the need to look at the symbiotic relationship between water resources and ecosystems, and balancing growth and sustainable development. He mentioned the focus of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) on green economy and green economic growth, opining that these could also drive poverty eradication. He said the UN should play the role of both catalyst and facilitator on water issues.

In the keynote speech, Joan Clos, Under-Secretary General and Executive Director, UN-HABITAT, expressing concern about the increase in informal settlements, called on participants to address the lack of decent water provision to these communities. He stressed the importance of planning for future growth and development, and called on governments to provide capacity to small- and medium-sized cities to tackle these issues. He underscored the need for political will when developing these policies.



Bert Diphorn, UN-HABITAT

Bert Diphorn, UN-HABITAT, provided an overview of the activities undertaken prior to WWD 2011, highlighting the five issues that were addressed: urbanization; urban water and waste management; environment and climate change; leadership and governance in the water sector; and investment. He said recommendations include: increasing the profile and understanding of urban water issues; honoring global water sector commitments; good governance and clear institutional roles and policies for sustainability in the sector; preparation for water disasters; and addressing water monitoring and data challenges.

Joan Clos delivered an address from UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, stating that without water there is no dignity and no escape from poverty. However, he underscored that the achievement of the MDGs on water and sanitation lags behind, with an increase of 140 million more people without access to water and 134 million more people without sanitation over the intervening 10 years. Ban highlighted the social impacts of lack of access to water for women such as increased school dropout rates and assault. Additionally, he noted that informal water vendors charge 20-100% higher water prices, in comparison to local utilities. He urged Governments to recognize the urban water crisis, noting that it is "a crisis of governance, weak policies and poor management, rather than one of scarcity."

THE AFRICAN CAUCUS

Rene Carayol, moderator, introduced the panel discussion on water and sanitation in Africa. Sering Jallow, African Development Bank, highlighted the mixed capacities within

Africa to achieve the MDG for water and sanitation. He called for better management of revenue collection by utilities, as revenue losses of up to 50% in some cities result in higher operating costs and decreased service expansion. He concluded that investment in urban services is not matching rates of urbanization and therefore service in slums is not always adequate.

Percy Sechemane, Chief Executive, Rand Water, provided a utility's perspective, underlining the importance of planning and good data. In response to explosive population growth, he admitted it was difficult, but not impossible, to balance expansion with design needs. He said increasing density is positive as it is an indicator of growth and prosperity, but that a modern city must be characterized by more infrastructure not just greater density.

Monyane Moleleki, Minister of Natural Resources, Lesotho, gave an example of a project providing water and roads concurrently, saying it is experiencing terrible delays and poor service in the laying of water pipes, thereby delaying the roads. He stressed the need for proper planning and coordination and called for donors and financiers to support sound planning programmes in undeveloped areas, not only in unplanned slum urbanization. Clive Justus, Executive Mayoral Committee Member, City of Cape Town, outlined the city's 2006 Water Demand Management Strategy, which has as its core tenant infrastructure-led economic development to lift citizens out of poverty. He underscored the importance of having a vision backed by a plan and budget for successful implementation. He also highlighted the importance of increasing compliance levels for collection of revenues from 66 to 85%, with an overall goal of reaching 95% compliance by 2016.

Brian Chituwo, Minister of Local Government and Housing, Zambia, noted that his Government has devolved planning to nine regional utility companies. Lamenting the problem of providing large illegal urban settlements with water and sanitation, he underscored the necessity of involving local communities in addressing this issue. He stressed the presence of political will in Zambia and the importance of partnerships to address water and sanitation issues. Alioune Badiane, Director, Regional Office for Africa and the Arab States, UN-HABITAT, highlighted the challenge in overcoming the backlog in service provision, saying that UN-HABITAT aims to halve the backlog by 2020. He noted that high density settlements results in cheaper service provision and called on politicians to pay more attention to urban communities.

On future steps to take, Jallow noted that commercial banks could provide funding for infrastructure provision but that interest rates may be prohibitive. Badiane called on countries to take the lead in infrastructure provision. Chituwo stressed inter-ministerial dialogue and planning, and Simelane highlighted public-private partnerships. Justice called for involving local government as they are the implementing arm of the government.

WATER AND CITIES

Chan Yoon Kum, Public Utilities Board, Singapore, explained his country's water supply predicament is due to dependence on rainwater and imported water from Malaysia. He said that agreements with Malaysia are expiring in the next five years and this has driven Singapore to search for alternative water sources. He outlined two new sources: reclaiming used water and desalination. He said demand management, proper planning and strong political leadership are equally important.

Kalanithy Vairavamoorthy, University of South Florida and Sustainable Water Management Improves Tomorrows Cities' Health (SWITCH), lauded Singapore's example, showing the value and imperative of change. He said most developed cities have well functioning water systems but that they are not sustainable in the long-term. In contrast, he described the potential in developing countries that do not have mature infrastructure to plan urban growth differently. He explained

SWITCH's ideas for taking the raw materials of grey, blue or black water and generating different water qualities for different purposes.

Margaret Catley-Carlson, UNSGAB, said developed countries should also be looking at water harvesting options in any new development. She suggested that the SWITCH concept could be applied to new installations in developed countries and should also focus on Asia where there is a demand for better services. She noted that success in the water sector was not celebrated enough, citing examples of universities in China and the US that recycle grey water to supply 80% of their needs, and buses in Rotterdam that are fuelled by methane from waste water. She suggested no waste water treatment plant should be built that is not energy self-sufficient. She also underscored that corruption and competing priorities complicate changes in the water system.

Benedito Braga, President of the International Forum Committee for the Sixth World Water Forum and Vice-President, World Water Council, provided an anecdote from Brazil on an alternative finance arrangement where money for a sewage treatment plant was held in trust and could only be accessed when the plant was in operation to avoid corruption. He noted that although technologies and models exist, financing and political will is imperative, especially when discussing the green growth agenda.

Ania Grobicki, Executive Secretary, Global Water Partnership, highlighted the importance of making an economic case for the value of water, noting a number of innovative models in this regard. She said that there are also income opportunities for communities utilizing payment for ecosystem services schemes and "selling" community water resources, citing the example of the city of New York paying for water from the Catskill Mountains. She commented that through this, bigger cities can also become engines for economic growth.

Margaret Pageler, ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, urged engaging local authorities on water and sanitation provision, saying that they have the skill and expertise to create political will. She also encouraged efforts to enable communities to value water properly to reduce waste.

In response to questions from the floor, the discussion considered: affordability, budget allocation and new sources of finance; moving away from water having only medical benefits; innovations for grey water recycling; how to communicate education and awareness raising to conserve water; role for youth; water management devices for the poor; and seeing water as an economic good that should be paid for.

In closing, panelists highlighted the importance of: innovation; political will and technical skill at the local level; reusing water to create resilience to climate change; innovative financing; awareness and the role of the media; maximizing benefits from water; and celebrating successes.

CLOSING STATEMENTS

The closing session kicked off with performances from various jazz musicians and singers, including the debut performance of "We are... for love of water" by Dutch and South African singing stars.

Maria Otero, Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs, US, participating via a live link up to the World Bank in Washington, DC, outlined a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the World Bank and 20 US government departments and agencies to tackle global water issues by: sharing knowledge and refining best practices; collaborating and cooperating at the country level through shared goals at programmatic and diplomatic level; and strengthening national and regional efforts.

Edna Molewa outlined the African Ministerial Council on Water's action plan. She shared her determination for it to be implemented via mobilizing advocacy, securing funds to implement the campaign and providing technologies to improve quality and access to water and sanitation.

His Royal Highness Willem-Alexander, Prince of Orange, said sanitation is often forgotten quoting a participant who said water and sanitation are "Siamese twins and if you separate them, one may die but you don't know which one." He appealed to the World Bank to feature water and sanitation prominently in the infrastructure report they are preparing for the G20, in addition to looking for innovative financial mechanisms.

Joan Clos said it was a sad reality that there are more people without access to water, as urbanization outpaces infrastructure provision. He called for a strategy to face this crisis, which will require sound urban planning, legislation and implementation.

Hannah Louisa Bissiw, Deputy Minister of Water Resources, Works and Housing, Ghana, outlined the interventions of her Government to provide the human right to access water and sanitation. Rolf Stahlhofen announced the donation to UN-HABITAT of water tank systems for 60,000 people.

Returning to Washington, DC, via video link, Robert Zoellick, President, World Bank, said access to water is a basic human right and food security issue. He outlined current water projects of the Bank, some of which have already collaborated with US agencies and looked to boost these efforts through the MOU.

Hilary Clinton, US Secretary of State, said water is a health, farming, economic and climate crisis and increasingly is a political crisis, which requires an equally comprehensive response. She welcomed enhanced collaboration through the MOU, but recognized there is much further to go, as finding and using water remains a defining challenge in the lives of millions of people in the developing world. She identified water security and its implications for economic, human and national security as a potentially increasing source of unrest and instability. She concluded that the issue can also bring people together in cooperation rather than conflict when water projects are implemented properly.

In closing, Clinton and Zoellick signed the MOU to much applause. The session ended at 8:25 pm.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

International Water History Association Seventh Biennial Conference: Talking water history on the African Veld:

The objective of the IWHA 2011 conference is to create an environment conducive for water historians to talk about the work they are doing in their respective fields of specialization.

dates: 5-7 July 2011 **location:** Kruger National Park, South Africa **contact:** Petra Lawson, North-West University **phone:** +27-16-910-3015 **fax:** +27-86-645-6820 **email:** Petra.

Lawson@nwu.ac.za **www:** http://www.unesco.org/water/ihp/events/iwha_kruger2011_2nd_announce.pdf

World Water Week 2011: Responding to Global Challenges - Water in an Urbanizing World:

This conference will address: urban governance; planning, adaptation and risk reduction; resilient supply chains; equitable service delivery; and technologies for resource-prudent modern lifestyles. **dates:**

21-27 August 2011 **location:** Stockholm, Sweden **contact:** Katarina Andrzejewska, Stockholm International Water Institute **phone:** +46-85-221-3975 **email:** katarina.andrzejewska@siwi.org **www:** <http://www.worldwaterweek.org/>

Singapore International Water Week 2011: This event will provide a global platform for water solutions, bringing together policymakers, industry leaders, experts and practitioners to showcase technologies, discover opportunities and celebrate achievements in the water world. **dates:** 4-8 July 2011 **location:** Singapore **contact:** Secretariat, Singapore International Water Week **phone:** +65-634-64402 **email:** waterconvention@siww.com.sg **www:** <http://www.siwv.com.sg/>