

## **Resume for 4 October 2011**

The second day of the Zaragoza conference continues with the discussion of tools which can enhance water management and support the transition to a green economy. The day starts with Session 5, which unpacks the 'green' in green economy, reflecting on the role of biodiversity and ecosystems in economic and social development. Elisa Tonda from UNEP provides an overview of how investments and fiscal measures for biodiversity protection can catalyse green growth. Maintaining healthy and functioning freshwater ecosystems is essential for securing the flow of services that societies and economies depend on. Panelists from Kenya and Ecuador illustrate by discussing their experiences with successful payment for ecosystem services schemes:

- In Lake Naivasha basin, Kenya, the local water resources users association compensates small-scale landowners for managing their land to provide good quality water to downstream users. The scheme has reduced environmental threats as well as providing income and livelihood improvement for participating communities.
- The Fund for the Protection of Water in Ecuador is a private trust fund that provides a stable long-term financial mechanism using revenues (interest and investments) derived from its equity to co-finance activities aimed conserving the basins that supply the water to Quito city and the surrounding area.

Session 6 is convened by the UN-Water Programme on Capacity Development and focuses on how water technology can contribute to job creation and economic development. Karl Ulrich Rudolph synthesises the issue, revealing how innovative water technologies can increase efficiencies, reduce pollution and close the increasing gap between supply and demand. The key challenge is in gaining access to and implementing these tools. He questions representatives from Burkina Faso, Egypt and India to see what lessons they have learnt from implementing technological approaches:

- In Quagadougou, Burkina Faso, an intelligent GIS-based computerised system has enabled significant reductions in water losses within the distribution of a municipal utility.
- A web-based system for interdisciplinary water and environmental studies initiated by a partnership of institutions from Germany and Egypt demonstrates how specially designed eLearning tools and knowledge transfer can support an evolving market for green jobs.
- In India, a combination of technological initiatives has dramatically enhanced the management of water resources in Gujarat State, reversing environmental degradation and resulting in a tremendous growth in agricultural production. Approaches adopted include a state-wide water distribution grid, an inter-basin transfer and the promotion of small-scale rainwater harvesting for irrigation.

When sharing success stories, understanding the context is crucial. There are no one-size-fits-all solutions and different social, economic and geographic conditions demand different approaches. Session 7 of the conference will take a closer look at the water challenges specific to the Western Asia region, and the tools that are proving successful there in advancing towards a green economy. Mohamed Al-Hamdi from the UN Economic and Social

Commission for Western Asia discusses how progress towards the MDG targets related to water supply and sanitation can contribute to fostering a green economy. This is realised through efforts to improve the technical and financial capacity of water utilities to deliver accessible and reliable water services for domestic use. Discussions around two case studies from Yemen and the Arab region provide examples of achievements in this field.

- In Yemen, the ongoing reform of the urban water and sanitation sector has shifted power away from a central authority to local agencies, resulting in better customer services, greater financial stability and better protection of the least advantaged users.
- The Arab region is the most water scarce region in the world and suffers chronic problems including weak environmental policies, lack of investment and regional conflicts over water. The Arab Countries Water Utilities Association is facilitating the exchange of knowledge and best practice, developing capacity and improving the performance of water supply and wastewater utilities in the regions.

The second day of the Zaragoza conference concludes with a three-hour Market Place session where 26 people from five continents will present their cases. These cases bring water and the green economy to life by providing examples of successful implementation of the tools and approaches discussed in the conference.