

Summary of the Side Event on
“From the World Water Day, 2012 “Water and food security” to IYWC2013”
March 22, 2012
Conference Room 3 (NLB)

Water is a strategically important resource vital for addressing sustainable development in a holistic manner, crucially interacting with its environmental, social, economic and cultural dimensions. On the occasion of World Water Day 2012, UN-Water in collaboration with the government of Tajikistan held a side event on the theme ‘Water and food security’ to the International Year of Water Cooperation 2013. – UN-Water

H.E. Mr. Sirodjidin Aslov, Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the UN

Delivering opening remarks, Ambassador Sirdjidin Aslov thanked the co-organizers of the event – Food and Agriculture Organization and UN-Water, as well as the Office of the President of the General Assembly for their advice and assistance. He extended appreciation to the President of the UNGA H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser and H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General, for their constant attention to water-related issues.

Mr. Aslov noted that, UN Member States currently focus their attention on the preparation for the *Rio+20* Conference. It is known that the forthcoming Conference will pay much attention to the issues of water, which is an indispensable element of green economy and component of sustainable development. He recognized that much is being done by the UN member states in the process of the preparation for the water agenda of the *Rio+20* Conference.

Ambassador Aslov indicated that the four UN member states, namely Hungary, Finland, Tajikistan and Thailand, have set up the Steering Committee of the Water Friends Group for advancing the water issues of the *Rio+20* Conference agenda. The Steering Committee has already held a number of events with the focus on the current most urgent water issues. He expressed his anticipation that the Steering Committee will make a considerable contribution to the preparation for the Water agenda of the *Rio+20* Conference.

He added that the objectives and goals of the International Year of Water Cooperation, 2013 will be the subject of the presentation of First Deputy Minister of Melioration and Water Resources of Tajikistan, Mr. Sulton RAKHIMOV, and other panelists of the event.

H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the 66th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

In his opening remarks H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser thanked the Permanent Representative of Tajikistan for organization of the event. He stated that food security depends on a large extent to the availability of clean, safe water. As populations continue to grow, water shortages remain one of the greatest obstacles to human survival. Clean, safe water is, therefore, critical to all efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, and it is central to sustainable development and to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

He added that the UN system plays an important role in supporting countries to achieve the goals of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the International Decade for Action: Water for Life 2005-2015.

Mr. Al-Nasser admitted that despite our concerted efforts to date, much more has to be done to address the needs of the 800 million people who still drink dirty water. 40% of those still without access to improved drinking water live in Africa. He expressed hope that the International Year of Water Cooperation in 2013 could also serve as a platform to unify our efforts. Declared by the General Assembly in 2010, The International Year of Water Cooperation will bring together the UN system, governments, civil society and the business community, to increase awareness of water-related problems and to consider ways to resolve them.

He concluded that as we approach the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development - Rio+20 - we must recommit to achieving all of the MDGs.

H.E. Mr. Asha Rose Migero, UN Deputy Secretary General

H.E. Mr. Asha Rose Migero indicated that over the coming decades, feeding a growing global population and ensuring food and nutrition security for all will depend on increasing food production. Unless we increase our capacity to use water wisely in agriculture, we will fail to end hunger and we will open the door to a range of other ills, including drought, famine and political instability.

She added that in many parts of the world, water scarcity is increasing and rates of growth in agricultural production have been slowing. At the same time, climate change is exacerbating risk and unpredictability for farmers, especially for poor farmers in low-income countries who are the most vulnerable and the least able to adapt. These interlinked challenges are increasing competition between communities and countries for scarce water resources, aggravating old security dilemmas, creating new ones and hampering the achievement of the fundamental human rights to food, water and sanitation.

She further commented that the international community should be encouraged by the renewed political interest in food security, as evidenced by the high priority given to this issue by the agendas of the G8 and G20, the emphasis on the nexus of food, water and energy in the report of the Global Sustainability Panel, and the growing number of countries pledging to Scale Up Nutrition.

She urged all partners to fully use the opportunity provided by the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development. In Rio, she said, we need to connect the dots between water security and food and nutrition security in the context of a green economy.

Mrs. Kenza Robinson, Secretary of the UN-Water, UNDESA

Ms Kenza Kaouakib-Robinson indicated that water is a crucial and finite resource for humanity and the access and use of sufficient and safe water is key to global food security.

Water is a strategically important resource, vital for addressing sustainable development in a holistic manner, crucially interacting with its environmental, social, economic and cultural dimensions. She added that this is the reason why water needs to be further recognized by all as the common denominator of all global challenges including energy, food, health, peace and security and poverty eradication.

She further commented that the linkage between water and the green economy is well established but that a green economy cannot be achieved without ensuring that everyone has access to food, safe drinking water and basic sanitation.

She reminded the audience that agriculture is by far the main user of freshwater and that water scarcity will increase food insecurity, creating situations of famine and undernourishment particularly in the poorest parts of the world in Africa and Asia.

She emphasized the importance of predictable finance for sustainable rural development and of the implementation an integrated and coordinated water resource management to reduce the increasing competition for water resources among different sectors.

Ms Kaouakib-Robinson added that , within the this context, understanding trust and cooperation among water users at local, national, regional and international levels are a prerequisite for better water management and will contribute to the achievement of the internationally agreed goals on water and food. In this regard, she added: “UN-Water welcomes the UN Resolution declaring 2013 the International Year of Water Cooperation”.

H.E. Mr. Herman Schaper, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations

H.E. Ambassador Shaper indicated that both water and food security were priorities within Dutch policy for development because of the international needs related to these topics and the high level of expertise in the areas of water and food security in the Netherlands. He added a that the Government of the Netherlands, gives particular attention to water efficiency, mainly for agricultural purposes and that his government wants to improve water productivity and the ratio of water consumption to agricultural yields by at least 25%in Dutch-funded programmes.

Mr. Shaper recognized that innovation and sustainable use of water are important for both water and food security but emphasized the equal importance of the role of good governance. By governance, he added, I mean a powerful administrative organization of water management, a legally embedded system of water law”.

Ms. Lila Hanita Ratsifandrihamanana, Director FAO Liaison Office with the United Nations, made a presentation on “Water and food security”.

Ms. Lila Hanitra Rafsifandrihamanana indicated that water and food security are interlinked and in order to feed everyone, water needed to be secured in sufficient quantity and adequate quality. She added that the world needs to produce more food using less water, reduce food wastage, and move towards sustainable diets.

She further emphasized the need to promote sustainable production and consumption, stimulate public-private partnerships, build resilience agains climate change and improve water governance.

Mr. Andrew Parker, UNICEF Senior Advisor WASH, UNICEF

Mr. Andrew Parker noted that water is also interlinked with sanitation and hygiene. Children bear a significant portion of the burden associated with poor “WASH”. He added that advances on MDG 7 are notable but a lot remains to be done.

Poor WASH, diarrhea, and nutritional implications are well known, resulting in stunting and poor learning, lack of school attendance having a huge bearing on the potential of today's and tomorrow's children. In this regard, guinea worm is a clear case of inequity in access to safe water. Efforts to address this must include sustainable water supply and sanitation services. The Rio Conference offers a chance to focus on sustainability, he concluded.

*Mr. Sulton Rahimov, First Deputy Minister of Melioration and Water resources of Tajikistan
"Objectives and expected actions of IYWC 2013"*

Mr. Sulton Rahimov stated that Tajikistan being the originator of three main "water" resolutions of the UN General Assembly, makes all efforts to ensure the proper basis and to develop common understanding on the importance of water issues at all levels. Thus, through an initiative spearheaded by Tajikistan, the General Assembly in 2010 declared 2013 as the International Year of Water Cooperation. The main objectives of the IYWC 2013 are: achievement of a more profound understanding of the interrelation between sustainable development and management of fresh water resources; encouraging governments to develop strategies and programs to promote efficient cooperation in sustainable management of water resources with involvement of all water users; mobilizing civil society to be involved constructively in dealing with issues of sustainable management of water resources; developing international communication-and-information networks for dissemination of knowledge and experience in successful policies, new and innovative practices and measures at all levels;

Mr. Rahimov indicated the main topics to focus, which should include: cooperation for Universal Water Access; water Cooperation for Poverty Alleviation; water Cooperation for Peace and Security; water Cooperation for Sustainable Development; and water Cooperation for Environmental Sustainability.

The planned activities of Tajikistan for successful implementation of the IYWC 2013 include four components: (1) To include the events on water cooperation in the program of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development; (2) To organize a High-level Round Table and a special event on the water cooperation issues in the framework of the 6th World Water Forum; (3) To prepare activities for the International Year of Water Cooperation, 2013; and (4) To organize an International High-Level Conference on the International Year of Water Cooperation in the second half of 2013 in Dushanbe.

Mr. Rahimov concluded that Tajikistan is highly interested in the preparation and successful implementation of the International Year of Water Cooperation. Thus, Tajikistan expresses willingness to cooperate with UN-Water and its institutions, in particular, with UNESCO, DESA and UNEP, which are authorized on behalf of the UN to coordinate actions and events during the Year, as well as with other stakeholders, to ensure effective contributions to the achievement of goals of the Year.

Mr. Tomoo Inoue, Director for Water Management Coordination, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT), Japan, "Water cooperation for effective disaster management"

Mr. Tomoo Inoue highlighted three directions for Effective Disaster Management: disaster management into sustainable development; Disaster management at all the phases; and Disaster management tailored to local conditions. He stated that Disaster risk reduction should be implemented before a disaster strikes, and emergency response and quick recovery should be introduced once a disaster occurs. Disaster management is effective when measures are well organized, prepared and implemented in the phase of prevention, preparedness, emergency

response, recovery and reconstruction. The best combination of structural and non-structural measures including capacity building can be provided as a solution for disaster management by taking account of their applicability to local conditions.

Mr. Inoue added that in order for disaster management to be effective international cooperation is needed. He underlined that when a mega-water-disaster strikes a country, its national development is severely hampered for several years, making recovery even more challenging. Many areas of the world are struck by such recurring disasters. These disasters know neither borders nor value chains, and they result in political, social and economic shocks, globally affecting sustainable development.

In order to mainstream Disaster Management into Development the following actions are necessary: more investment for disaster risk reduction and resilience; development of indicators for water disaster risk assessment, integrated water resources management focusing on flood and drought; international sharing of hydrological information as public goods; and more collaboration between water and disaster sector towards Rio+20 and beyond.

Dr. Ania Grobicki, Executive Secretary of GWP (Global Water Partnership)

Dr. Grobicki emphasized the importance of the three “I’s”: Information, Institutions, and Investments. Improving the collection of water and climate information will help in identifying vulnerable “hotspots” — arid regions, areas reliant on shrinking water resources, Small Island Developing States and low-lying deltas. Strengthening water management institutions, transparent regulatory frameworks, and multi-stakeholder dialogues, will result in innovative, local solutions that can contribute to disaster risk reduction. She urged that prioritising investments in water resources management delivers immediate benefits today as well as longer-term social, economic and environmental resilience.

Mr. Philippe Kridelka, Director of the UNESCO Office in New York

Mr. Philippe Kridelka noted that improving water resource management, increasing access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation and promoting hygiene can improve the quality of life of billions of individuals. He highlighted UNESCO’s role in promoting water resources management at the regional and international levels, as well as participation of UNESCO in the UN conference on sustainable development (Rio +20) to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 20-22 June.

Mrs. Marcia M. Brewster, consultant to the World Water Council, “Developing a Framework for Water and Green Growth”

Ms. Marcia Brewster presented a summary of the Water and Green Growth (WGG) project “Developing a Framework for Water and Green Growth” (Executive Summary and full report can be accessed at: www.waterandgreengrowth.org).

She noted that the project team carried out a theoretical analysis on green growth based on the policies of the Republic of Korea, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The project team then expanded the concept to include water resources, and analyzed 26 case studies to determine the common factors that made selected “water and green growth” projects a success. The case studies were divided into the following categories for analysis:

ecosystem recovery and water quality improvement; watershed management; policy, planning and governance; financing and public-private partnerships; innovation and technology; and infrastructure. The draft policy framework includes three main elements, which correspond to the three pillars of Sustainable development: Protection & conservation of water resources; Water as an engine of growth; and Water for an improved quality of life. Each element has four policy directions for implementation.

She concluded that the policy framework will be further developed at a number of international meetings being held in 2012, including the Rio + 20 conference in June, World Water Week in Stockholm in August and others. New case studies will be included in the analysis over the next two years in the lead up to the 7th World Water Forum to be held in Daegu-Gyeongbuk, Republic of Korea in March 2015.

H.E.Mr. Francis Lorenzo, President South-South News

Mr. Francis Lorenzo emphasized the important role of the mass media in water issues and raising awareness among different stake holders, as well as promotion of cooperation among water users at different levels, including coverage of regional and international meetings on water issues.