

WORLD WATER DAY 2010

WORLD WATER COUNCIL



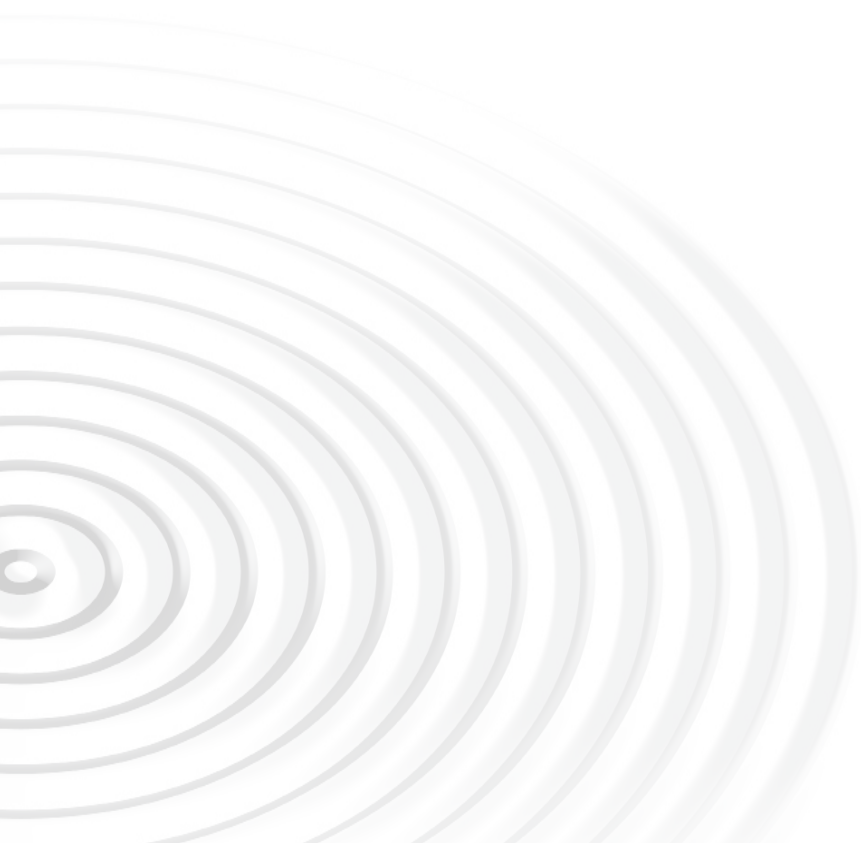
22 March 2010 - Clean Water for a Healthy World



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President of the World Water Council

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One Day for Water, Water Every Day



Water is celebrated. It even has its own universally dedicated day. This day is the occasion for all of us to reflect upon the importance to protect our water and the way we use it. It is also the occasion to openly denounce an unacceptable situation.

It is unacceptable that more than one out of six people on earth lack access to safe drinking water. It is unacceptable that in Africa, four persons out of five do not have a water tap in their home. It is unacceptable that in developing countries, more than 80% of waste water is discharged without treatment.

World Water Day is an opportunity for us to fight against wastage and promote greater water sharing. We know that the road to achieving water for all is long and arduous, but it is one that must be followed – for everyone has a right to sustainable safe water supplies and basic sanitation facilities.

We are all concerned with making water a priority. This priority is foremost political. It is a prerogative that imposes itself on international decision makers, Heads of State, Local Authorities and on all of those in the world who make our laws and allocate budgets. It is to them that we today, on World Water Day, say “Water and sanitation first!”

But this should also be the priority of each and every citizen whose awareness needs to be raised and whose behaviour needs to change. Awareness in the sense of realising a need for greater balance between the water that humans require and that nature needs. To progressively render clean water without major pollution to its natural habitat is respecting biodiversity. It is transmitting to our children this precious resource, indispensable to their development. Changing behaviour is every day wasting less water and better managing agricultural and domestic water usage.

Whether close by or distant from us, abundant or scarce, water demands our greater respect and attention. In giving both today – and every other day of the year – together we may help thousands of individuals to get access to water. This will allow them to find pathways out of poverty and achieve greater human dignity.

This is why the World Water Council demands that an essential part of the financial resources allocated to the poorest developing countries for adaptation to climate change, should be dedicated to the establishment of a Global Fund for Water which will focus specifically on Water for Health and Water for Food.

On this universal day, if you speak out loud and underline the vital importance of water, you contribute to seizing this enormous opportunity that is offered to humanity: the urgency is upon us all of us.

LOIC FAUCHON

PERSPECTIVES ON WATER QUALITY

Interviews with World Water Council Bureau Members



Ben Braga, you will chair the International Forum Committee of the 6th World Water Forum that many say will be the “Forum of solutions”. In terms of protecting the quality of our water, what kind of innovative thinking might help catalyse change on a larger scale through the Forum?

“In my opinion, the innovation needs to come on two levels: technical and political. To protect the quality of our water – especially in developing regions – we need to get sustainable water and sanitation systems in place. On a technical level, we’re at the moment in a situation of status quo when it comes to how we think about development aid. We therefore need to move towards a more pragmatic way of seeing things. The Council has suggested establishing an international fund for water and health. This would be a new type of financial scheme that can catalyze change on a large scale. Richer countries would benefit from helping poorer countries, creating a win-win situation. On a political level, the innovative thinking includes the role of the citizen. Communities at large should be heavily involved in discussions and debates in the Forum process. This will help increase awareness and understanding about water development aid. It can also help providing the necessary citizen support that elected politicians will need to implement an international fund for water.”



Andras Szollosi-Nagy, you are the rector of UNESCO-IHE, Institute for Water Education. With a core group in the institute that focuses on preventing and controlling pollution, what results can we hope to see from educating and training students from developing regions in this field?

“The whole idea behind this programme is to teach students not to cure pollution but to prevent it. We need to get away from old techniques and tools that promoted “dilution as a solution to pollution” and rather protect the environment from the beginning. When our students learn how to catch pollution upstream - at the water source - this prevents toxic chemicals from being washed down in case of a flood. We also teach our students to look at pollution in a new light by considering it as a potential resource. Using it to solve problems can have very positive results. For example in Uganda, our PhD and Masters students look to wetlands for treating wastewater. Instead of building huge industrial plants, they use wetlands to do the same job by simply using the ecosystem to absorb the chemicals. This is one positive result that we can definitely hope see more of in developing regions.”



Dogan Altinbilek, one of the recommendations that came out of the 5th World Water Forum in 2009 was to fully integrate water quality management to protect water resources from pollution. As a water resources engineering expert, what role would you give to engineering techniques in helping to implement this guidance?

“Engineering techniques are rather different depending on if we’re talking about preventing pollution or cleaning up after it. The technique is important in both cases but the latter is always more expensive.”

We can definitely learn from the past what we need to do to fully integrate water quality management. Let me give you one example: In ancient times, the Golden Horn estuary in Istanbul, next to the venue of the 5th World Water Forum, was a very nice harbour. In 1950 it was transformed into an industrial zone and in 1985 it had become the home to some 700 industrial plants. The zone was so toxic that you couldn't even cross the bridge without holding your nose to avoid the horrific smell. Between 1998 and 2003, there was a major clean up effort using expensive engineering techniques to an amount of 653 million dollars. This could have been avoided with a pro-active approach. Learning from the developed countries' past errors provides a great opportunity for developing countries to manage pollution with cheaper engineering techniques in a more sustainable way."



“Eunkyung Park, it is often said that protecting water sources from pollution is everyone’s responsibility. What is your experience, as an environmental specialist, in making different stakeholders take charge of the situation and work together to improve it?”

“If we want to fight pollution, multi-stakeholder dialogue is one of the keys in my experience. This type of practice was first seen at the Rio conference in 1992 and has been encouraged by the UNCSO ever since. When I worked with the Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development in Korea, I always strived for full and equal participation of diverse sectors. It was essential given that the Commission consisted of government, private sectors, NGOs and so forth. This special type of dialogue fostered greater transparency and as a result, we often managed to reach consensus. Given that water resources are a public asset, a democratic and equal participation in daily decision-making processes always stems from good governance. Interesting examples of this are the 700-years-old Water Boards in the Netherlands. If we want our water to be of high quality without any pollution, we need good governance with solid technological investments, multi-stakeholder participation and grass root level awareness and involvement.”



Jerry Delli-Priscolli, you have a vast experience in water security working with US Army Corps of Engineers. What would you say is the major challenge in providing good water quality in the aftermath of a disaster such as the earthquake in Haiti?”

“The recent Haitian disaster confirms the urgency of the UN Secretary General’s High-Level Expert Panel on Water and Disaster (UNSGAB). As the UNSGAB recommends, we must take broader prevention measures to minimize death and destruction by building resilience and incorporating disaster risk reduction into development planning. Haiti has enough water to support the needs of its population; but, it lacks effective institutional support, financial resources and infrastructure to manage the water and to keep it safe. Water availability and quality has been strained and exacerbated by this lack of capacity in its immediate response efforts.

Experienced donor agencies will need to lead in water resources and infrastructure planning and design, establishing water data systems, financing, technical modeling support, construction management oversight, extreme event and risk analysis, dam safety, reservoir operation alternatives and rehabilitation of the Péligré hydroelectric facility. Such needs seem removed from the immediate disaster needs. However, they are necessary as crisis responses move into longer term recovery and if Haiti is to reduce its vulnerability.”

Let us not forget Haiti

Two months ago, Haiti was struck by a terrible earthquake.

In the immediate urgency, the international community brought its material and moral support to the Haitian people and shared the grief with the whole country.

Today, we need to make long term commitments. One million people are homeless and need shelter, water, electricity and basic services.

The World Water Council, with its 400 member organizations, is at the disposal of the Haitian national water and sanitation authority (DINEPA) to help evaluate the country's water and sanitation needs.

The Council calls upon the great water family's availability and solidarity for Haiti. Helping to reconstruct the country's infrastructure will guarantee the suffering population's progressive access to water.

On this World Water Day, LET US NOT FORGET HAITI.

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