

News Update

Editorial

WATER AND CATASTROPHES

Whether too much or too little, water and its quality are most often the cause of both natural and humanitarian catastrophes. This year, we did not witness any catastrophe as great as the tsunami of 2004, but the intense flooding, drought and other extreme weather phenomena, possibly worsened by climate change, were a source of suffering for millions of people. The terrible floods that recently hit a large portion of the African continent were a harsh reminder of the close link between water and disasters.

For some years, the international community has been aware of the importance of good water management before, during and after a catastrophe. Despite this awareness, millions of people continue to suffer due to poor water management, the lack of water or its poor quality. Why is this the case, and, moreover, what can be done to improve the situation concretely for these millions of people?

In response to this simple, yet essential question, the High Level Expert Panel on Water and Disasters was created by the United Nations Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation. The Panel, chaired by Mr. Han Seung-soo, the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy on Climate Change, met for the first time in Tokyo on 6 September in the presence of approximately thirty experts on water management in crisis situations.

The mission of this Panel is to develop and promote concrete solutions related to water and catastrophes. This is a mission to which the World Water Council will contribute, through its dual participation as both a member of this Panel and as a facilitator for the working group on the question of crisis response.

Loïc FAUCHON



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Focus on...

Climate Change and Natural Disasters

Extreme events have been at the forefront of this year's entire summer season. After an extremely rainy monsoon provoked flooding, effecting tens of millions of Asians in July and August, the African rainy season resulted in disaster for 1.5 million people from Mauritania to Ethiopia.

What is most striking is the similarity of these extreme conditions over entire continents. Is this a new phenomenon? "No," responds Mike Davis*, affirming that the greatest droughts of the 19th century also had the same particular characteristic of affecting simultaneously the entire tropical zone from America to Asia, and even Africa. Moreover, these extreme conditions always correspond to very intense periods of El Nino. Making a link between this summer's rainy weather and the recent return of El Nina is a step that some experts have taken.

In this context, there are two important things to keep in mind. First of all, we are gaining a greater understanding that these global climatic phenomena actually help our planet function but represent a serious threat in a globalized world. The good news, however, is that this greater understanding of ours should enable us to be better prepared.

*in Late Victorian Holocausts : El Nino Famines and the Making of the Third World

This Month's Focus: Water & Disasters

First Steps for the High Level Expert Panel on Water and Disaster

The High-level Expert Panel on Water and Disasters, created in response to the Hashimoto Action plan at the 4th Forum and upon recommendation of the UNSGAB, held its first meeting in Japan on 6 September and was chaired by Mr Han Seung-Soo, President of the Korean Water Forum and UN Secretary General's Special Envoy on Climate Change. The discussions mainly focused on the status of the Panel, its relationship with UNSGAB, and its objectives: to establish clear global-level goals to reduce loss of life and livelihood caused by water-related disasters and to provide adequate and safe water and sanitation during and after disasters. The WWC, the Japan Water Forum and the ISDR* will jointly ensure the secretariat for the Panel, whose outputs should be announced at the 5th World Water Forum in Turkey in March 2009. Its next meeting will be held in Seoul, Korea, at the end of January 2008.



2007 Climate Disorders –Updates by Online Gateway

Looking for updated and reliable information about humanitarian emergencies and disasters? A new website has been dedicated to this matter: ReliefWeb is the world's leading on-line gateway providing information designed specifically to assist the international humanitarian community in effective delivery of emergency assistance. Administered by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), ReliefWeb posts nearly 150 maps and documents daily from over 2000 sources, including the UN system, governments, NGOs, academia and the media. For example, the International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC), a WWC member, contributes its maps on various humanitarian crises around the world.

More information on www.reliefweb.int



* International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

Based in Geneva, Switzerland, the UN – ISDR aims at increasing public awareness, creating commitment from public authorities, stimulating partnerships and improving scientific knowledge about disaster reduction. They have developed a very comprehensive website where you will find information on their missions, publications, awareness campaigns, and useful disaster-related data:
<http://www.unisdr.org/>

New Publication

“Floods in Bangladesh – History, Dynamics and Re-thinking the Role of the Himalayas.” By Thomas Hofer and Bruno Messerli. Contact: sales@hq.unu.edu or unuona@ony.unu.edu

Africa's flooding crisis is getting worse

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies warns of potential food security crisis following floods in East and West Africa. Their statistics show that the situation will only get worse. Latest news: <http://www.ifrc.org/news/index.asp>

A Day and a Workshop Dedicated to Disaster Reduction

Wednesday 10 October is the International Day for Disaster Reduction. This day was designated in 1989 by the UN General Assembly as a vehicle to promote a global culture of natural disaster reduction, including disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness. This is also the closing date of the Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop on School Education and Disaster Risk Reduction, which will be held in Bangkok, Thailand on 8-10 October. More information on the ISDR website: <http://www.unisdr.org/>



Source: UN - ISDR website

WWC News

Second China-Europa Forum - Taking on 21st Century Challenges

New challenges to the Chinese and European societies entail an enhanced dialogue to reflect together on the transformations at work. The second edition of the China-Europa Forum, to be held 4-7 October 2007, will provide an occasion to discuss issues like globalization and the rise of power in China. The Forum's main aim is to suggest new ideas for cooperation by outlining an overview of Chinese and European societies. The WWC will host the Water Management workshop, one of 46 workshops taking place in nine different European countries. For more information, please visit the official website: www.china-europa-forum.net



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WWC Meets ICID in Sacramento

The U.S. Committee on Irrigation and Drainage will host ICID's 58th International Executive Council Meeting in Sacramento, California from 30 September to 6 October 2007. WWC Programme Director, Paul van Hofwegen, will take the opportunity to organize a workshop on Financing water for agriculture and to discuss the involvement of ICID in the 5th Forum preparation.



Gender & Water Alliance

At the WWC General Assembly in March 2006 in Mexico, the members present drafted a number of points of programmatic guidance to the Board of Governors, one of which was to promote gender balance and specifically, the empowerment of women as leaders in implementing practical actions for resolving water issues at the local level. The WWC, therefore, accepted an invitation from the Gender and Water Alliance (GWA) to serve as an advisor to their Steering Committee for a period of two years. During its most recent meeting held in Arnhem, Netherlands, from 5-7 September, the Council thus participated in the review of GWA's past activities and future plans, including preparation for the 5th World Water Forum in Istanbul.

With over 700 members in 94 countries throughout the world, GWA strives to implement greater gender main-

streaming in Integrated Water Resources Management. Its mission is to promote women's and men's equitable access to and management of safe and adequate water, for domestic supply, sanitation, food security and environmental sustainability. To learn more: <http://www.genderand-water.org/>

In conjunction with the UN Secretary General's event on climate change held on 24 September at the UN Headquarters in New York, a high-level roundtable on gender equality and climate change was organised by the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), the Council of Women World Leaders and the Heinrich Böll Foundation of North America. A declaration was also prepared, recommending specific actions to ensure the consideration of gender equality with respect to climate change issues and adaptation strategies. For more information, contact d.gaillard@worldwatercouncil.org.

Global WASH Cluster Meeting

Last April, the 2007/8 Global Cluster appeal was launched (www.humanitarianreform.org) with the objective of gathering international NGOs dealing with water and sanitation in emergency situations. WWC Director Daniel Zimmer attended the 2nd WASH Cluster meeting in Geneva on 25-26 September 2007, aiming at coordinating the actions of the various organisations in emergency situations.

Changes at the WWC HQ

September has brought some significant staff changes at the Council... Although we are sad to announce the departure of **Stéfanie Neno**, our programme officer leaving for new challenges within the WWAP, we have the pleasure of welcoming **Michele Fezzani-Slater**, who will be assisting the WWC working bodies. She will be replacing **Dani Gaillard-Picher** who was recently appointed Forum Coordinator.

Towards the 5th Forum

The WWC team congratulates Dr Veysel Eroglu for his new post of Minister of Environment and Forests of Turkey. He will be replaced by Prof. Hasan Sarikaya, Secretary of State for the Ministry for Environment and Forests, as new Co-Chair of the 5th Forum ISC.

News from Members and Partners

New Directions in Urban Water Management

The 2nd edition of the UNESCO International Symposium was held in Paris, France on 12-14 September. WWC Director Daniel Zimmer was reporter for the workshop "Socio-Economic and Institutional Aspects in Urban Water Management". The symposium gathered experts of urban water management ranging from hydrology of urban catchments to socio-political issues.

Japanese Members Meeting

The WWC gathered its Japanese members for a meeting in Tokyo on 5 September 2007. Twenty two members from 13 organizations participated along with six representatives from the Japanese government. Mr Ishii, Mr Oda and Mr Tomaru, the three Japanese WWC Governors, took part in the meeting which focused on the Council's activities, as well as exchanging experiences and involving the members in the next World Water Forum.

World Water Monitoring Day

Two hundred participants joined the Water Environment Federation (WEF) and the International Water Association (IWA) on 18 September to kick-off activities for World Water Monitoring Day 2007. More about this international outreach program, which builds public awareness and involvement in protecting global water resources, can be found on the website: www.worldwatermonitoringday.org



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2nd European Solidarity Week for Water

The Republic of Moldova is hosting the 2nd European Solidarity Week for Water on 1-5 October around the theme "Appropriate Sanitation for Human, Economic, Social and Sustainable Development." Apart from contributing to the 2008 International Year of Sanitation, this initiative also contributes to the progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals: it aims to strengthen and/or multiply actions in the field so that sanitation, hygiene and health become effective financial and political priorities. More information: http://www.s-e-e.org/anglais/index_an.htm

American Water Resources Association Conference

The 2007 AWRA Annual Conference will be held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on 12-15 November 2007. WWC Governors Kenneth Reid & Jerry Delli-Priscoli will be participating in this 43rd edition. More information: http://www.awra.org/meetings/New_Mexico2007/index.html

Blue news

Safe Drinking Water is Essential: A New Web Resource

As the urgency of the global drinking water crisis becomes increasingly acknowledged, the need for information on how to take action is imperative. On 12 September 2007, the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and the Global Health and Education Foundation launched the website "Safe Drinking Water is Essential" joining more than 125 science, engineering, and medical academies around the world. The website is the first tool of its kind to provide international decision makers with peer-reviewed scientific and technical information about drinking water distribution and treatment options. www.drinking-water.org



Source: 'Safe Drinking Water is Essential' website ©Curt Carnemark/World Bank 1989



Source: IUCN

Job Offer

SaciWATERS announces a vacancy for a Project Director in its 'Crossing Boundaries - Regional Capacity Building on IWRM and Gender and Water in South Asia' project. Read offer: <http://www.saciwaters.org/vacancies.html>

Where to meet

2nd European Solidarity Week for Water

1-5 October 2007, Chisinau, Ivancea, Moldova
Information: http://www.s-e-e.org/anglais/index_an.htm
Celine Dubreuil, Project Officer

The 3rd International Yellow River Forum on sustainable Water Resources Management and Delta Ecosystem Maintenance

16-19 October 2007, Dongying, China
Information: <http://forum.yellowriver.cn/>
Loïc Fauchon, President
Paul Van Hofwegen, Programme director

UCLG's 2nd World Congress

28-31 October 2007, Jeju, Korea
Information: <http://www.uclg2007jeju.org/>
Celine Dubreuil, Project Officer

Other Events

Risks of climate change to water management and utilities – from impact analysis to adaptation

Amsterdam, Netherlands, 5 October 2007
Organiser: IWA
Information: www.moorga.com

Climat 2050 : Solutions technologiques et politiques, une conférence internationale

Montréal, Canada
Organisation: Veolia Environnement
Informations: <http://climat2050.org/>

News

Declared Rights of Indigenous People

The U.N. General Assembly adopted on 13 September 2007 a declaration outlining the rights of indigenous people and outlawing discrimination against them. The declaration was approved after more than two decades of debate and sets out individual and collective rights. 143 members states voted in favor, 11 abstained and Australia, New Zealand and the United States. Read more about the declaration: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/declaration.html>

A few acronyms

UNSGAB - United Nations Secretary General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation

UN-ISDR - United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNCDR - United Nations Centre for Regional Development Disaster Management Planning

UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund

WWAP - World Water Assessment Programme

AWRA - American Water Resources Association

IWA - International Water Association

WEF - Water Environment federation

Please feel free to send your press releases, publication & event announcements, etc. to be published in the WWC News Update to:
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