

Speaking Points for Dr Ursula Schaefer-Preuss
Progress on Stakeholder Engagement During the Water for Life Decade
Zaragoza, Spain Jan 15th 2015
Auditorium of Etopia Building 17.30-18.30

- I would like to thank the organizers for providing us this wonderful opportunity to analyze the impact that the Water Decade has had on improving water management and in what way ensuing thinking has continued to change our water perception and to address the main issues of the post-2015 SDGs.

Tangible progress!

- No doubt that the Water Decade proved to be helpful in a number of respects namely with regards to accelerating the achievements of the MDGs in the water area.
 - The JMP 2014 reports that today 116 countries have met the MDG target of access to improved sources of drinking water and 77 countries have met the target of improved sanitation.
- There is also a growing recognition that **if we wish to manage water resources effectively then we must approach this together in an integrated manner.** GWP with its partners have been tirelessly driving a worldwide movement towards Integrated Water Resources Management. We are gratified by the fact that there is encouraging progress, as reported in the UN-Water Status Report on the Application of Integrated Approaches to the Development, Management and Use of Water Resources presented at Rio+20.
 - Indeed, from the 2012 UN survey of 134 countries that 82 % have embarked on reforms to improve the enabling environment and integrate approaches to water resources management, 65 % have developed IWRM plans, and 34 % say they are at an advanced stage of implementation.
- This decade has witnessed the emergence of new and modified paradigms. The Green Economy/Growth and the Water-Energy –food nexus have become subjects of international debate, reinforcing the need for an integrated approach. But, the conceptual attractiveness of paradigms is not enough. They must be applicable in a fast-changing world.

- The SDGs process led to a growing recognition that water is at the core of sustainable development as it is closely linked to a number of key global challenges.
 - We are at a critical moment where countries are negotiating a dedicated water goal in the post-2015 development agenda. This stands to be a game-changer for our efforts and it is essential we work in partnership to support countries in these negotiations.
- Last but not least, I would like to salute the efforts of the government of Tajikistan to raise water cooperation as a global concern through initiating the UNGA Resolution declaring 2013 the international year of water cooperation. Dealing with water problems requires genuine cooperation at all levels where shared goals motivate diverse stakeholders to pull in the same direction. The Dushanbe and the Budapest Summits underscored the fact that much is intellectually and technically within our grasp. What is often missing is the political will and skill to achieve global and regional cooperation.

But, the business is not finished!

- Despite tangible progress many issues addressed in this decade remain unsolved.
- In the area of stakeholder engagement, much more remains to be done, in particular involving the **engagement of women and youth**.
 - I have been very pleased that last year GWP released its Gender Strategy and am hopeful that we can begin to move forward in taking concrete steps to engage and empower women in water management efforts.
- Evidently, major shifts in both policies and conceptual approaches to water are called for in order to reach a more desirable future and limit calamities that can otherwise be foreseen.
- Building on the foundation that we collectively laid during this Water Decade and in order to move away from where we are, arguably four clear areas of action are, in my view, required:

- **First, we need to match short and long-term action.** In the context of climate change, rapid urbanization, and growing disparities, the scale and complexity of water challenges require investing in the long term as well as the short term. Many complex processes are involved and long term commitment is needed in order to succeed.
- **Second, we must encourage partnerships.** We need the contributions of all the stakeholders. There is no doubt that no single set of actors holds the key to effectively addressing the challenge of effective management of water resources. Governments, both national and local obviously have a key role. But the private sector and the NGOs play also a major role. Working together is not optional: it is essential if we are to achieve our vision of a water secure world. We can and must achieve that vision! This requires fundamental changes in values, beliefs, perceptions and political positions among all stakeholders.
- **Third, we must strive towards the systematic sharing of knowledge.** To bring about change, people need knowledge to understand the state of water resources and the tools needed to sustainably develop and manage them. Knowledge can stimulate behavioral change towards a new ‘water culture’. We must engage in a learning process. We must monitor continuously and learn as we act in order to promote a real evolution in thinking not just a change in emphasis of current activities.
- **Fourth we must recognize the importance of international cooperation, including South-South cooperation.** It is essential that we proceed with the effective implementation of the many recommendations of the Dushanbe and Budapest Summits. This cannot wait!
GWP is actively involved in all the elements of this challenging agenda with its vast network of partners.
- This conference is a call to action as well as a celebration of the progress already underway!! Thank you!