

**International Conference on Cooperation for Water, Energy, and Food Security in  
Transboundary Basins under Changing Climate**

**“Towards 2015 - Sustainable Development Goals and  
Post-2015 Agenda”**

*Statement by Dr. Ursula Schaefer-Preuss, Chair, Global Water Partnership*

*Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam, 2 April 2015*

- Distinguished guests and colleagues, thank you for the opportunity to say a few words today. It is an honor and a privilege to present to you this morning some key elements on the Sustainable Development Goals and the Post-2015 Development Agenda. I do this in my capacity as Chair of the Global Water Partnership.

### Reflection on MDGs

- We have come a long way since the adoption of the MDGs in 2000 by the members of the UN Family. The adoption of the MDGs provided a roadmap for long term and concerted actions at national as well as international levels.
- The MDGs focused on water and sanitation through a target under Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability. This target was to halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.

- I want to mention here the longstanding joint regional initiative of ADB, UNDP, and UNESCAP in regularly producing a monitoring report on the accomplishments of the MDGs. The latest version entitled “Asia Pacific Aspirations – Perspectives for a Post 2015 Development Agenda. Asia Pacific Regional MDGs Report 2012/2013” is a very valuable reference for decision makers related to many facets of human development in the region.
- Between 1990 and 2010, more than two billion people worldwide gained access to improved drinking water sources. The proportion of people using an improved water source rose from 76 per cent in 1990 to 89 per cent in 2010.
- **For Asia, although the region as a whole has been classified as an early achiever for water access, 25 out of 51 countries actually slowed down their rates of progress on water access over the MDG time period.** 21 countries were able to accelerate their rates of progress, and five countries maintained their progress.
- Moreover, we are still far away from reaching the set target on sanitation, Over 240,000 people a day gained access to improved sanitation facilities from 1990 to 2011. Despite this progress, 2.5 billion in developing countries still lack access to improved sanitation facilities.

- The MDG process put a focus on water, sanitation and hygiene, but targets related to the broader questions of water resources management were not so clear. **In particular, the MDGs did not place sufficient emphasis on integrated water management in the context of environmental degradation and enhanced resource utilization to meet interrelated development goals.**
- The Water For Life Decade of Action, which began in 2005 and closes next year, was the focal point at the global level for action on these broader water management questions. With this process moving alongside the MDGs, there has been some movement at the global level on areas including the human right to water, water cooperation, and the growing issue of water and disasters.
- So while a lot has been achieved, there are still gaps to be closed on our way to the final assessment of the MDGs in September 2015 and the closing of the Water for Life Decade. And the issues related to water management continue to expand in scope and complexity.

## The Changing Context

- In closely monitoring the MDG targets and indicators the international community has learned a lot on how to contribute to improving human development. On the lessons to be learnt from the MDGs I would like to highlight the findings of the Asia Pacific Aspirations Report, that noted the need for more integration in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, and also noted a need for enhanced emphasis on gender and partnerships.

- The world has changed since the MDGs in 2000. Worldwide, but particularly in Asia, the issues of persistent poverty, rising income inequality, continuing food insecurity, gender disparities, demographic change, urbanization, and environmental degradation will need to be tackled in a post-2015 Development Agenda. **All of these priority areas are directly related to water management.**
- Countries in Asia and the Pacific are becoming increasingly concerned about environmental limits including with water. This is an issue that has to be addressed at regional and global levels, or we risk shifting the problems from one country to another.
- The global water cycle is now being disrupted through climate change, population growth, urbanization and industrialization. In other words, the water situation is rapidly becoming unsustainable.
- Water-related disasters – floods and droughts - pose some of the greatest global threats to development progress and economic stability. Between 1970 and 2010, the average number of people exposed to yearly flooding in Asia and the Pacific increased from 30 million to 64 million, and the population living in cyclone-prone areas grew from 72 million to 121 million. In Thailand, the 2011 floods were estimated to have cost \$45 billion, and recovery and reconstruction cost \$25 billion.

- On the issue of climate change in particular, which I understand is a central theme of this Summit, I would like to mention the new Strategy of the Global Water Partnership, which has water and climate change as one of our priority thematic areas. **We have recently launched The Southeast Asia Water, Climate and Development Programme (WACDEP) in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.** This programme integrates water security and climate resilience in development planning processes, and also contributes to the objectives of the UNFCCC national adaptation plan (NAPs) process. My colleague Mr. Pahrian Siregar is our new Programme Manager for this initiative and he has joined us here today.
- Water management issues in this changing context is complex. It has to be addressed through water sharing at different levels – sub-nationally within countries, and intra-regionally. Water is needed for energy, it is a driver of economic growth, and integrated management of water resources can lead to inclusive and sustainable growth in our societies. There is no better example of this than the contributions here of the Mekong River Commission (the MRC) in tackling the difficult issues of integrated water resource management in a basin so important for the future of this region.

## Water in the Post-2015 Agenda

- The vision of the Global Water Partnership is for a water secure world. We are committed to equitable and sustainable management of water resources because we have seen the impact this can make on the livelihoods and well-being of people and communities. Water is a connector. **With all of the global change that I have described water plays a central role. But water does not yet have a global institutional architecture which can tackle these challenges and move towards sustainability.**

- Throughout 2013, GWP worked with UN Water and other partners on a series of country level consultations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. These consultations supported the preparation of UN Water's Technical Advice on a Possible Water Goal. The suggestion is a dedicated goal of 'Securing Sustainable Water for All', with five target areas of:
  - Water supply, sanitation and hygiene,
  - Wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse,
  - Water resources development and management,
  - Flood and drought resilience, and
  - Improved governance for sustainability and equity.
- This framework integrates all aspects of water within one focused goal. It reflects what has been articulated on the ground around how water should be incorporated into an inclusive, sustainable development agenda.
- **As recently as this World Water Day, some 57 Permanent Representatives at the UN signed a call for a dedicated water goal in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. But it is not yet certain that this will be achievable. The UN Open Working Group is currently considering some 19 goals in all, some of which may be combined or reframed to enhance integration across areas. Others, including Jeffrey Sachs and the SDSN, have proposed no more than 10 goals where water would be a target or sub-target within some these more integrated goals. What is clear is that water must be highly visible in the Post-2015 framework, with coherent indicators, targets and metrics to ensure our success.**

- This year GWP is working in partnership to undertake a series of country-level consultations using the suggested dedicated water goal as a starting point. This has included work in Indonesia and Vietnam. It is our hope this work will help connect country-level efforts and priorities for a Post-2015 Development Agenda.
- In closing, I want to emphasize that water sustains life. Water is now recognized as a human right, it is essential for children, women and men, for economies, for ecosystems, for energy, agriculture and industry. Water is the medium that integrates our greatest human development challenges in health, food, energy, climate change, and livelihoods.
- **I applaud the efforts of this Summit to consider the relationship of water with energy, food, and climate in anticipation of a new global sustainable development agenda, and I look forward to having the results of your work shared across our global community.**