

First Meeting of the High-Level Experts and Leaders Panel on Water and Disasters (HELP)

4th June 2013, Tokyo

Input by the Chair of Global Water Partnership, Dr. Ursula Schaefer-Preuss

Your Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first express my sincere thanks to the Japanese Authorities for having organised this first meeting of the High-Level Experts and Leaders Panel on Water and Disasters with the invitation to a field trip to the tsunami affected areas. Yesterday's visit to Rikuzen-Takata City and Minami-Sanriku Town gave important insights on how to tackle such disasters. I can only express my deepest and heartfelt appreciation on how the affected population together with all the relevant Japanese authorities continue to cope with the consequences of this dramatic disaster.

As Chair of the Global Water Partnership I can not do more than state that we are, as a global network with more than 2800 members at local, country and regional level, fully committed in supporting this initiative, in particular and in the long run, aiming at the prevention of disasters.

We take note with appreciation that the report of the High Level Panel of the Secretary General of the United Nations on the Post 2015 International Development Agenda, having been presented to the public yesterday, includes a special reference to the concept of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) under goal 6 which is dedicated to water and sanitation. The same applies to the disaster goal (goal 1).

It is now up to us all, and not only those being closely linked with the so called water community, to fill these promising messages/recommendations with life and concrete action. GWP will continue to support and will put emphasis on concrete actions related to the water disaster risks. GWP is prepared to fully support the next steps to be undertaken by HELP in the context of the draft program of HELP, including priority actions towards 2015, presented to us just a short while ago.

Let me take this opportunity to draw your attention to some specific activities supported by GWP.

The Integrated Drought Management Programme which was launched in Geneva as a joint programme between GWP, WMO and many other partners only ten weeks ago. The programme aims to support countries to have frameworks in place to manage drought risks through an integrated approach.

www.gwp.org

The aims are:

- to support the development of national and regional drought policies and monitoring frameworks;
- to disseminate best practices on drought and water resources management and
- to connect the users of climate information with the providers of this information, the national hydromet services and the regional climate centres.

Four regional drought programmes are now being supported by GWP, one already launched in Central and Eastern Europe, and three in preparation in South Asia, Eastern Africa (in the Horn of Africa) and West Africa.

The Integrated Drought Management Programme is similar in structure to the Associated Programme on Flood Management (APFM) which has been running successfully, supporting countries in integrated flood management for over 10 years now. We gratefully acknowledge Japan's technical and financial support for the programme over all these years.

Within the APFM, a unique Help Desk has been put in place in 2009. Developing countries can access help directly through the Help Desk, which is a demand driven mechanism, providing access to financial and technical resources required to deal effectively with floods in an integrated way.

Such Help Desk will also be established for the Integrated Drought Management Programme.

Within the perspective of the Integrated Water Resources Management it is important to manage water better throughout all climate conditions, whether they bring too much or too little water. Within GWP both the flood management and the drought management programmes are part of a portfolio of climate programmes, which seek to build climate resilience through improving water security.

Let me close by stating that building resilience of people, communities and countries to these water-related disasters and extreme climate events is the major challenge of our time, as climate change will get worse before it gets better. GWP believes that water security is fundamental to sustainability and to human security. We continue to urge countries to push for a Sustainable Development Goal, calling for "water security for all", this being GWP's vision and our dream.

Such a water goal should include targets on water supply and sanitation, on wastewater management, water resources, as well as on water-related disasters.

In particular, a target on water-related disasters would seek to halve the number of people affected annually by water-related disasters, by 2030.

Thank you.