Budapest Water Summit
Budapesti Víz Világtalálkozó

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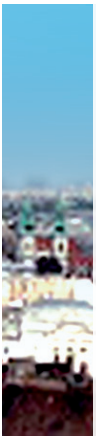
The 2013 Budapest Water Summit

The Role of Water and Sanitation in the Global Sustainable Development Agenda

October 2013
Budapest, Hungary

The global water challenge

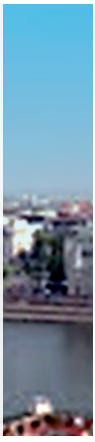


Covering 70% of the Earth's surface, water is the most abundant natural resource on our planet. At the same time water – and especially liquid freshwater (which makes up less than 1% of all waters) – is also our most precious and scarce resource. The lack of adequate drinking water and sanitation is a prime public health challenge: 1.8 million people die every year from diarrhoeal diseases (including cholera), 90% are children under the age of 5, mostly of which in developing countries. Pressures on existing freshwater water reserves are expected to grow even further. With rapid population growth water withdrawals have already tripled over the past 50 years. Withdrawals are predicted to further increase by 50% by 2025 in developing countries, and by 18% in industrialized countries.

Consequently, as UN estimates suggest, by 2025 some 1.8 billion people will be struggling to make a living in countries or regions afflicted by "absolute water scarcity". Climate change will likely further exacerbate prevailing water-related problems and will add increased risks to hydrological extremes and water resources that are already pressured by an unprecedented population growth.

By 2020 60% of the world's population will live in cities. Supplying water to rapidly expanding population centres is a huge challenge already. Since the development of infrastructure for treatment and reuse of discharged water is often lagging way behind the withdrawal of fresh water, the contamination level of the resources still available is inching towards red alert.

Transboundary river basins and aquifers, where 40% of humanity lives, carry a great deal of conflict potential, particularly if one considers that by 2050 nine billion human beings will share the same amount of water that we had ten thousand years ago. The strongest driver, therefore, is population growth and the secondary changes it triggers such as land use changes, large scale forest clearings, mass migration from rural to urban areas, pollution and dwindling natural resource base.



Water as a development imperative

In July 2010 the United Nations General Assembly recognised the right to safe and clean drinking water and to sanitation as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life in dignity.

Furthermore, in June 2012 the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development confirmed the cross-cutting importance of water in sustainable development. In the overarching development policy framework – laid down by the Rio+20 outcome document "The Future We Want" – water as horizontal issue is inextricably linked to the majority of priority areas identified for global action. Drinking water supply, adequate sanitation, food security, sustainable agriculture, energy, sustainable cities and human settlements, public health, climate change adaptation, desertification, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity protection, missing capacities are the most important themes selected by the outcome document where water and sanitation, in one way or another, constitute part of the problem and/or the solution.

Natural resources, such as water and the related ecosystems – recalls the outcome document – should be managed in an integrated and sustainable manner in view of their role in supporting economic, social and human development. These are essential ingredients of "The Future We Want". Besides fulfilling legitimate human demands, such management should at the same time also facilitate eco- system conservation, regeneration, restoration and improved resilience in the face of new and emerging challenges.

To better define the pathway towards sustainability, the Rio+20 outcome document calls for the establishment of universally applicable sustainable development goals (SDGs). While the document does not identify individual SDG areas, in view of the cross-cutting role of water in sustainable development policy it is widely accepted that a stand-alone or a series of SDGs should be dedicated to water.

The 2013 Budapest Water Summit

Hungary has played an active role in the elaboration of water-related issues in the run-up to the Rio+20 Conference. As a Steering Committee member of the Friends of Water group at the UN in New York it has co-organised, sponsored and hosted a number of events that proved to be pivotal contributions to the final outcome document.

Hungary continues to work with Member States and assists shaping a common understanding on current water-related challenges as well as the ways and forms of responses, including the formulation of appropriate SDGs.

To move forward the post-Rio water agenda Mr János Áder, the President of Hungary, announced in Rio de Janeiro Hungary's intention to organise an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations in 2013 in Budapest, the capital city of Hungary. This conference – the 2013 Budapest Water Summit – forms part of the events of the UN International Year of Water Cooperation led by UNESCO.

Objectives and structure

The principal objective of the 2013 Budapest Water Summit, to be held in October 2013, is to take stock of the various developments, in and outside the UN system, in the preparation of water-related goals under the Rio+20 agenda. Based on the outcomes of various UN programmes and the World Water Forum series, respectively, it also aims to present practical, accessible, affordable solutions to the main challenges identified. The Summit is expected to provide defining contributions to the elaboration of one or more SMART (specific, measureable, attainable, realistic, timely) SDG(s) on water that correspond to the multidimensional challenges outlined above.

The Summit particularly aims to build on the conclusions of the 6th World Water Forum, held in Marseille, France, March 2012, the proceedings of the World Water Day events in March 2013 to be held in The Hague, The Netherlands, the Stockholm World Water Week in September 2013, the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly as well as to provide contributions to the 7th World Water Forum to be held in Daegu, Republic of Korea.

The Budapest Water Summit is envisaged as a policy forum to facilitate consensus building amongst stakeholders concerning the water and sanitation SDGs and will address the following subjects:

- Striving for universal access to water and sanitation: Critical issues of access to water and sanitation, urban water infrastructure planning, waste water management, development and maintenance from technological, financial, public health and human rights aspects, with a view to providing sustained access;
- Integrated water resources management for the 21st century: The challenges of adaptation and resilience in face of a growing population and changing climate – complex solutions for pollution prevention, soil and groundwater protection, food security, disaster risk management including floods and droughts and man-made disasters, water storage and recycling, the water and energy nexus;
- Good water governance: international cooperation, transboundary river basin and aquifer management, integrated institutional strategy in planning and implementation, stakeholder participation in the preparation of water policies; capacity development, education, research, data, monitoring and assessment;
- Green economy for blue water: traditional and innovative water technologies in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; practical, affordable, local solutions in the various regions of the world;
- Financing the implementation of water and sanitation SDGs: the availability and best use of national and international financial resources and institutions; best practices, lessons learned. In addition to official development policy, special attention to be paid to the role of private philanthropy in solving the global water and sanitation crisis.

The outcome

The Budapest Water Summit attempts to cover these issues in a complex and interconnected manner combining policy, scientific, financial-economic as well as governmental and non-governmental approaches and inputs. The outcome document – the Budapest Recommendations on Water and Sanitation – will identify the possible water-related building blocks to be incorporated into future SMART SDGs as well as the post 2015 development agenda.

The main policy discussions of the Summit will be accompanied by parallel and interconnected events. These will include a Science Forum, a Business Forum, a Youth Forum and a Civil Forum. Several preliminary meetings will be organised in order to prepare the Budapest

Participants

The Summit is organised by the Government of Hungary in cooperation with the United Nations systems and the World Water Council. Invitation will be extended to all UN Member States of the United Nations, competent UN bodies as well as other international organisations, international development banks, private philanthropic organisations, civil society organisations and the private sector.

Water and Hungary

Sustainable water resources management has long traditions in Hungary due to its special geographical and hydrological features. Hungary's entire territory is situated in the Danube River basin, the most international catchment of the word. 96% per cent of Hungary's surface water resources originate abroad. Waters reach the country through 24 different watercourses. While most of the country is a flatland, it is surrounded by the mountain ranges of the Carpathians and the Alps, which necessitates protection against frequent floods originating outside of Hungary.

As a result of its outstanding exposure to divers hydrological challenges Hungary has historically developed significant expertise in water management. Today it has one of the longest system of dikes and levees in Europe, over 4000km in total length, as well as a complex system of flood risk management. This system involves integrated basin management, hydraulic engineering, spatial planning and disaster risk control.

Well-functioning transboundary water resource management and collaboration schemes have been put in place over the past decades, rendering the region a model-case of international water cooperation.

Average daily water consumption of a Hungarian citizen is about 100-110 litres, one of the lowest in the industrialized world. Yet, 95% of all drinking and household water in the country is abstracted from groundwater sources, rendering its proper management an overarching national priority. To safeguard its water resources Hungary has developed a stringent legal regime and a solid institutional framework in water and sanitation management.

Centuries of tradition in water management have been supported by a solid academic, educational and training background. The design and implementation of complex water engineering solutions for developing countries has always been and is a distinguished area of Hungary's international co-operation.

BUDAPEST WATER SUMMIT
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