

# CONCEPT NOTE FOR THE 2<sup>ND</sup> ASIA-PACIFIC WATER SUMMIT

## Background on the Asia-Pacific Water Forum and the 1<sup>st</sup> Asia-Pacific Water Summit

In the face of the region's pressing water problems, in March 2006 at the 4<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum in Mexico, the Asia-Pacific Water Forum (APWF) was created to help address the challenges of the Asia-Pacific region. The APWF is an independent, not-for-profit, non-partisan, non-political network dedicated to solving water problems in the Asia-Pacific region. The APWF organized the 1<sup>st</sup> Asia-Pacific Water Summit which was held in Beppu, Japan and focused on the theme "Water Security: Leadership and Commitment". The Summit endorsed the Message from Beppu and launched a series of concrete initiatives for regional water resolutions.

## The 2<sup>nd</sup> Asia-Pacific Water Summit (2<sup>nd</sup> APWS)

More than four years have passed and the Government of Thailand has the privilege of hosting the 2<sup>nd</sup> Asia-Pacific Water Summit (2<sup>nd</sup> APWS) in collaboration with the APWF and supporting regional and international organizations. The 2<sup>nd</sup> APWS will be held in Bangkok, Thailand, on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of February 2012.

Water is a fundamental resource and as such its sustainable management is at the heart of human security and the social and economic development of nations. To this end, strong leadership and commitment from national leaders is essential. The 2<sup>nd</sup> APWS will continue under the guiding theme of "Water Security: Leadership and Commitment" with three policy priority areas for commitment and change: *Development, Shocks and Resilience, and Well-being*.

Under this guiding theme six thematic focus sessions will be held during the Summit: Household Water Security; Economic, Food and Water Security; Urban Water Security; Environmental Water Security; Water Risks and Resilience, and; IWRM Process for a Water Secure World. A short brief is provided on each of the focus area sessions.

## Household Water Security

Asia and the Pacific is on track to achieve the MDG target of halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water, but not the MDG target for improved sanitation. A decade into the campaign, the poorest quintile of households in Asia also seems unable to make progress in either target. The richest quintile has enjoyed increased access more than any other group. Governments are stepping up investments but are not addressing risks in the system, i.e. sustainability of systems, impact of climate change and inequalities.

Participants will discuss:

- The need for household water security: how meeting the MDG target for water and sanitation will boost human and environmental health, while promoting economic development.
- Inequality concerns: what are the barriers that constrained the poorest quintile of households from reaching the targets and how can these barriers be broken?

- How can governments meet the sanitation needs before the MDG target year 2015 and beyond?
- Risk management strategies and how existing and new investments can address:
  - sustainability risks
  - cost recovery concerns
  - climate change risks
- What is the role of water governance in achieving household water security and promoting inclusiveness?

## **Economic, Food and Water Security**

This session will propose for discussion a supportive framework for action on water in green growth, local, national and regional action to assist regional national and local decision makers and stakeholders, to achieve sustained prosperity with equity, in developing a coherent set of feasible economic, social and environmental policy goals, water resources management strategies and related sectoral strategies policy instruments and investment programmes within a green growth strategy.

Participants will discuss:

- Processes for reviewing broad social, economic and environment objectives through a water lens, with respect to bulk water allocation, sectorial policies, productivity targets, and policy instruments and investments in all productive sectors including revitalizing irrigation in the region.
- Policy dilemmas and conflicts:
  - economic water productivity vs. equity and other strategic goals
  - national vs. local and river basin objectives
  - managing informal water economies and transitions
  - political feasibility - ideal vs. second-best options.
- Risk management strategies for national food security policies.
- How water policies, allocation, management and investment can support green growth strategies while having explicit food and nutrition security and poverty reduction targets.
- Progress on a regional system for monitoring of investment and results.
- The water, energy and food nexus.

## **Urban Water Security**

Considering the 2010 landmark Resolution of the UN General Assembly, declaring the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right there is a need to consider the target of achieving “Universal and Sustainable Access to Water and Sanitation in the Asia - Pacific Region by 2025”. Different approaches are required for urban areas of different sizes. Urban Water security, including the achievement of the target of universal access to drinking water and sanitation, will require an approach of (a) Integrated Water Resource Management (b) Water Demand Management (c) Improved focus on serving the poor and (d) strengthening the role of local authorities. The principal challenge of achieving urban water security is not so much technological but related to governance issues.

Participants will discuss:

- The governance and related challenges of achieving urban water security:
  - leadership & commitment
  - appropriate policy environment and legal and regulatory frameworks
  - improved best practices of good governance
  - capacity development
  - the transparency of financing arrangements and innovative financing mechanisms attractive to potential investors especially to the private sector.

### **Environmental Water Security**

Water is a prerequisite for a multitude of ecosystem services that help to support life, livelihoods and well-being. An integral concept in the efficient management of water resources for ecosystem services is environmental flows, which refer to the quantity, quality and timing of water flows required to sustain freshwater and estuarine ecosystems. The application of environmental flows supports the health of such ecosystems, while ensuring that the needs of biodiversity, agriculture, energy, industry and human development are met. Environmental flows is the core focus of this session

Participants will discuss:

- Experiences and lessons learnt from environmental flow initiatives in the region.

### **Water Risks and Resilience**

Water is life. Water can also be a threat to life. Various water related events such as floods, droughts and water contamination pose serious risks for people and society. Containing such risks, while at the same time ensuring sustainable growth under financial, political, societal constraints, is no easy task. This focus area session will zero in on how countries can manage various water-related risks and build resilient society adaptive to global changes and future shocks.

Participants will discuss:

- The impact of water-related risks on green growth and national development.
- Country experiences and lessons: what worked and what did not in managing water-related risks.
- The essentials for better risk management and resilience: good governance, raised awareness, effective support systems, and what else?
- The best mix of structural and non-structural measures: finding a formula to build shock-resilient communities, countries and region.
- Science and technological advancements in helping to manage water risks.
- A framework for next actions: ways to promote global discussion and regional cooperation for better risk management.

### **IWRM Process for a Water Secure World**

Water is related to every aspect of life. Health, food, economy, ecology and natural disasters are just some examples. Impacts of climate change often appear and are felt through water: floods, droughts, and change of water flow trends. Therefore, holistic water governance is a

key requirement for adaptation to climate change. This focus area session will propose actions for decision makers and stakeholders on how to achieve Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) on the ground.

Participants will discuss:

- Guiding principles for implementing IWRM.
- Enabling institutional frameworks for achieving effective coordination at regional, national and river basin levels.
- The role of IWRM in managing environmental and hydro hazards including flood and drought.
- Adaptation to processes such as climate change, population growth, and urbanization.
- Utilization of science and technology achievements for IWRM.
- Capacity development for IWRM implementation.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> APWS will showcase leadership in decision-making, excellence in practice and innovation, and concrete results that have had substantial impacts, spanning from policy to the grassroots. At the end of the Summit a synthesis of key messages will be presented and commitment to change sought from heads of government from nations throughout the Asia-Pacific region.