

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT SESSION NOTE

Version 1.0

WORLD WATER COUNCIL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

A. PLENARY DISCUSSION SUMMARY:

Working at the political level

There was strong endorsement of the idea that the Council should continue working at a political level. However, this did not just mean high-level political action, but more general linkage to decision-making environments, including at the local authority level. The key was effectively communicating issues to political actors (at whatever level), and not getting submerged in details on specific issues. The Council could play a kind of knowledge brokerage role between policy and practice communities (including as ‘guardian of knowledge acquired at the World Water Fora’, as one participant noted). Our role would therefore involve using and disseminating this knowledge to raise awareness, increase outreach and establish strong messages for decision makers. In doing this, the Council should be clear and transparent about what it stands for. In short, we need a strong narrative on what is being communicated and why: above all, what is the Council’s core message?

Getting the process right

Discussion also surrounded how we work as a ‘Council’. There was discussion of the need to avoid too diffuse an approach on many issues. Our added value, some argued, lay in focusing on a few key issues and to address these issues in a substantial manner in order to add real value to global debates. This included—and a key point emerged here—encouraging non-water ‘sectors’ to see water as one of their critical issues: ‘Big reforms come because people see water as part of their reforms’, as one Bureau member put it. Hence, the next Forum and processes leading up to it should provide scope for this broader linkage to other sectors.

Part of achieving a stronger focus and ensuring added value relates to better integration between the World Water Fora and other Council work.

This point was reflected in a call for continuity: The Council should continue to develop areas identified in the past as priorities and ensure that these priorities are taken forward towards concrete actions and greater country-level engagement, in particular. (An example was given of monitoring implementation of the right to water at a country level.)

A key part of generating such actions lay in supporting greater public participation. But rather than looking at the ‘general’ public, some argued for a specific youth focus (with an additional call to address children and think about inter-generational knowledge transfer). The World Water Fora should act as the global platform to connect players together at all levels around agreed common solutions, thereby enabling and supporting broader public participation.

Working effectively at all levels would require strong communications, but particularly at a strategic level. The Council should work with members and partners to develop stronger approaches. A number of observations were made on this point, including the need to reflect multiple perspectives in Council communications, showcasing our ‘multistakeholder’ nature. It was also important that communication from the Council, through its members, should address clearly the added value that the Council provides in terms of achieving solutions. (An example was cited of civil society in Africa and what it could expect of Council activities.)

This touched on a core issue, notably the way members engage with Council activities. There was a call to make more use of Council expertise in working with members to help generate stronger alliances, e.g. with the World Energy Council, and to consolidate pre-existing alliances.

Regional Approaches

A strong sub-theme emerged on working at a regional level. This included ensuring greater regional balance within colleges. One argument held that the legitimacy of the Council lay in tackling critical issues in key regions and, therefore, our activities should emphasize regional-level collaboration (e.g., in helping to address transboundary issues and coordinating the experience of different river basin agencies). This requires good Council representation from such regions. At another level, an example from Asia showed that existing regional collaboration previously developed between Japan, Korea and China might be a platform on which the Council could build further.

Africa required a particularly strong focus, some argued, and one way forward would be to support existing regional activities, both in political and technical terms, for instance under AMCOW. These could be activities including adaptation to climate change, the development of joint water management plans, and regional capacity development (See below).

Thematic Choices

Discussion also covered key themes that the Council might address. For all areas, some argued, the Council should identify key indicators of progress and track them over time under specific themes.

A strong governance thread ran through most water issues and, therefore, this should be given due emphasis. In this regard, the Helpdesk concept, which was being developed by the Council with partners, could support identification of solutions and governance-oriented good practice.

Other major thematic issues included the confluence between freshwater and marine environments and, at a higher level, synergies between water, energy, climate change and food security. In some regions (e.g. South Asia) this latter issue should form a particularly strong Council focus.

Financing and the targeting of ODA was highlighted as a key thematic concern. This included issues of country budget allocations to water and sanitation investments, but also synergies between public and private sectors, including building confidence between local commercial banks and utilities.

Understanding more fully the flow of financing, funding allocations and the links to decision makers (including political environments) was highlighted by one participant, who emphasized that for the financial community the challenge was to identify the right investments, at the right time and the right place.

Water access, sanitation and the MDGs should be at the forefront of all Council activities, with some participants noting the linkages to many other development areas, including how the wider resource base is managed. It was noted that WSS and WRM were not 'polar opposites'; the two could be more closely aligned, including drawing on greater understanding of 'returns' from ecosystem flows.

Sanitation on its own remained a critical issue, both from a local authority perspective and as part of wider urban development issues. The Council should be involved in the upcoming UN-HABITAT World Urban Forum which will take place in Rio de Janeiro in March 2010.

B. BREAK OUT GROUPS DISCUSSION SUMMARY:

1. Local Authorities and Sanitation

Key points

The group suggested three principles and four points to guide the Council's future work.

The three principles are:

- Continue building on activities undertaken by the existing Sanitation Working Group;
- Ensure that the Council plays to its strengths, including working at political levels, communicating effectively and seeking political influence;
- Use the Council as a platform to bring attention to what others are doing and do not duplicate efforts.

Next steps

The key points described to help direct future work are as follows:

- Support a 'positive segregation' from water issues – in other words ensure that there is discussion of sanitation in its own right.

- Emphasize that sanitation is not just a technical issue, it is also a political one. Hence, the WWC should focus on the political side of sanitation, helping to build a bridge between politicians and practitioners. One way to bridge this divide would be to invite local authorities to water events, and technical experts (e.g. WOP) should be invited to the meetings of the National Association of Local Authorities.
- But, as the Council, we should also go to the meetings of cities where there is national government in attendance, and not simply 'bring mayors to World Water Fora'. The Istanbul Water Consensus is an important tool for this reason.
- The Council should become a better conduit of synthesized information on sanitation in order to inform and inspire global action, but also make sure that this information is professionally produced and supports clear messages that can help in persuading politicians to take sanitation seriously. Some professional communicators should therefore join the panel on sanitation.
- Through messages understandable by everyone, we should explain the added value of sanitation in terms of economic benefits. Changing sanitation from a "charitable" activity to an activity that adds value to local and national development could assist in making sanitation a more attractive issue for Local Authorities to tackle, because it might then become more of a perceived 'vote-puller'.
- Communications campaigns should be adapted to the different contexts (in developing and developed countries) and to different cultures as well. Health reasons are not always the motivation; there are also social and cultural reasons. The key is to find the best arguments to communicate to different audiences.
- Lead by example, so put sanitation at the forefront of all deliberations by the Council and take a role in defending and promoting the right to sanitation. We can disseminate information and case studies with member contact details that can help to catalyze actions by others and promote what WWC members are doing.
- We should address donors directly and convince them to integrate both water and sanitation, including supporting their understanding of the critical funding gap issue.
- A suggestion was made to create a prize/award on sanitation for the next World Water Forum during which a whole session should be dedicated to the issue.
- Debra Leigh proposed that her organization, the Water Environment Federation, lead the project "Water for Schools" launched by Mr. Fauchon, in order to assist in the move from discussion to concrete actions.
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2. Climate Change and Disasters

Key points

- An important message made during the Water Caucus session on Climate Change was 'don't wait for the COP'. Hence, the water community should take forward water and climate issues using its own 'collective action', rather than wait for others to do it.
- The Council's comparative advantage lies in the influence it can bring to bear on this issue, not least due to its status as a multi-stakeholder platform. This gives it greater legitimacy and helps in gaining global attention to key issues.

Next steps

- One of the Council's major roles lies in ensuring the development of a coherent debate on water and climate issues. This is not just about holding World Water Fora, but also about what happens outside Fora, through multi-stakeholder participation.
- An important focus for the Council is on ensuring that a strong process emerges around the political mobilization of cities, towns and municipalities on water and climate issues – including mitigating and tackling climate-related disasters. The Council can help to facilitate this process by convening panels of local officials which can assist in communicating key messages and triggering actions.
- After COP-15, the Council should look in detail at the outcomes, assess any gaps and be ready to:
 - Set up a post-COP forum or dialogue with members and partners (the January Governors' meeting could provide a kick-off for this process), leading to an Action Plan on water and climate change. This would seek to address knowledge and action gaps and bring greater urgency to tackling the issues.
 - On disasters, link up discussions related to climate with ongoing disasters initiatives, including emphasizing the importance of a shift from planning to implementation on the ground, which is where the Council's membership has an important supporting role to play.
- The Council should set up a group from amongst its members to stay on top of these issues, but should also include external partners.

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3. Food and Energy

Key points

- There are well-developed global energy, water and food communities, with growing awareness of – but major challenges in achieving – greater interconnection and synergies.
- Part of this challenge lies in the very nature of complex, inter-related, open and dynamic systems and the cross-cutting place of water within them.
- We inhabit these systems and they provide us with vital water, energy and food, as well as many other components of our wellbeing. But, because of this complexity, our knowledge and ability to manage the tensions between competing interests and demands is inadequate.

- One of the major problems is the institutional links between water, energy and food. At the highest level there is a disconnect between these at the moment, with multiple stakeholders, a many-layered decision-making environment and multiple uses of different resources.
- For this reason, developing a greater understanding of useful metrics and achieving agreement on what should be measured, where, how and by whom is crucial. At a minimum this could help in establishing greater common ground on water foot-printing data. The complexity of the metrics involved extend to issues such as biofuels, where, in some circumstances, some solutions can be beneficial, and, in other circumstances, the same solutions can have seriously negative impacts, e.g. on the production of food crops and levels of food security.
- Lack of knowledge and understanding hinders communication between the multiple stakeholders and this exacerbates the situation.

Next steps

- In this very complicated institutional environment, a significant challenge is how to simplify issues through understanding them more fully – and then to communicate them effectively – so that they are comprehensible and manageable for policy makers and resource users alike.
- A fruitful line of work for the Council could be, through its membership, studying the interactions between water, energy and nutrient cycles, including mapping the synergies and competitions that arise between these cycles in different global contexts. This should develop into a thorough analysis of the process of water allocation, with a view to providing tools and methods that could help stakeholder decision-making at different levels.
- The Council could also, in relation to this, address the lack of reference to an 'energy MDG', given other references to hunger and access to water. (Indeed, new and more relevant targets will be needed after 2015.)
- Building on the panel in Istanbul and its policy-level work, the Council should establish a core group to take this forward, but also work at lower levels on synthesizing and communicating data and analysis on water, food and energy systems.

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4. Finance and Economics

Key points

- Financing is a critical, primary issue that has to be resolved in order to take action in other areas.
- Past work that the Council has undertaken with others is important, including on clarifying revenue streams (who pays for services). Invariably, these derive from taxpayers within or outside the country, or final beneficiaries themselves. The Council needs to continue to communicate the results of this work to others.
- It is important to understand different beneficiary groups, including supporting better understanding of tariff structures and how to provide for vulnerable groups. (This should include tapping into the work of others, including the OECD.)
- There is also a need to look beyond the money and ask the question, 'What are the pre-requisites for keeping money flowing into the sector?' And how can good management be ensured so that money does not 'trickle out' (through corruption, inefficiencies and other means).
- A focus on investments should include greater strategic environmental planning for the sector and better understanding of the drivers and goals leading to investment decisions.

Next steps

- The Council should not duplicate the work of others, but support the dissemination of information tailored to key audiences. For example, the Council could play an important role in communicating issues surrounding tariff structures to civil society.
- But the Council should also be concerned to bring messages to all levels, including parliaments, and to link financing to other, specific thematic areas.
- The Council should maintain a financing working group.

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5. Transboundary

Key points

- River basins traverse political boundaries (regional, national and sub-national) and cut across the competing demands of users. River basin management is therefore a major challenge for sustainable water resource development. The Council has already carried out a number of activities on transboundary waters which provide a good starting point for a sustained dialogue on how to move forward. This includes how the Council can add value to work on transboundary waters being carried out by many others in the global community.

- The Council convened a Task Force on Transboundary Waters in November 2008. As part of this, a paper was prepared by Viktor Dukhovny on Ways for Improving Water Governance, which recommends ways of enhancing transboundary water cooperation through improved governance. At the subsequent 5th World Water Forum, there was broad debate under Topic 3.1 on Basin Management and Transboundary Cooperation
- Other organizations have been examining transboundary water management, including the UN Task Force on Transboundary Waters, which is co-chaired by UNECE and UNESCO. The Council could examine its role with respect to these existing treaties and agreements—whether or not they are in force—and work closely with other initiatives.
- The group discussed a broad range of issues related to what needs to be done on transboundary waters, including improvements required in international water law and awareness-raising on what is really meant by ‘benefit sharing’. National sovereignty issues often make transboundary waters a sensitive topic. Different levels of competencies among agencies and organizations involved in a transboundary basin can hamper more effective dialogue. However, basin-level exchanges, including training and capacity development programs, and joint work programs, can help to create trust among riparian nations and organizations.
- Benchmarking and ranking of river basins could help to determine what needs to be done and where, as well as build bridges between river basins. Ongoing work in some basins on environmental flow assessments and managing floods, for example, can offer insights that may be useful in other basins, particularly those prone to conflict. Although the Council includes entities involved in transboundary basin management, the Council could increase membership by river basin authorities.
- Whilst progress was made at the 5th World Water Forum, the 6th Forum should offer an opportunity for deeper reflection and discussion on ways to improve transboundary water management. The Council’s capacity to bring together stakeholders is a particular strength. Identification of gaps in improving transboundary water management could also help to refine ways in which the Council might supplement the work of others, rather than duplicate.
- It is important not to forget that transboundary waters include groundwater and coastal waters.

Next steps

- Through a transboundary group, the Council should reach out to those involved in the topic in Istanbul and involve them in preparations leading up to the 2012 Forum.
- This group should also reach out to those involved in the Task Force already established by the WWC in order to harmonize efforts between all those currently and previously involved.
- The Council should consider putting in place actions to encourage dialogue among riparians in an effort to increase understanding, with the support of its members.
- The transboundary theme should be included in all thematic meetings that the Council organizes.
- A specific working group should be established, with encouragement to other members to join.

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6. Parliamentarians

Key points

- Key achievements to date included a preparatory conference hosted by the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, November 2008).
- The 5th World Water Forum in Istanbul brought together Parliamentarians to debate key issues, namely decentralization, global changes, the right to water and transboundary waters. A meeting was also conducted between Parliamentarians and Local Authorities.
- The outcome of the Parliamentarians' Process was an agreement to create a facility to support Parliamentarians in their activities and to provide a networking tool between them, dubbed a 'Helpdesk'.
- Parliamentarians were critical in linking government and local authorities together, in representing the voices of the people, and in ensuring government accountability, approving budgets and ratifying international treaties.
- Well-informed Parliamentarians could influence how decisions about water are made. The issue was one of enhancing awareness, focusing on an advisory role and comparing and contrasting different national water policies, as part of a wider lesson-learning process on what works, does not work and how legislative processes can be improved.
- Ongoing work includes establishing a taskforce of Parliamentarians with which to take forward the development of the Helpdesk. As a result of a simple e-survey conducted in September, some 30 Parliamentarians have agreed to be a part of this task force.
- An advisory service should be at the disposal of Parliamentarians. This could help to facilitate contact with other Parliamentarians, provide appropriate case studies and/or benchmarking on the right to water and sanitation, and provide a database on water law.
- Water as a human right is a key area on which to focus, as well as transboundary issues and water management. However, it is also important to understand the relationship between Parliamentarians and ministries more fully – in order to engage parliamentarians without creating difficulties for other executive branches of government (e.g. water ministries).
- Water should be positioned as a cross-cutting/integrated issue, with strong links to debates on agriculture and energy; this would engage together more effectively the work of water and non-water parliamentary committees.
- Parliamentarians have a short-term focus (usually 3-5 year electoral cycles), so it is important to consider how best to capture and sustain their interest and to think about the most suitable indicators of success in supporting them.
- In order to find funding for the Helpdesk, the Council could partner with others for technical support. An exchange of experience on water policy and laws would be helpful. For instance, the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) was cited as a useful pre-existing legal exchange mechanism.
- Francois Munger (Switzerland) expressed a willingness to support the project on condition that a person is properly involved within the Council Secretariat.

Next steps

- There is a need to build on work accomplished at the World Water Forum, to strengthen the involvement of Parliamentarians and to ensure that they are better informed about water issues.
- Our objectives need to be clear. There is a need for concrete projects that help to support their work. For this reason, the Helpdesk concept should become a base for a wider Parliamentary process, including establishing links to debates and dialogues at a regional level. The greatest challenge is in ensuring that the Helpdesk is sustainable at both national and regional levels.
- The Council of Europe has already proposed to organize a mid-term Parliamentarians meeting in the run-up to the 6th World Water Forum.
- The Korean Water Forum is a candidate to organize a Regional Parliamentarians Meeting in East Asia. Lebanon is also willing to organize a Regional Parliamentarians Meeting, political challenges notwithstanding.
- Eiman Karar (South Africa) could help to identify a Champion in each African country. It was also noted that there is a need to identify Focal Points in other regions.
- It was suggested that part of the 2 million € dedicated to the Parliamentarians process in the Forum draft budget could be used to help support the Helpdesk.

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To achieve change there is a need to have more focused media strategies, particularly in regions where media are, on the whole, less developed. A current example is African Interactive, an initiative which enables a more balanced 'two-way' informational relationship between North and South.

- That the world is changing is a given. How it will impact on the water sector is less sure, but we know that there will be an impact. The following developments have already changed our lives significantly:

- IT (e-bay etc.), internet pay systems, mobile telephone, micro credits, music industry, business models etc., and new communication tools (like FLIP Video, twitter, social networks, and serious gaming);
- All these changes come from outside the existing sectors. But they will eventually also have an impact on the water sector.

- Areas in the water sector most affected :

- Development cooperation: direct contacts will be possible between people in the North and in developing countries (AKVO.org; KIVA.org etc)
- Financing: private initiatives, new ways of fundraising (Charity Water, Live Earth, Walking for Water)
- Data gathering: already Google and others are experimenting with this
- Sharing knowledge: through Wikipedia, etc (Hydrological Memory)
- Reporting and feedback from the field through mobile telephone and internet and local field reporters (African Reporters).

7. Public Events and Awareness

Key points

- There is a 'North-South' divide on issues of awareness and engagement in key issues and events: in the North there is typically more awareness, less engagement; in the South, more engagement (not least because there are more 'felt impacts') yet less awareness, partly because of problems with access to information and data. There is a need to strike a better balance between the two.
- Good examples exist of current initiatives which are helping to bridge the gap, including 'walking for water'; but with the advent of new technologies, there are more opportunities emerging to improve awareness and reduce the artificial 'North-South' divide.
- Global actions such as the 'Space Clown' (Guy Laliberte) have the capacity to raise awareness, but the impact of such activities on global action remains unclear.

Next steps

- The Council needs good interaction with debates and ways of bridging the issues; this requires strong speakers, not least those able to engage effectively with the media.
- The 6th World Water Forum must have good, eye-catching events (the Council's President said that there are plans for the Forum to host an international football match to raise awareness).
- We should involve more women's organizations in event planning.
- The above will also change the way we communicate in the water sector:

- Already during the 5th World Water Forum in Istanbul, lots of Tweets were sent out to the hydrological community in India which spread the message beyond Istanbul;
- The “Water Cube” at the Stockholm World Water Week was a success, not only in providing a window to the world through the internet (“You tube-like” video), but by giving many people a voice that could be tracked.
- In order to generate more youth interest, we will have to transform ‘classical conference’ formats into new concepts and participatory events, including multimedia.
- The feeling of the group was that this is only the beginning and that we (as a sector) need to be more receptive to these changes.
- The need for constant investment in CD was highlighted as one way to encourage youth (and adults) to pursue careers in water. Retention of experienced water technicians was highlighted as an important issue and gave greater emphasis to the need for new people to enter water professions.
- It was recognized that CD needs were wide ranging and that match-making could be topical (groundwater, bi-national watersheds, governance, etc), and by target groups: examples included media, elected officials, citizens/lay-people, pre-school ages 3-5, school ages 6 -18, trade schools, universities and businesses.
- Members discussed the idea of designing and developing an electronic course for non-technical lay people to learn about water, its use, management, and protection, but the complexity of developing and delivering such a course raised difficult questions.
- The topic of measuring the impact of CD efforts was discussed, and the group felt more emphasis should be given to investigating and understanding all aspects of measuring success. Several group members mentioned a trend amongst private and public donors towards linking CD to specific measurable results (e.g. the actual percentage of graduate students who returned home and worked in water to solve local problems).
- It was agreed that increasing knowledge was good, but linking knowledge and education to measurable results was even more important.

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- It was recognized that CD needs were wide ranging and that match-making could be topical (groundwater, bi-national watersheds, governance, etc), and by target groups: examples included media, elected officials, citizens/lay-people, pre-school ages 3-5, school ages 6 -18, trade schools, universities and businesses.
- Members discussed the idea of designing and developing an electronic course for non-technical lay people to learn about water, its use, management, and protection, but the complexity of developing and delivering such a course raised difficult questions.
- The topic of measuring the impact of CD efforts was discussed, and the group felt more emphasis should be given to investigating and understanding all aspects of measuring success. Several group members mentioned a trend amongst private and public donors towards linking CD to specific measurable results (e.g. the actual percentage of graduate students who returned home and worked in water to solve local problems).
- It was agreed that increasing knowledge was good, but linking knowledge and education to measurable results was even more important.

Next steps

- The Council should establish a CD market place to match agencies and organizations with specific CD experience to agencies and organizations seeking CD assistance:

- For example, Project WET described its extensive experience in developing education materials for schools and community educators which could bring water education to children and youth. Based on Project WET participation in Council processes and events, there is significant interest in this topic.

- The match-making service or ‘expertise marketplace’ could serve as a vehicle to link people and to help members in establishing capacity-building initiatives, rather than the Council doing this itself.

- One way to get started would be to conduct a survey of members and their capacity-building needs, interests and expertise.

- The members of the CD session were **interested** to form a sub-committee under which discussions related to CD could continue and to ensure that a Board member is dedicated to the issue in coming years.

8. Capacity Development

Key points

- The Capacity Development (CD) session strongly believed that the WWC should actively support CD as a core strategic element in its work. The WWC should continue to develop the theme on CD now and at the future World Water Forum.
- It was noted that CD became a theme in its own right in Istanbul, which represents important progress.

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- So, whilst expanding membership is critical, in particular from regions that are under-represented, this needs to be accomplished in conjunction with our communications and programme strategies.
- Through members that are willing to be engaged with the Council, we should incentivize the implementation of the pre-Forum processes at a national level. This will help in making activities more dynamic nationally and will contribute to leveraging more country participation in and contributions to the Forum week (the example of Portugal and the 5th World Water Forum was cited).

Next steps

- The President could engage globally through a blog and by using other Web 2.0 tools.
- We should involve more young professionals through the membership and in our activities, perhaps as one means by which to continue strengthening the link between members and programmes.
- We should boost networking and exchange through making more of online collaborative platforms, strengthening member engagement in Forum thematic sessions, and through connecting members to programmes, e.g. on Africa.
- To help bring members more fully into Council activities, we should continue to map member interests by region and country, including highlighting their specific know-how on particular water management issues as these develop over time.

9. Members Engagement

Key points

- A key strength of the Council lies in how we focus on global-level member engagement.
- Members will continue to engage thematically, and through creating partnerships. They are likely to strengthen their engagement if they feel that they are part of the search for solutions to 'big picture' water issues.
- This is central to our ability to bring key issues forward and project them onto the global policy agenda – this is where the Council's leadership niche lies. There is, therefore, a critical need to strengthen linkages between programme activities and members, and to provide a mechanism for the continued engagement of members within programmes.

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