

Outline of the Ministerial Conference

Ministers responsible for water from around the world will meet at the Ministerial Conference on 22-23 March 2003 in Kyoto International Conference Hall, Takaraga-Ike, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto, 606-0001, Japan, to discuss water issues.

The Government of Japan will organize an international conference at a ministerial level on the occasion of the 3rd World Water Forum, in which ministers and the heads of international organizations will take part.

1. Objective

The primary objective of the Ministerial Conference is to reaffirm political will towards solving water issues and to add a political perspective to efforts of the Forum participants and the general public around the world. The Ministerial Conference will identify concrete actions taken by governments that have the primary responsibility for water resources management.

In order to improve the water situation, governments need to address various water issues. The Ministerial Conference will also seek for cooperation on water issues. It may emphasize that civil societies and private sectors are playing the active roles in implementing necessary actions. Various networks in the international community are encouraged.

One way to build capacity is to share experience, both successes and failures. The lessons can be a tool to help translating ideas into actions, devising and implementing water strategies, and encouraging water cooperation. Concrete actions on water, that consider the needs of both environment and development, are keys to sustainable development.

Recognizing the need for maintaining the momentum raised by the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Ministerial Conference will provide a platform for following up and expanding initiatives and cooperation on water.

2. Themes

The Ministerial Conference will follow up discussions such as those at the 2nd World Water Forum and the Ministerial Conference in The Hague, the UN Millennium Summit in New York, the International Conference on Freshwater in Bonn, the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, etc. Potential themes for the Ministerial Conference include water governance with ownership, which is a key to sustainable development and a better quality of life, and partnership to support the ownership, focusing on poverty eradication and enabling developing countries to stand

on their own feet. The themes should enhance water strategies for individual countries or for river basins where appropriate; participation in water activities reinforced by role sharing with civil society and stakeholders; and water networking within the international community.

The themes to be discussed at the Ministerial Conference should be elaborated in the preparatory process in order to put together discussions with sectorial focuses as well as regional focuses so that participants may discuss both water issues of relevant sectors as well as those in a particular region as necessary.

Candidates for sectorial topics subject to comments are the following :

- (1) Water and sanitation ;
- (2) Water for food and rural development ;
- (3) Water pollution prevention and ecosystem conservation ;
- (4) Disaster mitigation and risk management ; and,
- (5) Water resources management and benefit sharing.

3. Expected Outcomes

Two kinds of outcomes are expected at the Ministerial Conference. One is a ministerial declaration. The other is a compilation of action plans submitted voluntarily by each government or international organization either individually or collectively with its partners, which will be called as a blueprint for action (tentatively named).

(1) Ministerial Declaration

In Ministerial Conferences, attending ministers normally summarize the conclusion of their discussion and adopt the points of common understanding in the form of the Ministerial Declaration. This would include follow-ups including assessment of previous international debates especially the WSSD.

(2) Blueprint for Action

At the 2nd World Water Forum and the Ministerial Conference in The Hague 2000, “World Water Vision” which emphasized the importance of wider participation on water issues and the “Ministerial Declaration” which identified the main challenges in water were adopted. Then specific goals of actions on water were proposed in the UN Millennium Summit and the International Conference on Freshwater. More recently, at the WSSD in Johannesburg 2002, the “Plan of Implementation” was agreed and many “Partnerships” were announced. While the plans normally list actions to be taken, they may need further details of proposed actions: who, what, when, where, why and how. It is expected that giving concrete details will help promote actions required on water at various levels. Participating countries and organizations are expected to promote actions through voluntary activities based on characteristics of each region.

4. Outline of Program

(1) Outline of the Ministerial Conference

The Ministerial Conference will be divided into plenary sessions and sub-group meetings. At the plenary session on the first day general issues including reports of the results of the Forum from the representatives of the Forum participants will be discussed, being observed by the media and the general public. At the sub-group meetings on the first day of the program each sectorial topic is expected to be discussed among ministers, heads of international organizations and representatives of the Forum participants, followed by meetings among ministers and heads of international organizations which focus upon sectorial and regional topics. At the plenary session on the second day results of the sub-group meetings will be reported, and finally the Ministerial Declaration will be adopted. Proceedings of the sub-group meetings may be attached to the Ministerial Declaration.

[Note]

Simultaneous interpretation for the Ministerial Conference

- Plenary session: UN official languages and Japanese (Texts will be distributed in English and Japanese)
- Sub-group meetings and senior official's meeting: English and Japanese

(2) Interaction between Forum and the Ministerial Conference

~Dialogue between Forum Participants and Ministers~

The Ministerial Conference will have inputs of the results of the Forum. These are expected to be (1) the World Water Actions Report (WWAR); (2) Thematic Statements; and (3) the Dialogue between the Forum Participants and the Ministers. The Ministerial Conference expects that by engaging themselves in dialogue with Forum participants before the Ministerial Conference itself, the ministers may be motivated to issue messages to raise citizens' awareness on the importance of water issues. The dialogue is expected to bring together government officials, citizens, the private sector, and NGOs to discuss a variety of water-related issues. Please find attached a chart which describes interaction between the Forum and the Ministerial Conference.

5. Preparatory Process

(1) Kick-Off Meeting (already held)

The Kick-Off Meeting, which aimed at building momentum and gathering inputs for the Ministerial Conference, was held on September 1 in Johannesburg during the WSSD. In this meeting, there were more than a hundred participants, Senior Vice-Minister of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, the Government of Japan stressed the importance of taking concrete actions to solve global water issues, especially exercising leadership of ministers who are primarily responsible for water management as decision makers with political will. The Japanese Government and the Secretariat of the 3rd World Water Forum gave presentations on the present situation of preparations, a draft proposal for themes and expected outcomes of the Ministerial Conference, organizing and preparation policy for the Ministerial Conference, etc. Please find attached the report of the

Kick-Off Meeting for your information and the figure which describes the preparatory process for the Ministerial Conference.

(2) Informal Advisory Meeting (IAM)

The Informal Advisory Meeting (IAM) will be held two times before the Ministerial Conference in Kyoto 2003. In order to take steady steps in the preparatory process, the IAMs will be composed of experts of certain countries and international organizations who have shown their interest to assist the Japanese Government in terms of the framework of program and expected outcomes of the Ministerial Conference and of inputs for consideration on regional water issues. The results of the IAMs are to be reported to all governments and international organizations invited to the Ministerial Conference.

(3) Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM)

The Senior Officials' Meeting is to be held on 19-20 March 2003 prior to the Ministerial Conference. In the meeting, senior officials from governments and international organizations are to discuss mainly the draft of the Ministerial Declaration.