

Proposed Issues for Discussion in the Ministerial Conference

The Ministers are invited to discuss various water issues in the following 5 fields concurrently with a view to achieving sustainable development, building upon the achievements at the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg (WSSD). 'Encouraging Governance and Ownership of Water Management', in the countries concerned and 'Fostering Partnership to Support Ownership', among governments, NGOs and other stakeholders are important. The issues of governance, capacity building and financing may be dealt with as well as the means of implementation and the question of monitoring. Additional information on the 5 Sub-group Meetings can be found in the attached papers.

1. Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation

Under the above title, aspects of human health, development and ecosystems, among others, may be dealt with. The ministers are invited to discuss how to achieve the targets stated in the WSSD Plan of Implementation. In developing drinking water and sanitation systems, consideration may be given to such issues as culture, the natural environment, technology and socio-economics and the integration of the systems into water resources management strategies.

2. Water for Food and Rural Development

Under this heading, the Ministers may wish to discuss how to meet the growing and changing demands for food, alleviate poverty and maintain economic growth. Individual characteristics of agricultural water use such as regional diversities, multiple roles, interactions with the environment and positive or negative externalities may be considered. A variety of actions and measures to improve efficiency and sustainability of agricultural water use may be discussed, taking account of social, economic and environmental uniqueness of each region.

3. Water Pollution Prevention and Ecosystem Conservation

Here, policies and measures to improve and maintain water quality will be considered. In relation to "water pollution prevention", such issues as water quality management targets, appropriate policy mix, and environmental assessment may be discussed. Concerning "ecosystem conservation", the Ministers are invited to discuss various functions of wetlands and forests, management of watersheds and specific actions for conservation and restoration.

4. Disaster Mitigation and Risk Management

Disasters include both floods and droughts. The Ministers may review experiences of such disasters of specific countries and basins. Exchanging information may be useful for such aspects as causes and mechanisms, including global climate change, and countermeasures taken against floods and droughts as part of basin management, having sustainable development in view. Common understanding will be explored, including the usefulness of information sharing to reduce vulnerability at various levels on these matters.

5. Water Resources Management and Benefit Sharing

Based on the information available on water resources, taking into account regional characteristics and levels of social development, the Ministers are invited to discuss water resources management and benefit sharing. With regard to various water cycles including on the basin and global levels, consideration may be given to possible measures for water resources utilization and environmental harmony. Integrated Water Resources Management is relevant as well as capacity building and technology transfer.

“Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation”

1. Background

The issues of safe drinking water and adequate sanitation rank high on the agenda of the international community requiring efforts both in developing countries and developed countries. The provision of safe drinking water and basic sanitation is a basis for human health, economic activities as well as preservation of ecosystems.

Thus we agreed in the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to halve by 2015 the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water, and also agreed in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) to halve by 2015 the proportion of people without access to basic sanitation.

The Plan of Implementation lists the following measures, among others, for these purposes. a) Developing and implementing efficient household sanitation systems, b) promoting education and outreach, c) mobilizing financial resources, d) transferring technology and promoting best practices and supporting capacity building, e) facilitating access to public information and participation, f) intensifying water pollution prevention (Paras 8 and 25).

The Ministers are invited to discuss how to implement these measures effectively, sharing the best practices, in order to achieve these goals combined.

2. Our Experience and Challenges Ahead

Through the experience of having overcome severe waterborne infectious diseases (e.g. cholera) and deterioration of the water environment, Japan fully recognizes that safe drinking water supply and appropriate sanitation are crucial to human health and environmental protection. We also believe that good governance is indispensable to achieving progress in water supply and sanitation, for the countries in need to take full advantage of technical and financial cooperation to be extended by the international community based on the partnership to support their ownership.

In tackling the above goals, based on the international efforts made so far, the following points should be borne in mind.

(1) Required water supply and sanitation systems range widely depending on living conditions, the natural environment, accessible technology and socio-economic circumstances.

(2) Safe drinking water supply contributes to improving public health in such fields as waterborne diseases. In rural areas, the role of community and residents' participation should be emphasized. In urban areas, development of well designed systems and improvement of operation and maintenance, rehabilitation, if needed and effective management are important.

(3) Urban and rural areas each present different issues which require differentiated approaches. Lack of basic sanitation in rural areas causes poor hygienic condition. On the other hand, environmental sanitation should be emphasized in urban areas, where rapid growing population continues to threaten the hygienic condition. Deterioration of water resources due to inadequate disposal of humane excreta and wastewater is feared.

(4) Issues of sanitation on both qualitative and quantitative aspects should be integrated

into water resources management strategies.

(5) Promotion of public-private partnerships for developing water supply and sanitation may need consideration of such questions as respecting local conditions and involving all stakeholders concerned.

(6) The international community should monitor and follow up concrete actions, with a view to the achievement of the above goals.

3. Key Questions for Discussion

- What are the obstacles to achieve the goals on drinking water and sanitation stated in the WSSD Plan of Implementation, and how can we overcome these?
- What kind of Public Private Partnership should be developed, taking into account local conditions?
- How can we strengthen the governance at national, regional and local levels?
- Are there any specific schemes fitting to certain countries?
- What kind of approaches should be adopted to solve the problems in urban areas and rural areas for water supply and sanitation?
- What kind of technologies should be promoted and what kind of innovative technologies should be developed?
- How should we monitor and follow up concrete actions?

“Water for Food and Rural Development”

1. Background

As recognized at the “World Food Summit 5 Years Later” as well as the WSSD in Johannesburg, agriculture plays a crucial role in addressing the needs of a growing global population, and is inextricably linked to poverty eradication, especially in developing countries. Sustainable agriculture and rural development are essential to the implementation of an integrated approach to increasing food production and enhancing food security and food safety in an environmentally sustainable way (WSSD Plans of Implementation Para 40).

The following measures were agreed at the WSSD with regard to water for food and rural development:

- to develop and implement integrated land management and water-use plans that are based on sustainable use of renewable resources and on integrated assessments of socio-economic and environmental potentials (Para 40 (b));
- to promote programmes to enhance in a sustainable manner the productivity of land and the efficient use of water resources in agriculture, --- especially through indigenous and local community-based approaches (Para 40 (d));
- to promote the conservation, and sustainable use and management of traditional and indigenous agricultural systems and strengthen indigenous models of agricultural production (Para. 40 (r)); and
- to integrate measures to prevent and combat desertification as well as to mitigate the effects of drought through relevant policies and programmes, such as land, water and forest management, agriculture, rural development, --- and poverty eradication and sustainable development strategies; (Para. 41 (d)).

2. Our Experiences and Challenges Ahead

Water is essential for agricultural production, accounting for about 70% of total water use, however usable freshwater resources have become more and more limited in many regions of the world.

In order to cope with the increasing food demand due to the rapidly growing population, it is required to strengthen the governance of agricultural water, raising the awareness and responsiveness of users on water productivity and efficient management. One example of successful methods in improving the efficiency of water use is user-driven management, which is getting wider recognition all in the world.

In some regions agricultural water use has gone beyond the limits of sustainable water resource, which will require alternatives to be considered. On the other hand, it is widely recognized that agricultural water provide a broad spectrum of functions related to society, culture and environmental conservation in addition to that of commodity production.

Furthermore, it is known that the rural development based on using small-scale community-based irrigation has brought about many positive changes to the lives of those living in poverty improving their economy, hence their good health and well-being. Rural community building is important.

With these findings mentioned above, we need to address the issues of 1) how to

achieve food security and poverty alleviation, 2) how to develop and conserve communities for sustainable water use, and 3) how to promote environmental conservation and partnership.

In this sub-group the Ministers consider the recommendations made at Ministerial Meeting on Water for Food and Agriculture (to be held on March 21, 2003). Focused actions and contributions are encouraged based on enhanced ownership and partnership.

3. Key Questions for Discussion

- How can we reduce unsustainable water use in agriculture and improve the efficiency of agricultural water use?
- How can we reduce poverty in rural areas? How can we promote neighborhood-communities-based development with effective water use?
- What should we do to address food security and poverty issues?
- How can we achieve water-saving in agriculture, appropriate for local conditions in arid and semi-arid areas?

“Water Pollution Prevention and Ecosystem Conservation”

1. Background

Water pollution prevention and ecosystem conservation are essential for a sustainable water environment and actions taken in these areas contribute to the protection of scarce water resources.

For the purpose of water pollution prevention, the establishment of monitoring systems and legal frameworks at the national level is essential, as agreed at the WSSD (Plan of Implementation Paras 25(d), 27). At the WSSD, we also agreed on areas for international efforts for ecosystem conservation, such as wetlands and forests (Paras 32(e), 45(a)).

Bearing the above agreements in mind, Ministers are invited to discuss how to implement policy and measures according to each country's characteristics and share useful information and experiences.

2. Our Experiences and Challenges Ahead

Many countries experienced an increase in diversity and magnitude of pollution burdens and exploitation pressures to a water environment and ecosystems, in pursuing economic growth and development. They caused serious water pollution problems and ecosystem degradation that were sometimes irreparable. Based on such experiences, it is important to change our policy and measures from reactive ones to proactive and preventive ones.

As for pollution prevention, “rule making” is important. In Japan's experience, the enactment of relevant laws and their enforcement have contributed to substantial reduction of pollution. Desirable specific policy and measures include setting of environmental quality standards for river, lake and groundwater, regulation for emission reduction, sewerage infrastructure building, and environmental impact assessment. Promoting resource-efficient and recycling-oriented socioeconomic activities will also contribute to protecting a water environment in a preventive manner.

On the other hand, such measures as designation of protected areas, conservation of wetlands, rivers and lakes, greening, and sustainable forest management including afforestation and reforestation have been effective to keep ecosystems sound for a water cycle. Recently restoration of degraded ecosystems such as wetlands, rivers and forests gets increasingly crucial to recovery of sound ecosystems, with strengthened measures to conserve biodiversity.

As water pollution prevention and ecosystem conservation are closely related; The allocation of appropriate water resources to wetlands, rivers and forests is crucial for sustainable ecosystems that substantially contribute to maintaining a clean water environment. Therefore policy and measures in these areas need to be implemented in an integrated manner.

In addressing these issues, consideration should be given to the question of ownership of the countries in need and the partnership of the international community including in the fields of capacity-building and technology transfer.

3. Key Questions for Discussion

- What kind of constraints do you have to overcome in order to achieve preventive policy for a water environment?
- How do you value the principles of user-pays and polluter-pays on which policy and measures are promoted?
- How can we implement relevant policy and measures based on “ecosystem approach” and/or “integrated approach” in watersheds? What kind of innovative tools, measures and technologies are evolving to enable taking “ecosystem approach” and/or “integrated approach” at the basin level?
- What kind of policy is appropriate to tackle with various water environmental problems? A regulatory instrument or an economic instrument? What kind of system is appropriate for an effective and efficient enforcement of legislation including monitoring and inspection?
- How can we promote environmental education that effectively disseminate the value of ecosystems in terms of a sustainable water environment and lead to a sustainable lifestyle such as efficient use of water resources? How can we involve stakeholders such as local communities and NGOs to achieve a sustainable water environment?
- How can we promote sharing information including scientific data obtained from research and monitoring, and experiences that could contribute to the promotion of national policy and measures to realize a sustainable water environment? How can we strengthen joint programmes under partnerships among relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and activate existing networks to conserve a water environment and ecosystems such as wetlands and forests?
- How can the international community support countries in need?

“Disaster Mitigation and Risk Management”

1. Background

Statistics shows that natural disasters of floods and droughts in the world have increased. For example, the number of flood victims increased from 19 million per year in the 1970s to 131 million per year in the 1990s. The rare large-scale floods in Europe in 2002 drew the world's attention.

In the area of disaster management, we have agreed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002 that "An integrated, multi-hazard, inclusive approach to address vulnerability, risk assessment and disaster management, including prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery, is an essential element of a safer world in the twenty-first century."

Against this background, Ministers are invited to discuss how to implement various measures and share relevant information.

2. Our Experiences and Challenges Ahead

(1) Policy-making process for disaster mitigation and risk management

Reduction of disaster risk will contribute to sustainable development. It is therefore important to properly evaluate disaster risks and, according to evaluation results, establish a process through which appropriate measures for disaster mitigation and risk management will be implemented. Tasks and challenges that need to be addressed in order to establish such a process may include the best prediction particularly frequency of floods and droughts; the evaluation of disaster risks such as changes in land use due to urbanization, climate changes and the possible influence on the vulnerable people; technological assistance and support for human resources development; the prioritization of disaster mitigation and risk management goals at the national level; and efforts at the community level .

(2) Methodology for disaster mitigation and risk management at the river basin level

On the basis of the understanding that basin-based river management achieving a good balance among flood control, water utilization and environmental conservation is effective in disaster mitigation and risk management, a comprehensive approach with appropriate combination of various measures should be sought. Typical case studies and best practices may be useful for these deliberations.

(3) Multilateral partnership in disaster mitigation and risk management efforts

Efforts should be made jointly by national governments and international organizations to achieve disaster mitigation and risk management goals, particularly on how the entities involved (e.g., river management organizations, meteorological organizations, communities, residents, NGOs) should cooperate with one another at the river basin level. Here the question of ownership and partnership should be considered.

3. Key Questions for Discussion

- What is the relationship between economic development and poverty eradication, on the one hand, and “disaster mitigation and risk management”, on the other?
- What are the problems to be solved in relation to the disaster risk evaluation?
- How should we use disaster risk evaluation for the disaster mitigation and risk management purposes?
- How should we balance water utilization and environmental conservation with disaster mitigation and risk management?
- How should we integrate preventive and recovery measures as well as structural and non-structural measures for disaster mitigation and risk management purposes?
- How should various entities cooperate with one another in connection with disaster mitigation and risk management?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of national governments, local governments, communities and international organizations in disaster mitigation and risk management?
- What are specific actions that should be taken in cooperation by national governments and international organizations for disaster mitigation and risk management?

“Water Resources Management and Benefit Sharing”

1. Background

Recently we have faced many aspects of “Water Crisis” such as water shortage, water pollution and floods, and it is feared that these problems will become more serious due to the rapid increase of population and extensive economic activities. In addition, the Climate Change worsens the problems by inducing extreme weather events and changing geographic precipitation patterns.

Under these circumstances, governments and international organizations have struggled to address these water-related problems with measures of water resources management, such as enhancement of institutional frameworks and facilitating stakeholder participation. However, we recognize that the “Water Crisis” remains. Therefore, this issue has been discussed at several multilateral fora including the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002. There, countries agreed to develop integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans by 2005.

Against this background, Ministers are invited to discuss how to implement appropriate water resources management to overcome water-related problems by introducing their plans and exchanging their experiences.

2. Our Experience and Challenges Ahead

(1) The Need for Long-term Plans and Linkage with National Development Plans

In order to undertake sustainable water resources management, it is necessary to create long-term plans for water resources management based on forecasts of long-term water demand trends of water users at the river basin. Also, as the water demand of a basin is closely related to a national development plan and since water resource facilities require a large investment; it is necessary to consider the national development plan in the context of the water resources plan.

In several countries, we have witnessed the creation of long-term plans for integrated water resources management as a result of consideration among basin stakeholders following the national and local basin’s development plans, thereby successfully responding to changes in water demand due to industrial development. Furthermore, in order to assess the long-term trend of water supply, efforts are underway to analyze the water cycle at the global level.

(2) Sharing Information and Coordination Among Stakeholders

Water resources involve many stakeholders. For example, the upstream water use conditions affect the downstream situation and the downstream water demand influences the upstream water resources development. Therefore, it is necessary to deal with water utilization issues among relevant stakeholders by sharing information by them and creating opportunities for their dialogue. In the major rivers of the world, basin stakeholders (sometimes of more than one nation) create organizations to contribute to the solution of such issues.

(3) The Importance of Ownership at Every Level of Water Resources Management

In order to carry out water resources management in a sustainable manner, it is

necessary for the national government, local government, the neighborhood community, and all other entities concerned to operate systems for water resources management in accordance with social conditions.

Developing countries use external aid not only for the construction of water supply infrastructures alone but also for its maintenance and management. Here, entities for water resources management from the national government level to neighborhood community level are in place and the stable supply of water ensured for the use by the people and the industrial development making it possible for the water resources management system to fund their own maintenance with the necessary revenues.

In order to empower relevant local communities, technical and other assistance may be needed.

3. Key Questions for Discussion

- In order to develop Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), it is necessary to establish ownership at all levels from the national government, local government to neighborhood community. But the roles of these entities differ according to the country's situation. In your country, how do you allocate the responsibilities among the various entities and which entity takes a leadership role?
- In order to share the benefits of water resources among stakeholders, it is necessary to share information and promote dialogue among stakeholders. To promote this, what measures are necessary in respect of legal framework, organization and planning?
- What should we take into account to implement IWRM sustainably?
- In order to develop IWRM, some countries require technical assistance. In such cases, how should these countries specify necessary elements of assistance? Also, what schemes are available to carry out necessary capacity building?
- What kind of conventional technologies should be utilized, what kinds of innovative technologies to supply water resources should be developed?
- In order to create long-term water resources management plans, it is necessary to forecast long-term water supply and demand trends. However, quantitative and qualitative aspects of the global water cycle remain to be unknown. In order to address this issue, what kind of international cooperation will be advisable?
- Due to the Climate Change, there maybe unprecedented changes in the future volume of rivers and lakes. In your country, how will these issues be dealt with?
- How can the international community assist the countries in need in developing IWRM plans?