

Speech by Ambassador Tommy Koh  
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Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

Seven years ago, in March 2006, the then Prime Minister of Japan, Hashimoto Ryutaro, had a vision. He wanted to bring the countries and people of the Asia-Pacific region together in order to find solutions to the region's water issues. He convened a regional meeting of our water ministers, at the Fourth World Water Forum, in Mexico. They adopted a declaration calling for the establishment of the Asia Pacific Water Forum (APWF), "to work in complete solidarity to identify and adopt solutions to water issues in the region." When Mr Hashimoto passed away unexpectedly, the mantle of leadership was taken up by another former Prime Minister of Japan, Mr Mori Yoshiro.

First Asia Pacific Water Summit

Six months after that meeting in Mexico, APWF was born, in September 2006, at the Asian Development Bank, in Manila. Fifteen months later, the First Asia Pacific Water Summit (APWS) was held in Beppu, Japan, in December 2007. The deliverables of APWS included the Policy Brief, the Message from Beppu and the Asian Water Development Outlook. Six years after Beppu, the Second Asia Pacific Water Summit is being held here in this beautiful city of Chiangmai, Thailand. What has the APWF achieved in the past six years?

## APWF's Achievements

First, APWF has become the region's indispensable network on water. Its membership includes governments, both at the national and local levels, international organisations, water providers, the private sector, academia, the media and the civil society. APWF is open and inclusive and welcomes any one with a genuine interest in water and sanitation. APWF is democratic and makes all its decisions by consensus.

## Independent, Non-Political, Not for-Profit

Second, APWF has been faithful to its guiding principle, to be an independent, not-for-profit, non-political network. As a result, APWF is respected for its credibility and integrity.

## Rational, Efficient and Consistent

Third, APWF has organised its work in a rational, efficient and consistent manner. It focuses on three priority themes, namely, water financing and capacity development, water-related disaster management, and water for development and ecosystem. Next, it has established five key result areas, which are the concrete means by which APWF and the lead organizations seek to achieve the targets set under each of the priority themes. As the Asia Pacific is a large and diverse region, it is divided into five sub-regions, each with its coordinator. The matrix is like a pyramid, with the three priority themes at the top, the five key result areas in the middle and the five sub-regions at the base.

## Ministers For Water Security Initiative

Fourth, APWF and its partners, the Japan Water Forum, the UN Economic and Social Commission for the Asia-Pacific, Asian Development Bank and Network of Asian Basin Organisations have successfully launched the Ministers For Water Security Initiative in the Asia Pacific. In addition, the APWF has made valuable inputs from the Asia Pacific, to the Fifth World Water Forum in Istanbul and the Sixth World Water Forum in Marseille, the Stockholm Water Week and the Singapore Water Leaders Summit.

## Asian Water Development Outlook

Fifth, APWF and ADB have produced two editions of the Asian Water Development Outlook, 2007 and 2013. The 2013 edition provides the first quantitative and comprehensive view of water security in the countries of our region. It also contains a framework to measure water security as a foundation for creating a water-secure future for our people.

## 17 Regional Water Knowledge Hubs

Sixth, APWF has created a network of seventeen regional water knowledge hubs, covering a broad range of issues and geographies. Each hub is a centre of excellence. Together, they collaborate to generate and share knowledge and develop capacity in more than a dozen knowledge domains.

## Water and Climate Change

Seventh, APWF has produced a Framework Document on Water and Climate Change Adoption. It is a practical and actionable guide to action in this challenging area.

## Conclusion

To sum up, over the past six years, we have made significant progress on water security. For example, the percentage of our region's population, which enjoys access to safe drinking water, has risen to 91%. However, 380 million of our citizens, especially the poor, still do not enjoy this basic human right. The Beppu target that by 2025, all the people of our region will enjoy such access is therefore achievable if we have the political will to do so. This is not the case with sanitation. Only 58% of the people of our region enjoys access to basic sanitation. Nearly 800 million people still practise open defecation, with all the deleterious consequences for human dignity, public health and the environment. I also note with regret that 80% of our rivers are in poor health. Many of these rivers are the main sources of drinking water for millions of our citizens. It is an imperative for all riparian communities and states and other stakeholders to manage our region's river systems in a cooperative, equitable and ecologically sustainable manner. Man's unsustainable development and urbanisation, compounded by climate change and the loss of biodiversity, are doing enormous damage to our ecosystems. Violent storms, floods, droughts and other forms of water-related disasters are on the increase. We should also focus on the new nexus between water, food and energy. We must therefore not become

complacent as there is still much work for us to do.

### Expressions of Gratitude

Let me conclude by expressing my gratitude to the President of APWF, Mr Mori Yoshiro, for his leadership and guidance. I would also like to thank the JWF for serving as the secretariat of APWF. I would like to thank my two co-chairs: Amb Erna Witoeler and Raviji Narayanan. It has been a pleasure working with them. Finally, I would like to thank all the members of APWF for their cooperation, friendship and kindness.

Thank you very much.

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