

Panel Dialogue: How Can Political Leadership Increase Water Security?

Tuesday, August 18th, 16.00-17.30

Convenor: Asia-Pacific Water Forum (APWF)

Chair: Mr. **Ravi Narayanan**, CBE, Vice-Chair, APWF Governing Council

Facilitator: Prof. **Torkil Jønch-Clausen**, Senior Adviser, DHI and Global Water Partnership

Eye on Asia concluded with a panel discussion among leaders from government, civil society and private sector on water security in Asia and Europe. The panel and participants discussed the role that political leadership must play in achieving universal access to water for the common good. The panel discussion was part of APWF's *Ministers for Water Security* initiative, which was announced at the start of the 5th World Water Forum by APWF's President Yoshiro Mori, a former Prime Minister of Japan.

The initiative is raising public awareness and encouraging cooperation among leaders in government, private sector and civil society on policies, investments and innovations that will increase water security in Asia. Ministers from 18 countries in Asia, top officials of international organizations and a representative of the G8 Experts Group on Water and Sanitation, confirmed their support for the initiative.

Many examples have shown that we should invest the time and effort in wide participation of stakeholders in the consultation process. At the panel it was pointed out that among important factors for integrated approach are, political leadership, critical mass of ownership, building trust and confident of people and ensuring good communication among stakeholders.

The speech delivered by Mme **Khempheng Pholsena**, Minister to the Prime Minister's Office, Head of Water Resources and Environment Administration, Lao People's Democratic Republic showed how political leadership is being shown in the country. In 2007, the Government of Lao PDR has adopted an integrated approach to water resources management, which is requiring changes in the coordination of water resources development, as well as the revision of the water law and organizational changes leading to the establishment of the Water Resources and Environment Administration (WREA). Under a national water policy being prepared by the WREA, river basin organizations will apply IWRM principles, with wider participation of stakeholders, in water resources planning and management from the village to the national level. This approach will also integrate with the Basin Development Plan of the Mekong River Commission.

Mr. **Timothy McCarthy**, Chairman and CEO of Nikko Asset Management Co., Ltd. and the floor participants highlighted the importance of increased public private partnership in order to promote long-term investment into water. For example, the financial industry engages in Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) through main business as part of the Company's CSR activities. In June 2007, Nikko Asset Management launched two new SRI funds: the Global Water Fund, which makes diversified investments in global companies contributing to precious water resources to support sustainable development, and the World Bank Bond Fund, which allows investors to support developing countries through investments in World Bank bonds issued in the currencies of developing countries.

The importance of leadership and wide participation of stakeholders are fundamental for the resolution of water-issues and to increase water security. This difficult task can be achieved, with increased dialogues between the different parties. It is also important to keep in mind that this is not just a one-way flow, but a two-way flow, as both leaders and other stakeholders can contribute to dialogue and experience sharing. This mindset will enable us to come closer to the water secure world.