

Asia-Pacific Water Forum

"Ministers for Water Security" Initiative in the Asia-Pacific Region

To be supported by the Japan Water Forum (JWF), UNESCAP, Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the Network of Asian River Basin Organizations (NARBO)

Background

The 1st Asia-Pacific Water Summit (APWS) in December 2007 in Beppu, Japan, underlined the need for leadership and commitment to achieve water security. Low access to water and sanitation in the region, the toll of water-related disasters, degraded ecosystems and inefficient irrigation practices, are still serious barriers to human health and dignity, and to economic development – highlighting the fact that water insecurity is still widespread. Leaders in the region recognized that water security involves satisfying basic needs for water and sanitation in households, as well as needs of cities, agriculture, industries and the environment.

The APWS offered leaders an opportunity to explore water security more comprehensively, looking both inside and outside the "water box" to consider the many policies, reforms and investments that impact on water services and resources. In support of the APWS, the 2007 *Asian Water Development Outlook* provided clear messages to leaders at the 1st APWS that water management crosses many sector boundaries and that knowledge and solutions are available to address the region's water challenges provided that water governance is improved. By adopting sound policies and promoting more investment in the delivery of water services and the management of water resources, leaders can make a profound impact on poverty reduction and sustainable economic development.

Following up on the encouraging results of the 2007 APWS in Beppu, the Asia-Pacific Water Forum (APWF) has continued its work to bring together leaders of government, private sector and civil society in promoting policies and investments that increase water security in the region. As a result of APWF's advocacy, leaders at the 2008 Toyako G8 Summit in Japan endorsed water management as a key development challenge with its declaration referring to the need to implement 'good water cycle management,' and requested Japan to facilitate a strategy for implementation in the Asia-Pacific region.

Introduction

To further support leaders in demonstrating leadership for achieving water security, the Japan Water Forum (secretariat of the APWF), UNESCAP, ADB, and NARBO are collaborating in the development of a "Ministers for Water Security" initiative in the Asia-Pacific Region, and to explore support for its implementation through in-country and regional activities, with the involvement of members and stakeholders of the APWF and leaders participating in the APWS. The initiative is expected to raise awareness and facilitate regular dialogues among leaders in government, private sector and civil society on policies, investments and innovative solutions that help to increase water security in countries throughout the region.

The "Ministers for Water Security" initiative is targeted to ministers of finance, planning, health, infrastructure, agriculture, energy, environment, disaster management, water, and other water-related portfolios, and will also involve influential leaders from the private sector and civil society in the dialogues. **Ministers can express their interest to join by registering with JWF as a Friend of the "Ministers for Water Security" initiative.**

Objectives

Friends of the "Ministers for Water Security" initiative are expected to demonstrate leadership to:

- raise water security issues high on the agenda of leaders in their country and in the region
- engage in dialogues and exchanges of experience on policies and solutions to increase water security
- initiate or accelerate concrete actions that help to increase water security in their country
- help to articulate the Asia-Pacific region's voice on water issues and solutions for water security
- help the initiative to catalyze actions that help to increase water security in the region.

Participation

The initiative is targeted to ministers who wish to be seen taking a leading role in influencing policies, investments, innovation and implementation of good water management to increase water security in their country and in the region. Ministers of finance, planning, health, disaster management, infrastructure, agriculture, energy, environment, water, and other water-related portfolios that can help to increase water security are requested to register as a Friend of the initiative. Leaders from the private sector and civil society will be invited to join the dialogues organized by the initiative.

Dialogues

Ministers participating in the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Meeting at the 5th World Water Forum will be invited to recommend themes and topics for dialogues on leadership for water security. It is expected that such dialogues will be organized several times a year in a variety of settings, such as:

- In-country dialogues and bilateral exchanges and visits
- (Sub)regional economic summits and forums (ASEAN, ASEAN+3, EAS, GMS, CAREC, others)
- Ministerial conferences (infrastructure, energy, agriculture, environment, disaster management, water, others)
- Leadership forums of regional events (water, climate change, disaster management, food, energy, others)
- Private sector and civil society forums to promote government-corporate-society partnerships
- Events to disseminate the Asian Water Development Outlook
- Asia-Pacific Water Summits
- Other suitable events, including meetings to support the G8 action plan for water.

Results

The dialogues on leadership in water security are expected to result in media opportunities for coverage that increases public awareness; announcements of new policies, investments, initiatives and partnerships; exchange of experience with policies, solutions, and governance; information exchange; new cooperation initiatives; and joint statements.

Organization

Friends of the initiative will be supported to engage in dialogues on leadership for water security. Dialogues can be proposed by interested ministers, and opportunities will also be pursued proactively by the supporting organizations to organize dialogues on the sidelines of scheduled meetings of leaders in the region. The initiative is expected to be supported by UNESCAP, ADB, and Japan, including arrangements for a secretariat, funding support, and technical advice from NARBO.

Calendar

Announcement of the "Ministers for Water Security" initiative at the 5th World Water Forum in Istanbul

March 2009

Dialogue in a leaders panel on water security during Asia Day at the Stockholm World Water Week

August 2009

Dialogue at the 2nd APWS