

Summary of Proceedings (draft) 3rd Joint Executive Committee Meeting of the 4th Asia-Pacific Water Summit

[Outline of the Meeting]

Time & Date: 16:00 – 17:30, Friday, September 18, 2020

Format: Web Conference

[Agenda]

1. New date of the 4th Asia-Pacific Water Summit (APWS)

The secretariat proposed a new date: Saturday, 23rd and Sunday, 24th April 2022. The committee has agreed to the proposal.

2. Action plan toward the 4th APWS

The secretariat reported an action plan toward the 4th APWS: in particular, proposed activities with the APWF members include holding a series of APWF webinars (online seminars) and the launch of a youth initiative targeted at high school students. Committee member Watanabe supplementally explained the youth initiative program.

3. Water and COVID-19 (Impacts of COVID-19 on water sector activities, how to address these impacts, and the discussion points of water and COVID-19 related issues in the 4th APWS)

Following a presentation of analytical views of COVID-19 situations by committee member Oki, other members expressed their opinions.

[Summary of presentation by Committee member Oki]

Committee member Oki shared his analytical views for co-existence with the Covid-19 Pandemic during and after the epidemic. He found the commonalities of the trends of the time of outbreak, the numbers of infections of COVID-19 pandemics at the time of outbreak, quantity of river water flow in the event of flood, and the numbers of infections of traffic jams in highway traffic peak as compared to “normal” times. The common challenges are how to reduce the anticipated incremental risks in advance without over-investment, and how to handle the overflow of them during the emergency. By comparing floods and

traffic jams, as well as the pandemic, they noticed similarities in the phenomena during their emergency phases.

We will be able to learn various lessons from the responses to the flood and traffic jam in highways about how to strike a balance between optimal preparedness and economic efficiency and how to manage human resources during the emergency conditions. Regarding the responses to the flood and the traffic jam, the lessons about preparatory ways to cope with the emergency situations are gaining the social acceptance by taking the long history among public. These lessons will be also be referable when we cope with the infectious risk of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In his last slide, Prof. Oki showed the example of Comprehensive River Basin Management, which is now called “Ryuiki-Chi-Sui” in Japanese, as officially announced by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism of Japan this year. The concept is that all stakeholders prepare for and respond to floods by taking all measures throughout the river basin. This philosophy is not new, but Prof. Oki thinks that this kind of idea may have applications on how we build society under the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Summary of comments by committee members]

- Comments on discussions at the Summit
 - ✓ As the UN report says, the reconstruction from the COVID-19 pandemic based on the policy “Build Back Better” should be green (conserving the ecosystem and its services), resilient to pandemics and disasters (including the impacts of climate change), and inclusive (introducing a multi-stakeholder process). The Asia-Pacific region should promote green recovery, which includes investments in protecting ecosystems and the services they provide, including the services regarding water. The Asia-Pacific region is still very disaster-prone region, and now we see the multiple impacts of COVID, and disasters being overlaid. (Committee member Panella, and alternate member Zahedi and Haruta)
 - ✓ The ADB has pledged to provide \$20 billion for COVID-19 relief for its members. The bank has contingent liability facilities now not only for water related disaster but for health emergency. The ADB is combining our health outcomes, and all our water and disaster preparedness and response activities. (Committee member Panella)
 - ✓ I hope summit participants can carry out in-depth discussions about how to build social resilience to all infectious diseases, not just COVID-19. (Alternate

member Amano)

- ✓ In Japan, we have been working on utilizing remote control technologies of construction machinery and field demonstrations of unmanned construction technologies, which are effective not only in ensuring safety and improving productivity, but also in preventing coronavirus infections. (Committee member Yamada)
- ✓ In ensuring public health, we need to accelerate various efforts in the water and sanitation sectors by making use of both structural measures, such as the construction of water supply and hand-washing facilities, and sewage systems in uncovered areas, and non-structural measures, such as awareness-raising activities aimed at changing people's behavior in daily life. (Committee member Yamada)
- ✓ To spread and promote appropriate hygiene practices, clean water and education are essential. We need to discuss how to develop infrastructure and how to enhance mutual support while considering disparities in Asia and the Pacific region. (Vice-chair Onishi)
- ✓ The theme of a water cycle plays an important part of the discussion in the 4th APWS. We need to continue our efforts to encourage governments to invest in water sector to achieve the SDG6. We need to bring the evidences that show that the returns of investing in water are much higher than other sectors to promote political decision making. (Committee member Khan)
- ✓ There are many researches which try to identify where are the hotspots by using developed technologies to detect the coronavirus in sewage. We have to disseminate the summarized results of these researches to every country in the region. (Committee member Yamada and Khan)
- ✓ The Asian Water Development Outlook 2020, which is being finalized right now will provide a basis for the thematic discussions at the 4th APWS. In addition, the ADB is developing a paper on financing the SDGs across Asia and the Pacific by the time of the 4th APWS. It will examine some of the financing gaps and explore traditional or more innovative ways to meet the financing gaps in

the region. (Committee member Panella)

- ✓ COVID-19 is not only the health crisis but the humanitarian and socio-economic crisis. COVID-19 is affecting almost all aspects of the SDGs. However, the SDGs is still an important road map for countries and cities to recover from this COVID-19's crises. The United Nations has issued many policy briefs. We should make the best use of these reports for the APWF webinar series and to prepare the program of the 4th APWS. (Committee member Koresawa)

- ✓ How to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 infection in evacuation centers at the times of flooding and tsunami is the most important issue. We have to carefully consider how to operate these centers and implement appropriate evacuation procedures while keeping social distancing from the perspectives of both structural and non-structural measures. If the environment of disaster evacuation centers is improved and fewer people are reluctant to evacuate, the number of victims of disasters in a post-COVID-19 society can be reduced. (Committee member Yamada and Khan)

- ✓ Taking Japanese experiences of major disasters in recent years into account, the concept of the integrated flood management which is a basin-wide comprehensive flood disaster management involving all stakeholders is very important. The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT) of Japan is improving evacuation procedures and discussing the relocation of the communities to reduce flood risks in addition to taking structural measures such as constructing dams and levees. (Committee member Yamada)

- ✓ As the 4th APWS will be held in Kumamoto, the theme of a sound water cycle including groundwater management must be highlighted. It should be discussed from a perspective of flood control and basin management as well as water use and water environment conservation. (Committee member Watanabe)

- ✓ It is quite important that water-centered policies should be prioritized in the whole water-related sectors. Exciting cross-cutting agenda items should be set in the summit where the heads of the state and government want to show their leadership. (Committee member Yamada)

- ✓ The COVID-19 pandemic was caused by a virus that was once thought to have been under-controlled. This may drastically change our cultures, social systems, and science. I hope the 4th APWS can propose various ideas or visions of the future world. (Vice-chair Tambo)
- Comments on the webinars
 - ✓ The topics of the webinar should be in line with the themes of the 4th APWS to prepare the summit wisely. We should also prepare the 4th APWS carefully, so twice a month is too frequent. (Committee member Khan and Koresawa, and alternate member Zahedi and Amano)
 - ✓ The webinar series can provide knowledge and information to make the discussions at the 4th APWS fruitful. (Committee member Panella and alternate member Zahedi)
 - ✓ I would like to propose the themes of webinars such as:
 - the special techniques which can detect where are the hotspots of COVID-19 and how other countries can use it,
 - integrated water resources management in transboundary water basin,
 - integrated disaster management (especially for flood and tsunami) under the COVID-19 pandemic, including evacuation procedures with the prevention of the covid-19 spread,
 - focusing the water youth leaders (The UNESCO Intergovernmental Hydrological Program has a major emphasis on youth. The UNESCO has a network of schools, which can be very useful.), and
 - focusing the special aspects of Kumamoto city's groundwater and the World Heritage. We can bring the theme of water and culture as well as the youth together. (Committee member Khan)
 - ✓ I would suggest that under the leadership of the Asia-Pacific Water Forum, we should start to think about bringing some brief reports and analysis which can be used by the universities or by the practitioners such as guidelines. We must not just have talks, more than talks, bring things in a concrete form in a written form in policy related areas which can be used by the governments of the Asia-Pacific countries. (Committee member Khan)

- ✓ Countries are facing different challenges, and they have already had different experiences, the lessons, and good practices about COVID-19. Therefore, it will be good to plan the webinar that includes the speakers from different countries to ask them to share their experiences, challenges, how they deal with those challenges, successes, and failures. These can be linked to the 4th APWS. (Committee member Koresawa)

- Comments on youth initiative
 - ✓ We will start connecting existing youth groups which are already active in Kyushu. After that, we hope to connect them with high school students in the Asia-Pacific region, and to finally launch the Asia-Pacific Youth Water Forum. (Committee member Watanabe)

 - ✓ It is important to encourage young people to take an interest in water, and to improve their skills and experience by giving them opportunities to take part in international conferences. In that sense, I think it is significant to establish the Youth Water Forum. (Committee member Aso)

- ✓ It is a brilliant idea about the youth program targeted to the high school students, but there are the cases some of them in developing countries do not have enough fund to travel to Kumamoto or not have access to the sufficient ICT or Wi-Fi or internet. Therefore, I would like to ask the secretariat to consider how to support those youngsters. (Committee member Koresawa)

- ✓ Digital divide is not necessarily so great when it comes to young people. Many of them at least have access to smartphones and are able to communicate. (Committee member Panella)

- ✓ ADB would like to offer the involvement of ADB's Youth initiative which is very well established and has thousands of contacts across all our member countries. The ADB's Youth Initiative is very well connected on social media. I will be able to coordinate the ADB's and APWF's youth program for the linkage. (Committee member Panella)

- Comments on the format of the summit and distribution of information
 - ✓ We should consider a remote participation as well because no matter the situation, some people may not travel. We need to put many opinions as much as possible into the discussions at the 4th APWS. We should have a hybrid participation model in mind. (Alternate member Zahedi and Haruta, and vice-chair Onishi)
 - ✓ Towards the Summit, the Forum should address the issues of digital technologies and digital divides related to water and water management. (Alternate member Zahedi)
 - ✓ It is necessary to reflect as many opinions as possible in the various programs. I hope a variety of stakeholders will be able to join the process. (Alternate member Haruta)
 - ✓ We should organize the summit with recognitions that the digital divide is broadening between not only individuals but also regions. (Alternate member Haruta)
 - ✓ I hope we can invigorate the 4th APWS by involving not only stakeholders from the water sector but also citizens and the media. We need more innovative efforts on public relations. (Committee member Yamada)
 - ✓ For people to easily understand the 4th APWS, we should disseminate clear messages of its significance in cooperation with the media. (Vice-chair Onishi)

End.