

A brief summary of the Asia-Pacific Water Summit history and its objectives

The primary objective of the Summits is to create an opportunity for the political leaders of the Asia-Pacific region to set a course of action for the sustainable development of the region from the perspective on water, so as to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Asia-Pacific Water Summit (APWS) started as a first-ever international conference on water targeted at top government leaders in the region.

Japan took the initiative for the 1st APWS in Beppu in 2007, where 371 leaders including 10 heads of country and 32 ministers joined and called for the necessity to address water and sanitation targets of the Millennium Development Goals, then adopted a “Message from Beppu” to achieve the target of universal water and sanitation access by 2025. It was the first water summit that also highlighted the importance of addressing water-related disasters to be placed on higher priority of the global development agenda.

The Kingdom of Thailand took the leadership for the 2nd APWS in Chiang Mai, 2013. More than 300 leaders, including 18 heads of country and 16 ministers joined the 2nd APWS and adopted the “Chiang Mai Declaration”. It called on the leaders of the region to prioritize water and sanitation issues and water-related disaster risk management in their national development agendas in order to achieve water security. As a result, the outcomes of the 2nd APWS were reflected in the goals and targets of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015.

In the 3rd APWS held in December of 2017, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar took the leadership to set out a course and pathways for sustainable development of the Asia-Pacific region through water security. A total number of the participants in the APWS was more than 700 from 37 countries, which included 20 heads of country and ministerial-level delegates from 16 countries in the region. The 3rd APWS served as a communication platform for the regional leaders to discuss concrete actions in enhancing regional cooperation for integrated water resources management, promoting water-based economy and implementing globally-agreed agenda. In the end, the “Yangon Declaration: the Pathway Forward” was adopted unanimously by the participating leaders.

The 4th APWS aims to build on the outcomes of the 3rd APWS and achievements of the Asia-Pacific region to promote actions and innovation in Water for Sustainable Development. It aims to review milestones of outcomes and cases of action made by the public and private sectors, while gathering continued efforts and steadfast partnerships to drive solutions and investment in water.

Some of the advantages of being the host country of the 4th APWS include an opportunity to exercise the regional leadership toward improvement of water security in the region, with the support of local governments, civil societies and leaders from the private sector as well as media in the region.