

World Water Council Press Conference

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INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT TO THE PRESS CONFERENCE



Mr. Benedito Braga

President of the World Water Council

Check Against Delivery

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the World Water Council, I am very pleased to welcome you to this press conference. This afternoon, following two intensive and fruitful years of collaboration with Korean partners, we welcome participants from all over the world to the 7th World Water Forum.

First of all, what makes the World Water Forum special is that anyone; any organization or committed citizen can participate. However, the Forum is more than a conference: it is a continuous process which, every three years, allows policy makers and the water community to focus on global water challenges.

In 2015 it is more important than ever to focus on these global water challenges, as every day we can read in the media of governments around the world facing droughts, floods, and increasing competition for water between different users.

Since the last World Water Forum, held in 2012, the World Water Council has been actively working through our members on major water issues such as green growth, energy, food, climate change, disasters, and the right to water and sanitation. All too often these issues are addressed in isolation from each other - the World Water Council is constantly reaching across these boundaries and searching for ways to deliver water security for all in a sustainable world.

Ladies and gentlemen, water is the common thread that connects all aspects of our life – economy, society, and environment.

During the coming week the World Water Council will host or co-convene sessions on water in the Sustainable Development Goals, financing water infrastructure, water and food security, integrated water resources management, water and green growth, and so on. We are happy to share more information on all these events, but today I would like to focus on three issues that I believe are critical if we are to achieve water security for all.

Climate variability and change stands as one of our primary water challenges - by and large, all the impacts of climate variability are manifested through, by and with water.

Given the increasing gap between supply and demand, it is clear to me that water infrastructure is central to delivering water security in the face of a changing climate. In the coming decades, we will need more storage capacity, more efficient water resources use and management, strengthened governance, and better information.

Unfortunately at a global scale we are simply not investing enough to bridge the growing gap between demand and supply. More needs to be done.

Our work with the OECD which will be released tomorrow provides some key perspectives on how we can address financing issues.

However it is more than simply a question of finance. I also believe that we need to view water storage infrastructure in a more holistic way - through the water supply, energy, transport, food, flood, and drought lens. It must take into account the upstream and the downstream social, economic and environmental impacts. In other words the water infrastructure of the future must be multi-purpose.

I believe that if we embrace this multi-purpose infrastructure approach we also have an opportunity to redefine the water debate. Such an approach will demand new financing solutions, as well as new ways of engaging all users in genuine shared responsibility for our precious water resources. I do not believe that we can afford to pursue individual sectoral solutions around water any longer.

As with any intervention in the natural environment there are difficult choices to be made, each with impacts that are both positive and negative - there are costs and benefits. I firmly believe that the positive impacts of water resources infrastructure and management outweigh the costs.

Ladies and gentlemen, this year is vitally important for our water community. This week we gather in Daegu and Gyeongju to discuss water; in September the international community will adopt Sustainable Development Goals, and we will end the year debating a global climate agreement in Paris at CoP21.

If we aspire to lift the most vulnerable in society out of poverty it is clear that economic and sustainable growth must go hand-in-hand with the health and wellbeing of communities. It is equally clear that water, as a thread that connects economy, society, and the environment can play a central role. Therefore, in my view, it is imperative that the global community accepts the proposed Sustainable Development Goal on water to "ensure its availability and sustainable management for all." It is equally vital that a global agreement on climate change is explicit about the central relationship between climate and water.

The World Water Forum has always been an event that tackles these global issues, and the 7th Forum has the opportunity to be particularly influential.

I would now like to open the floor to questions.