

## HIGH LEVEL PANEL ON WATER (HLPW) VALUING WATER INITIATIVE SOUTHERN AFRICA REGIONAL CONSULTATION

Tuesday, 30 May 2017  
Johannesburg, South Africa

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The High Level Panel on Water (HLPW) is convened by the United Nations Secretary General and the World Bank Group President. It was mandated to mobilise action to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and to propose effective management of water resources and necessary actions to build momentum towards better stewardship of water around the world. The Panel comprises 11 sitting Heads of States and Government and addresses four themes, namely:

- Identify legal, economic, financial, and institutional mechanisms to incentivize multi-sectoral and transboundary water cooperation;
- Examine how to cope with and prevent water-related conflicts, namely transboundary and intersectoral – possibly exploring potential mechanisms to promote hydro-diplomacy;
- Promote effective implementation of the global water conventions;
- Promote best practices in water cooperation.

In Bellagio, Italy, in May 2017, the HLPW produced a draft document with a proposed Preamble and Principles for the “*valuing water*” theme.

South Africa, as a member of the eleven Heads of State on the HLPW, along with the Department of Water and Sanitation, on behalf of President Jacob Zuma, and championed by the Netherlands, agreed to convene a regional consultation on the “*valuing water*” initiative. As a multi stakeholder partnership, GWP provided a platform for voices from Southern Africa to express reactions, key messages, and suggested actions to the HLPW on the Preamble and Principles. The consultation was attended by approximately 100 participants and convened by the Republic of South Africa, the Global Water Partnership – Southern Africa (GWP-SA), and the Global Water Partnership Organisation (GWPO). The morning was devoted to opening speeches and a high-level panel discussing valuing water. The afternoon consisted of facilitated interactive sessions designed to receive key messages from a cross section of regional stakeholders.

### 2. OPENING CEREMONY

The Opening Ceremony included remarks from:

- Mr. Dan Mashitsho, Director General of Department of Water and Sanitation and the Republic of South Africa HLPW Sherpa
- Prof. Dr. Patrick Verkooijen, World Bank Special Advisor/Sherpa on HLPW
- Ms. Marisa Gerards, Ambassador of the Netherlands to South Africa
- Dr. Kuiri F. Tjipangandjara, GWP-SA Chair
- Ms. Thembi Majola, Deputy Minister of Energy, South Africa
- Ms. Faith Muthambi, Minister of Public Service and Administration, South Africa

All of the speakers addressed the critical importance of the consultation in the context of the challenges that are being confronted globally vis-à-vis the management of water resources. Other remarks included:

[www.gwp.org](http://www.gwp.org)

- The unusual nature of the HLPW given the fact that 11 sitting Heads of States and Government have committed themselves to the single issue of water.
- Water is typically underappreciated: "*you never know the value of water until the well runs dry.*"
- Lack of focus on quantifying the value of water could come with detrimental consequences, hugely impacting on social and environmental aspects (which are difficult to value).
- The value of water in economic terms should be made explicit to assist decision making processes.
- The importance of a shared vision as well as a shared understanding of the value of water.

### **3. HIGH LEVEL PANEL DISCUSSION: INTER-SECTORAL POLICY PERSPECTIVE OF VALUING WATER**

After the opening remarks, a panel discussion was facilitated. The panel participants noted (in summary):

- water pricing is critical to determine the cost of providing the service and to bring to light the need to fully finance delivery of water and management of water resources.
- the tariff for entities that use water efficiently should be lower than for those which do not use water with due care.
- the multiplicity of water uses and the interdependency of energy and water needs to be recognized in the context of the water-energy-food nexus.
- the need to review current international agreements on water and ensure they are underpinned by efficient extraction and use, and lend themselves to minimal ecological adversities.
- the efforts made by the SADC region which had embarked on and completed the project of the economic accounting of water, whose objective was to attach value to water.
- water supply is pivotal to industrialization, and therefore job creation, which are key objectives of the SADC region.

### **4. INTERACTIVE STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION WORKSHOP**

The afternoon workshop solicited the views of the stakeholders on the draft Preamble and Principles. Participants were asked for key messages, proposed actions, and suggested modifications to the document, as well as any stories, tools, and other issues that should be taken on board by the HLPW. Over 70 stakeholders from the region offered over 70 messages to the HLPW.

#### **a. Consultation Methodology**

Each of the two interactive sessions followed the same process. Participants were seated in tables of 7-10 participants. They were first asked to individually write down one key message to the HLPW. They were then invited to discuss these messages at each table and the facilitator requested each table for one main message. The floor was then opened to allow other messages that were discussed at the tables to be voiced. To complete the session, each participant was allowed to rank the top 3 messages they thought most important to send to the HLPW. Participants were assured that all messages would be preserved but that the cumulative ranking of the messages indicated the strongest collective feelings among the group.

#### **b. Messages and Issues to the HLPW on the Preamble**

Participants identified 35 key messages to send to the HLPW regarding the **Preamble**. The strongest sense of the group was that the preamble must include bottom up country level perspectives, as well as top down efforts and that the statement needed stronger language which conveyed greater

urgency to water valuing if it is to be relevant to political decision makers. The preamble needed to be more specific on the economic and social value of water; the costs of doing nothing or maintaining the status quo; and on recognizing the importance of sanitation and the role of children and youth. While a strong sense emerged that the economic value of water should be highlighted, different views on how to present this along with water's social values and issues of pricing were shared. These and other messages regarding the preamble are listed below.

**Table 1: Valuing Water Preamble**

Item	Preamble Issue	Weighting
1.	Bottom up approach-lower level country meeting-CWP and others	42
2.	Make preamble more politically relevant - strong language, i.e. political decision (sense of urgency)	16
3.	Involve schoolchildren as agents of change	13
4.	Recognize social and economic value. Pricing not equal to value	12
5.	Include Sanitation	11
6.	State the cost of status quo and doing nothing	11
7.	Eco-systems need to be part of valuing	5
8.	Planning for water extremes should be included	5
9.	Note that Water Price can drive water use behavior	5
10.	Mention that Water needed for Prosperity economic growth (tag line)	4
11.	Risk of not valuing water	4
12.	Simplify language of Preamble	4
13.	Be more aspirational on transformative and binding	4
14.	Water has an economic value (be clear) with social and environmental	4
15.	Include incentivizing use of polluted water	4
16.	Mention that Water needed for Prosperity, economic growth (tag line)	4
17.	Involve school children as agents of change	3
18.	Clarify implementation action	2
19.	Important to invest in data, plus sharing and exchange	2
20.	Include Principle of applying water balance of use	2
21.	Add cultural value of water	2
22.	Fit for purpose water allocation concept is important	2
23.	Combine bullet Preamble and Principles	2
24.	Allocation of land decoupled from water	2
25.	Include How to use virtual water in the Preamble	2
26.	Note that where there is no procurement there is corruption	2
27.	Add cultural value of water	2
28.	Include waste water	1
29.	Note that rights mean obligations	1
30.	Animal rights should be included	1
31.	Intensify and accelerate all partnerships	1
32.	Co-ownership and different users pay differently	0
33.	Water loss	0
34.	Reference to other deliverables need to be emphasised	0
35.	Invest more innovative in communication strategy and knowledge dissemination tools	0

### c. Messages and Issues to the HLPW on the Principles

Participants identified 33 key messages to send to the HLPW regarding the **Principles**. The strongest sense of the group was that principle 2 should add transboundary waters and data sharing; principle 3 should be more explicit on balancing protection of resources versus gaining economic benefits from water use; the importance of political will to achieving more financing should be included; and the principles need to explicitly state a “*put a price on water*” notion. These and other messages regarding the principles are listed below.

Item	Principles Issue	Weighting
1.	No.2 add transboundary and sharing	16
2.	No.3 protecting resource goals- look at balancing trade, protecting against benefits of economic use	16
3.	Note that Valuing Better achieved with political will and financing	15
4.	We are afraid to say “put a price on water” need to say it!	15
5.	On principle 5 add knowledge sharing	12
6.	Note-Educate people to be more efficient	8
7.	No 5 add O & M to management	7
8.	No.1 note explicitly that water, food energy and other sectors impact on water sector	7
9.	No.3 add lakes, aquifers and oceans	7
10.	No 5 – add investment institutions and partnerships	5
11.	Note that Valuation should be carried out within the confinements of the democratic framework	5
12.	Add behavioural change to enhance water management for efficiency	3
13.	No. 5 Disaster Risk Reduction be included	3
14.	Water for domestic consumption should be a principle	3
15.	Add that Water is key for environment protection	3
16.	No.1 Recognize water’s multiple value between sectors and different use including states	2
17.	Note Basic human needs now and future must be balanced	2
18.	Note that price is not only money	1
19.	No.2 Move last sentence to principle No.4	0
20.	Where are principles on the roadmap to binding agreements?	0
21.	No. 5 say “adequate or substantive”	0
22.	No. 3 add impact of climate change to water appreciation indivisibility of water cycle	0
23.	No. 1 add explicit inclusion and marginalized groups and focusing on alternatives	0
24.	There is No principle to “value” the water!	0
25.	Add principle major that others build on	0
26.	No. 4 after intricacies value change of mindset	0
27.	No. 5 link institutional to mainstream entities	0
28.	Add All countries should set a budget at all levels	0
29.	Say put a price on services of water	0
30.	Add municipalities and capacity	0
31.	Basic human needs now and future need to be balanced	0
32.	On Principle 5 add knowledge sharing	0
33.	No.5 - add investment institutions and partnerships	0

### c. Suggested Cases and Stories

During the sessions, participants were invited to suggest cases and stories that the HLPW will consider. They identified four cases: the need to revive urban lakes like the Bangalore Vola in India; the need to have tools for urban water security planners for use by urban water planners and civil society; the need to preserve forests and trees given that the value of trees standing is more than three times the value of cut trees; and the usefulness of indigenous knowledge on solutions like the tubers in Zambia.

Participants were reminded that messages should include actions and were encouraged to come up with actions. Each session was started with a definition of messages that made this clear. Generally, it is difficult for groups to suggest actions versus identify problems and issues. The final session asked participants to reflect on the scope of what they prioritized in the sessions, to consider what they were collectively saying and to suggest what the HLPW might do and what actions the HLPW might take. The facilitators pushed hard on this for a little short of an hour but participants had little more to say on actions. The last two paragraphs of section 4(d) describe some further reasons for the difficulty in these sessions to generate more actions. In the third to last paragraph of 4(d) there are three major actions identified.

### d. Final Plenary Reflections and Suggested Further Actions

In the final session, participants were invited to reflect on their work and on further actions that the HLPW might take. Reflections ranged from specific suggestions to more general policy ones. For example, it was suggested that principle 5 should be brief and that it could state that water efficiency is central to developing infrastructure. Others noted there was a greater focus on floods than on water scarcity. Some suggested the clarification that water services are mostly undertaken by public providers, that services should be charged, and that we should speak of water services rather than prices.

Questions were also raised about the meaning of the words ‘principles’ and ‘preamble.’ A view emerged among some that principles should be the building blocks and a preamble should follow principles, support and be relevant to the principles, and that the preamble should start with something like, “*We the heads of state....*” Others suggested principles and preamble should be combined into one document.

While most of the 70 items generated in the preamble and principles sections contained specific actions, a few important follow up actions for the HLPW were offered.

First, the principles should be used as critical content for the Decade of Water and Sustainable Development which starts in March 2018. Second, the question of how to proceed from 11 Heads of States to 110 Heads of States was raised and put forward as a critical objective of future actions. One leader, for example, could work to inform 10 other leaders before the next General Assembly. Third, the HLPW’s role was to “spark” in-country processes and that the HLPW should consider engaging more local level policy makers to undertake such. In this regard, the importance of involving stakeholders was further underscored.

Participants expressed some confusion over how the preamble and principles were developed, by whom, and why. Questions were also asked on how the valuing of water theme would fit with other themes of the HLPW; and whether there would be separate statements on each or combined into one statement. The question of how this effort linked to SDG 6 was also raised.

Asking participants questions about the relevance of the preamble and principles to the Southern

African region revealed some uncertainty among participants on how their messages and contributions were to be used by the HLPW. They also revealed concerns that their "*bottom up*" work might be ignored by "*top down* efforts."