



National Stakeholder Consultations on Water: Supporting the Post-2015 Development Agenda

Swiss Position Paper on Water 15 April 2013



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Water is a key determinant in all aspects of social, economic and environmental development. Water security is also directly linked to peace and security. If water issues will not be addressed adequately, this would not only mean a water crisis, but several other crises in water-dependent sectors. Therefore, Water security has to be addressed as one of the highest priorities in the Post-2015 development agenda and water must feature prominently as standalone goal with measurable targets and indicators in support of life, well-being, economic development and the environment.

1. Analysis at global level

1.1 Most important trends in the water sector

As highlighted by the Rio+20 outcome documents, it is widely recognized that water is one of the key global challenges of the 21st century and at the core of sustainable development. Rio+20 reaffirmed the importance of water supply and sanitation, the need for an integrated approach to water resources management and highlighted the role of ecosystems for achieving a water-secure world. According to a recent assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community, water insecurity can generate widespread social and political instability and water stress may well contribute to instability and state failure and even expand to regional tensions or conflicts, particularly when combined with poverty, social tensions, environmental degradation, ineffectual leadership, and weak political institutions.

Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH): Acknowledging the fact that safe drinking water and sanitation are vital for human development, in 2010, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution recognizing safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right. And yet, according to recent estimates by WHO and UNICEF at least 780 million people lack access to safe drinking water and 2.5 billion lack improved sanitation.

Water Resources Management: The results of a global survey carried out in 2011 on the state of water resources management in 130 countries show that in recent years, progress towards sustainable water resources management has slowed or even regressed in both developing and developed countries. This despite the fact, that the integrated management of water resources is essential for a balanced development and that trans-boundary water resources are becoming increasingly important for peace and international security.

Wastewater Management and Water Quality: Nearly all human activity results in the production of wastewater. Though difficult to quantify, UNEP and UN-Habitat have estimated that, globally, about 80% of wastewater from human settlements and industrial sources is discharged into the environment without treatment. Reuse/recycling can combine an effective environmental and health protection strategy with recovery of water, nutrients and energy. In this respect, wastewater is still an under-utilized resource.

1.2 Strengths and weaknesses in the sector during the MDG-period

Millennium Development Goal No. 7 includes the target “to halve by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation”. This has boosted significantly the international profile of drinking-water and sanitation. According to the UNICEF/WHO Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP), MDG drinking water target was met in 2010. However, it is widely recognized that current global indicators fall short of measuring some key aspects of drinking-water supply such as drinking water safety or sustainability of access. Meanwhile the world remains seriously off track for the MDG sanitation target with 2.5 billion people lacking access to improved sanitation. Open defecation is still practiced by 1.1 billion people. Besides, there are significant disparities as for instance between and within regions, between urban and rural areas and between the rich and the poor section of the population.

Despite being situated within the goal of environmental sustainability, the MDG targets for water and sanitation did not address the link to the larger water agenda, including water resources, wastewater management and issues of surface and groundwater quality, which are crucial for sustainable development.

1.3 Important challenges in the Post-2015 period (opportunities and threats)

Key challenge related to WASH: How can universal access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene be achieved?

More than 780 million people still lack access to safe drinking water and 2.5 billion lack improved sanitation - more than 1 billion of them practicing open defecation. From a human rights point of view it is particularly important to address in the future especially also the issue of equity and non-discrimination. The question is not *if* the world can fulfill universal access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, but rather *how* to do so.

Key challenges related to Sustainable Water Resources Management: How can limited freshwater resources be managed so as to satisfy human needs while respecting ecosystems requirements? How to allocate limited water resources while balancing the needs and requirements of competing uses and users nationally and internationally? How to increase water use efficiency in the industrial sector, agricultural production and communal water supply? How to protect water resources for future generations?

Much remains to be done in terms of designing, financing and implementing an integrated approach to water resources management as outlined in the 2002 Johannesburg Plan of implementation. It was agreed that all countries should develop integrated water resources management (IWRM) plans and define water rights, legal systems and allocation mechanisms, establish water institutions, put in place participatory processes and adopt integrated water basin approaches. The demand on water resources and the competition among user groups will increase drastically. By 2030, feeding a world population of 8 billion people will require a more efficient use of water in agriculture, the demands on water for energy production will more than double and higher rates of urbanization will increase demand for water for domestic and industrial use with consequent higher production of wastewater. Due to human activities, ecosystems are degrading rapidly. Furthermore, increased variability in water availability and increase of extreme events due to climate change will threaten human well-being, economic activities and put further strain on water-related ecosystems.

These challenges are exacerbated by the additional level of complexity considering that more than 250 major watercourses cross international political boundaries. These basins

account for 40% of the global population and 60% of global freshwater. The development and sustainable and long-lasting implementation of treaties and frameworks to manage these trans-boundary watercourses is crucial for national, regional and international peace and security.

Key challenges related to Wastewater Management and Water Quality: *Hot to develop effective and practical water pollution control policies? How to promote the concept of minimizing the production, adequate treatment and reuse of wastewater? How to optimize the roles of the public and private sector?*

Wastewater production, its management and disposal/reuse remain un-quantified despite the fact that it is a significant component of the water cycle. Understanding the importance of wastewater and its opportunities is woefully lacking in the current MDGs. Wastewater pollution is threatening oceans and other aquatic ecosystems and has the potential to contaminate scarce water resources, thus exacerbating the problem and bringing a potential crisis to water-short economies. The inclusion of wastewater management based on the concept of minimizing the generation, adequately treating and reusing/discharging of wastewaters on a collective or individual basis should therefore be an essential component of national water strategies, especially in transition and industrialized countries. The polluter-pay principle and defining the optimal role of the public and the private sectors in providing, monitoring and regulating wastewater services should also be part of the strategy.

1.4 How is water security related to the three dimensions of sustainability (social, economy, ecology) and to the dimension of peace and security?

Water security has social, economic and environmental dimensions and is directly linked to peace, stability and security.

Lack of sustainable and equitable access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) has serious social as well as economic consequences including violations of human dignity, treatment costs of disease and economic losses at the household and community/country level. The supply and demand management of the limited water resources and the fair allocation of water to the different users are related to social, economic as well as environmental dimension of sustainable development. Increased water use efficiency in agriculture and industry and water pollution control for protecting natural ecosystems by adequate treatment and disposal/reuse of wastewater are other prerequisites for sustainable development (economic and environmental dimension).

Dimension of peace and security: Since freshwater is a vital and non-substitutable resource relevant for all societal, economic and ecological activities, competition for limited supplies lead to tensions within societies, and nations see access to water as a matter of national security. In history, there are many examples of disputes over shared fresh water resources. At the same time, there are more, although less spectacular, examples where water has played an important role as catalyst for collaboration and peace. In any case, uneven distribution of freshwater coupled with the current trends in population growth place water as an increasingly salient element in national, regional and international politics.

For these reasons, water should be featured prominently in the Post-2015 development agenda as standalone goal for a water-secure world; if not, this would not only mean a water crisis, but several other crises in many water-dependent sectors.

2. Analysis/activities at Swiss level

2.1 Swiss particularities

Availing from abundant freshwater, Switzerland is not facing water scarcity problems unlike many other countries although water shortages can occasionally and locally occur during long spells of dry weather and the need for irrigation is increasing due to climate change. However, being the “water castle of Europe” and importing large amounts of virtual water in the form of agricultural and other products (roughly 80% of the total Water Footprint), Switzerland has a big international responsibility. It has been taking its responsibility as upstream country quite effectively (e.g. full treatment of the wastewater; collaborating actively in the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine; etc.) To consider social, economic as well as environmental sustainability when allocating water resources to different users and uses has always played an important role in Swiss water politics and policies.

2.2 Swiss contributions in the water sector

Switzerland has been very active in the framework of multilateral environmental agreements. The Convention on the protection and use of trans-boundary watercourses and international lakes of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) – the UNECE Water Convention – is recognized as one of the leading organizations in the area of trans-boundary cooperation. Switzerland is heading together with the Netherlands its Task Force on Water and Climate.

Water has been playing a key role in Swiss development cooperation and was declared as one of the focus areas with a global program in the Message to the Parliament on Switzerland’s international cooperation for the period 2013-2016, setting out the operations of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). In 2011 the Swiss Parliament also approved an additional 0.5% credit reflecting Switzerland’s response to the increasing international priority given to water and climate change challenges.

For more than 30 years, SDC has supported partner countries in the implementation of their drinking water supply and sanitation services as well as watershed management programs. SDC “Water Principles and Guidelines 2015” declare integrated water resources management as the overlying principle of SDC actions in the water sector. Switzerland, and particularly SDC, was an early, very active and leading stakeholder in the long international debate and promotion to declare water and sanitation as human rights.

The SECO cooperation program has also been running since more than 30 years. The strategic direction of SECO water projects includes water infrastructure with particular focus on sanitation, institutional strengthening of water companies, support of the private sector where feasible and meaningful, support innovation and applied research and support to national water policy dialogue.

Several Swiss-based NGOs such as HELVETAS have a strong water portfolio and have been implementing for many years projects in Africa, Asia and Latin America related to water supply, sanitation and hygiene and other water-related sectors. Similarly, internationally renowned academic institutions in Switzerland (such as Eawag, the water research institute of the ETH domain and the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute) have a long track record in conducting applied research related to a wide range of water and water-related issues.

In the context of the development of the Post-2015 development agenda, Switzerland is, together with The Netherlands, Jordan and Liberia, host country of the UN led thematic consultation on Water. Support is given mainly to UN ECE for conducting the sub-consultation on Water Resources Management (WRM) and to UNDP/GWP for conducting national water

consultations. Switzerland was chairing a high level and technical meeting which was held on 27/28 February in Geneva to (a) discuss the outcome of the sub-consultations on WRM and Wastewater Management and Water Quality (WWM&WQ) and (b) prepare for the High Level Forum which assembled in The Hague on 22 March 2013 to discuss overall outcomes and recommendations of the Thematic Consultation on Water in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Federal Councilor Didier Burkhalter was one of the keynote speakers at the High Level Forum in The Hague. The Forum basically endorsed the call for a Water-secure world with sub-goals (targets) for WASH, WRM and WWM&WQ.

3. Consolidated formulation of a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on Water

In May 2011 the WHO and UNICEF, working through the Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP), started a process of formulating Post-2015 targets and corresponding indicators for the sub-sector Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH). This consultation brought together over 70 WASH professionals, representing civil society, academia, professional associations, regulators, multilateral and bilateral agencies, as well as statistical and data collection experts and representatives from the human rights community. This wide and inclusive consultation process resulted in the formulation of sub-goal, summary targets and detailed (time-bound) targets for WASH.

It is important that a future SDG on Water will not only formulate targets related to WASH but also to “Water Resources Management” (WRM) and “Wastewater Management & Water Quality” (WWM&WQ) Therefore, a draft outline for a future Global Goal for “A Water-secure World” with targets related to WASH, WRM and WWM&WQ was prepared under the leadership of SDC/Water Division and the Swiss Water Partnership facilitated a national consultation process (Swiss national water consultation) for reviewing this draft. The consultation resulted in the consolidated formulation of an overall SDG on Water, with one sub-goal for each of the three pillars WASH, WRM and WWM&WQ and corresponding summary targets for each pillar as shown in the figure at the end of this paper. The part on WASH basically corresponds to the consolidated outcome of the JMP process (see above) and the formulation of the sub-goals related to WRM and WWM&WQ have largely been taken up in the outcome document of the Thematic Consultation on Water which was endorsed on 22nd March by the High Level Forum in The Hague.

4. Conclusion/Compelling arguments for a SDG on Water in the post 2015 development framework

This paper shows how water is at the core of sustainable development. Without proper management of water resources, food and energy security, health, education, environmental sustainability and other crucial elements of human development are put at risk. However, it is not sufficient to look at water merely as a transversal topic and to include water-related targets within one or more of other SDGs. Due to the irreplaceable nature, the complexity and essential socio-economic as well as environmental role of water, it is fundamental to include an explicit SDG on Water in the post-2015 development framework. Among the most compelling arguments one counts:

- Water is a limited, non-substitutable resource essential for sustainable and equitable economic development and poverty reduction.

- Access to clean water and adequate sanitation is a human right and together with practicing good hygiene a prerequisite for healthy human living; it has direct impact on the wellbeing and productivity of the population as well as sustaining freshwater eco- systems.
- Water is essential for ensuring food and energy security
- Water resources management is a key instrument for Climate Change mitigation and adaptation.
- The polluting impact of increasing wastewater production due to fast urbanization and industrialization can be effectively addressed by minimizing the production of wastewater and ensuring its re-use at appropriate quality while reaping the financial, health and environmental benefits.
- National, regional and international stability and peace increasingly depend on effective management of the world's freshwaters and especially of the more than 250 major international water basins.

Figure:

Outline of a future Global Water Goal

Overarching goal	A Water-secure World		
	WASH	Water Resources Management	Wastewater Management and Water Quality
Sub-goals	Safe and sustainable sanitation, hygiene and drinking water used by all	Ground and surface water is managed sustainably to satisfy human needs while respecting ecosystems requirements	All wastewater is managed based on the concept of reduction/omission, treatment, re-use/discharge
Summary targets	<p>Everyone has safe drinking water, adequate sanitation and practices good hygiene at home</p> <p>All schools, health centers and other institutions provide all users with basic drinking water supply, adequate sanitation, and hand washing and menstrual hygiene facilities.</p> <p>Water, sanitation and hygiene are equitable and sustainable</p>	<p>Water resources are managed in every country and every basin based on an IWRM plan</p> <p>All transboundary basins have institutional and legal frameworks</p> <p>All ecosystems are managed sustainably and their services ensured</p> <p>Water efficiency in industry, agriculture and communal water supply is progressively increased</p>	<p>All industrial wastewater is collected and adequately treated for reuse/discharge</p> <p>All urban wastewater is adequately treated before being reused or discharged to the (aquatic) environment</p> <p>All wastewater is managed in a sustainable way to protect water resources and aquatic ecosystems</p>