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The post-2015 development agenda

Slovenia stakeholder perspectives on a water goal and its implementation



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Acknowledgements

GWP would like to acknowledge the support of Denmark, represented by its Foreign Ministry, the European Union Water Initiative – Africa Working Group, and the core GWP donors for their support in funding the national consultations. GWP also acknowledges the support of UN-Water for advice and guidance on the consultations.

GWP also wishes to thank all those in the GWP Regional and Country Partnerships who organised and conducted the consultations so effectively – as well as the numerous stakeholders who contributed to the country consultations.

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1 Comments on recommended Sustainable Development Goal and Targets for water

1.1 Discussion of the recommended Goal and Targets in relation to local development aims

1.1.1 Why national consultations

In 2015 the target period to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, Millennium Development Goals) will expire. At the UN Conference on Sustainable Development RIO + 20, it was found that the MDGs are a good basis, but lack of focus on sustainable development was recognized. A comprehensive consultation process on sustainable development started in the preparation process of the UN Development Agenda after 2015 ("post-2015 development framework"), which comprises 11 themes. One of these is water, which is crucial for achieving sustainable development and poverty eradication. In addition to access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation as two important public services, sustainable water resources management and use is closely linked with the protection of natural resources and economic development. Water resources are a central element in the consultations on other themes of the UN Development Agenda after 2015 and international agreements.



In 26 countries around the world will be, in consultation with stakeholders, proposed the goal and targets of sustainable development (SDG- Sustainable Development Goals), which will be discussed and decided on a global level.

2 Program of national consultation

The consultation in Slovenia was organized on 21 March 2014 to mark World Water Day as well. The United Nations declared March 22 as a World Water Day; water is the source of life, is indispensable for health, food, biodiversity, development, energy, water preserves and consolidates or endangers international peace. The consultation was organized by Global Water Partnership Slovenia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Agriculture and Environment. Consultation was attended by 73 participants, which is for Slovenia an extremely large number.

During the first part of the national consultation, facilitated by **Mojca Deželak**, a number water connected themes were presented. Presentations were necessary because we have invited not only water experts but also climatologists, agronomists, foresters, geographers, civil engineering experts, managers, economists, lawyers and representatives of civil society. For such a structure we have decided with the aim to gather broader opinion and not speak only with the already convinced people from water sector. The second part of the consultation was a panel discussion, facilitated by one of leading Slovenian journalists, **Igor Evgen Bergant**.

At the beginning of the national consultation GWP Executive Secretary, **Ania Grobicki**, welcomed the participants on video record. She briefly explained the importance of water in sustainable development and the importance of national consultations for the successful preparation of the decision of the sustainable development goals and why the GWP decided to participate actively in the process of preparing the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda.

The participants were welcomed also by the Director-General for Global Issues and Multilateral Political Relations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, **Dragoljuba Benčina**. In the opening speech she highlighted the vital importance of water for survival and development of humanity.



She pointed out the 21 Century inappropriate state with regard to access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation, as 780 million people worldwide still lack access to clean drinking water and basic sanitation. She highlighted the positive role of cross-border and international cooperation in managing shared water resources to strengthen international peace and security. She also confirmed the Slovenian commitment to follow proposed global water goal and support to give water a visible place in the UN Development Agenda after 2015.

Dragoljuba Benčina

The speakers presented the purpose of the national consultations, recommended SDG and Targets, as well as the most important goals for Slovenia. There were presented examples of existing good practices in water management at the river basin, international, macro-regional and regional levels as well as disadvantages in the implementation of adopted water management plans. The presentations were devoted to water interdependence with climate change, agriculture and forestry and impacts of these links for Slovenia. It was presented also look at the performance of Slovenian integrated water resources management and the necessary actions to continue and improve it.

Martina Zupan, GWP Slovenija presented the global and national consultation process. It was stressed that Slovenia is exposed to the global climate change, which brings more and more extreme weather events, frequent and prolonged droughts, floods and others. In Slovenia we had in February 2014 two natural disasters, starting with extremely severe ice sleet, which destroyed 40 % of the forests and did extensive damage to infrastructure (according to preliminary estimates from 400,000 to 500,000 Euro). After ice sleet also floods hit the Karst area of Slovenia, which exceed previously highest flooding in the area, as Karst underground was supersaturated.

At such events we can recognize how vulnerable civilization and ourselves are. Processes in nature have to be understood, accepted and we have to adapt to them. Human being can not subordinate the nature, even though he is trying to do just that in his comfort oriented behavior and interference in the nature.

Coordinator for macro-regions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs **Gregor Krajc** presented the Slovenian activities within the Danube and the Adriatic-Ionian macro-region. Macro-regions in European terms first appeared in the 2007-2013 programming period. It was a new form of territorial cooperation, based on better coordination of projects between Member States and non-EU countries in a particular area where there are projects with the added value. The basic principle of the implementation of existing macro-regional strategy is the principle of "3 times better" by making better use of available EU funds, better use of existing institutions and better implementation of existing European acquis.

The European Commission has until now at the request of the European Council organized two macro-regional strategiers, for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBR) and Danube (EUSDR). Slovenia actively participates in the Danube macro-region and coordinate the implementation of two priority directions, "land and air transport" - together with Serbia and direction of the "administrative strengthening" - together with Austria Slovenia is also the initiator of two emerging macro-regions,

Adriatic-Ionic (EUSAIR) and Alpine (EUSALP). EUSAIR will be adopted by the end of this year, EUSALP until the summer 2015.



More specifically, international cooperation on water was presented by **Mitja Bricelj**, State Secretary at the Ministry for Agriculture and the Environment and Head of Delegation of Slovenia to ICPDR and ISRBC. The doctrine of sustainable development (Agenda 21, UNCED, 1992) in the Danube basin countries was very effectively manifested through enhanced cross-border cooperation in the most international river basin in the world. Objective: »To reduce pollution and sustainable use of water resources at the regional level«.

Cooperation and coordination within the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), have contributed to the effective implementation of the measures and the realization of the objectives of the EU Water Framework Directive at regional and interregional levels (Danube / Black Sea). With the work of the expert groups composed of national representatives, this process is further strengthened. The special value of the operation of the ICPDR is the high culture of cooperation with the business sector and non-governmental organizations. Due to the exceptional achievements in the promotion of sustainable use of water resources is ICPDR recognized as the most effective river commissions in the world, which was in 2007 awarded with the prestigious River Prize.

Experience from the implementation of the Convention on the Protection of the Danube River, was used in the preparation of the Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin (FASRB). International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC) is linking water management with economic uses and development. The European Commission has supported this approach with the project of preparation the Management Plan for the Sava basin (adopted in 2012); it is an ambitious cross-border program for navigation on the Sava River, a program to reduce flood risk, guidelines for sustainable tourism in the Sava River and its tributaries, active cooperation with industry, schools and non-governmental organizations.

Lučka Kajfež Bogataj, GWP SC member, presented a need and possible ways for “Adaptation to altered water cycle” in Slovenia. On the basis of measured data she presented increase of the temperature, especially during summers, increased evaporation in Slovenia, as well as more frequent droughts and floods. Level of aquifers is lower, mean river flows decrease, the rivers temperature increase. The purpose of adaptation is to reduce the risk and damage from current and future adverse effects of climate change in a way that is costeffective or exploiting the potential benefits. The adaptation strategies are needed for different time scales (long-term, medium-term, short-term measures). A common problem is the focus only on short-term measures.

Lidija Globevnik pointed out the shortcomings of water management in Slovenia . A European blueprint to safeguard Europe's water resources (2012) could serve as the basis for the strategy of integrated water management in Slovenia , which we do not have. We have a Water management plan, which is still far from offering the basics for the operational management, but give the guidelines for achieving good water status and good ecological status. Slovenia would need a strategy base for water management in a way that it would support the socio-economic needs and prevent high risk due to floods and droughts. Due to the lack of integrated water management, inappropriate use in a water space for urbanization and roads is possible.

Even in agriculture, the protection of land dedicated to water, is not respected enough, but there are also examples of good practice. The water losses in water supply systems were reduced substantial. Technological processes with a low water consumption have been introduced in many companies, as well as effective systems for collecting and treating wastewater. In the period 2021-2050 we can expect in Slovenia that the mean river flows could be reduced to 65 % in comparison with the average mean flow in the time period 1961-1990 and this is why the sustainable water management is so important for Slovenia.

Metka Petrič from the Karst Research Institute presented the appearance of occasional flooding in Slovenian intermittent karst lakes in karst fields and karst depressions, which occur almost every year, even several times a year. For the people living in these areas is this flooding usual and have mostly successfully adapted to them, at least to the extent of the floods, which have occurred in recent decades. Floods in February 2014 were exceptionally large. Snow and ice sleet retained a part of the precipitation on the surface. However, this was followed by rapid warming at constant and intense precipitation and the large amount of water in a short time broke in with the water already filled karst aquifer in the hinterland sources. Water inlet has exceeded the ability of run-off, which was limited due to the high level of groundwater in karst areas downstream. Rainfall in the last autumn and winter was above average, especially in January and February 2014, and the quantity of water in the karst underground extremely high. The water level is especially in the Planina lake lake has grown rapidly. Comparison with historical sources indicate that such and even more extensive flooding occurred in the past. Although their return period is very long, the possibility of recurrence of floods in a similar or even greater extent should be taken into account in land use planning in the future.



The contribution of forestry to the integrated management of river basins was presented by **Dušan Jurc, Urša Vilhar, Primož Simončič**. Forestry plays an important role in the integrated river basin management and they suggested improving cooperation of all stakeholders in this field. For good status of surface water and groundwater in the basin forest is of utmost importance. Due to the increasing prevalence of disorders that cause damage to forests larger scale, threaten the good condition of water in the forested catchments, as the damaged forests do not carry out all its functions. This year extensive ice sleet is natural disturbance in the forest, that does not threaten the forest as an ecosystem, but reduces its functions, that are useful to man and its water protection role. Planning forest management must become an integral part of the overall water management plans, as in Slovenia, a significant proportion of the river basin is covered by forests and they suggested improving cooperation of all stakeholders in this field. For good status of surface water and groundwater in the basin forest is of utmost importance.

Due to the increasing prevalence of disorders that cause damage to forests in a larger scale, threaten the good condition of water in the forested catchments, as the damaged forests do not carry out all its functions. Planning forest management must become an integral part of the overall water management plans, as in Slovenia, a significant proportion of the river basin is covered by forests.

Branko Ravnik, Director of Agriculture and Forestry Chamber of Slovenia spoke about the water for agriculture as the basis of food production in Slovenia. Development of irrigation is important for Slovenian stability of food production (climate change = water). The share of water for irrigation in

Slovenia today is barely 1%. The key questions are: How to achieve greater impact with less water? Can we design and construct water infrastructure to reduce flood risk, which would be consistent with the priorities in food production? Agriculture must be adequately incorporated into the system of water management.

Some facts: Water management is a global challenge to tackle global challenges it starts at the local level. Climate change is a reality especially in water supply in Slovenia. We must find a proper balance between the professional and economic interests. Protection of water resources is an important task for agriculture.

After a lively discussion, the participants expressed the following opinion of the individual targets:

2.1 Target 1: Water Resources

Slovenia is in general a country with abundant water resources, but they are not distributed equably. Many are in the Alpine part of the country (the Soča river basin and the upper stream of the river Sava), but much less in the karstic areas of Slovenia, which covers about 40% of the surface and in the north-eastern and eastern part of the country, where during periods of drought serious problem appears in the quantity and quality of water for drinking water supply. More sustainable use of water was supported by all participants.

An additional problem is the fact that most of the rivers, with the exception of the Drava and Mura, originated in Slovenia, while the majority of water resources are transboundary. This means that transboundary cooperation and consideration of the needs of downstream-lying countries is unavoidable.

2.2 Target 2: Water Governance

Under the existing legislation, water is centrally managed, under responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment. The majority of participants expressed the opinion that this way of policy has significant shortcomings and that Slovenia it should re-enter the system, which we have had already before, it is the management of the sub-basins on regional level. The participants were of the opinion that more cooperation in both directions "Top down and bottom up" is needed. It is also necessary to improve cooperation between the sectors, which is undoubtedly the critical point of water management in Slovenia, especially because it is a responsibility of one ministry, the money is distributed by the other without serious professional discussion.

2.3 Target 3: Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene

Water supply and sanitation in larger cities and settlements is more or less solved in compliance with WFD and other EU directives. However, major problem are the settlements with population under 2000, in which lives 40-45% of Slovenians (data 2008). Water supply is coming from small local sources, which are inadequately controlled. During drought or floods occasionally occur diseases caused by drinking water.

2.4 Target 4: Waste water, pollutions, water quality

In the same areas mentioned under target 3, is also the problem of wastewater treatment, especially in upstream karst areas, as untreated waste water pollutes wells downstream. The problem of dispersed pollution of the groundwater with nitrates and pesticides in agricultural areas is still present; however, the concentrations of both are slowly decreasing. This is the result of measures taken during last 15 years.

Water quality of rivers is improving. Unfortunately, we are still far from the goal, that all the rivers would reach good ecological status according to the WDF.

2.5 Target 5: Water-related Disasters

As everywhere in the world, also in Slovenia we are facing with climate change. More frequent and increasingly severe droughts and floods are a fact. The problem in Slovenia is that neither all the experts still support the recognition that adaptation to changing weather patterns is necessity which should start immediately. However, participants of the SDG national consultation unanimously support this need.

In summary, we support both global goal, as well as all 5 Targets. Priorities are in opinion of participants: water governance, including transboundary co-operation and water related disasters (Risk management).

3 Key implication and means of implementation identified for achieving the SD Goal and Targets.

3.1 The way forward?

During the panel discussion, led by Igor E. Bergant, started a lively discussion on priorities and potential as well as the most effective measures, questions of participants were answered by the speakers.

The participants unanimously supported the goal and targets of “The post-2015 agenda”. We have to choose the way how to proceed in Slovenia: to mitigate climate change, adapt to new situations or endure the negative impacts and consequences? Damage arising as a result of climate change is usually much larger than the investment to preventive measures, besides the adaptation could also bring new opportunities as the protection of water resources is a basis for economic and environmental investments. The objectives, opportunities, best practices and risk for Slovenia have been identified.

Participants agreed that the number of periods of drought affects the drinking water supply in Slovenia is increasing. To cope with the impacts of climate change on the water cycle requires a national strategy to adapt to climate change and program of measures to reduce damage. We need the strategy of integrated water resources management to retain abundant water resources in appropriate quality. Water should be set as a priority to the Slovenian Development Strategy. Clear long-, medium- and short-term objectives of water management are needed at the national level, which should be based on appropriate cost-benefit analysis and the existing potential. In the preparation of documents and actions is necessary to strengthen cooperation between sectors at national and local level.

Due to the fact that more than 40 % of population live in the settlements below 2000 inhabitants we will have to solve the problem of wastewater management in medium and small size settlements.



The plans for the construction of hydro power plants should be checked up, taking into account the fact that the mean discharges during periods of drought could decrease up to 65% of average mean flow in time period 1961-1990.

All Slovenian large rivers are transboundary and cooperation with other countries is very important. In Slovenia, according to participants opinion, much of which is in harmony with the proposed SDG is already happening within the EU strategies.

Country Slovenia participates in many activities within the EU Danube Strategy. GWP CEE in the context of this strategy focused on the priority areas PA4 (Water Quality) and PA5 (Environmental Risks) as most important. Slovenia is also actively participating in the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) and the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP).

Interesting observation was, that in the context of the Sava agreements some activities work that on the national level does not work, especially the social dimension of sustainable development. Some of the participants think that the approach "Think globally, act locally" might help to unite the people. Above all, people need to know the goal and know what they want.

It was pointed out that the water is not yet recognized as a natural resource of the 21st century, which has to be changed. Civil society can be the initiator of this.

Governments need to look beyond their term of 4 years and prepare a medium-term and long-term strategies. It is also necessary to examine the extent to which the measures proposed in the RBMP 2009 were implemented. An important role in these activities can play civil society.

The opinion of the participants was that the measures which are supported by the EU directives will be implemented with the help of European funds. A bigger problem will be the implementation of measures to adapt to climate change and measures for wastewater treatment of small and medium-sized settlements. Solving of these will require innovation; otherwise measures will not be financially sustainable. The problem is that all local communities do not have experts in project preparation and financial resources for co-financing. Participants were also of the opinion that it is necessary in new RBMP make it more realistic economic analysis, which was quite unreliable in the previous one.

4 Concluding comments specific to the country

1. We welcome the process of drafting the UN Development Agenda after 2015, which could be a good example to strengthen negotiation and cooperation. Water will play an important role in achieving sustainable development and poverty eradication in the future. We support the goal of sustainable development "Securing sustainable water for all", which comprehensively addressed the water issue. To include public participation, consultation and active involvement is useful and necessary in the process of the preparation and adoption of relevant documents in the field of sustainable development and water management. Among the people at the local level is a lot of historical memory and the

transfer of knowledge between generations should not be ignored by politicians and experts.

2. In addition to the water resources management plans Slovenia needs a Strategy for integrated management of river basins and sub-basins, which would include vision and guidance to all water-related fields. Strengthen cooperation between sectors and agreement at national and local level.
3. The risks posed by climate change in Slovenia in the last 30 years, require the climate change adaptation strategy and, of course, a program of measures to reduce losses and to control the risks of floods and droughts. It is necessary to determine degree of risk due to natural disasters.
4. Effective regional, cross-border cooperation in the field of water contributes to the stability and the maintenance of international peace and security. Good practice and expertise in Slovenia are transferable to other regions of the world. A good basis for integration and achieving the sustainable development goal is international cooperation under conventions and agreements (Danube, Sava, Jadran). Integration within the macroregions is reasonable and certainly useful, due to the transfer and exchange of knowledge as well as the reduction of financial inputs.
5. Wastewater treatment is a problem in many small settlements, where it will be necessary to find innovative solutions, which require lower financial investment. The problems of drinking water supply appears particularly during periods of drought, the floods and the karst springs after the first heavy rainfall following prolonged drought, - these events are becoming more frequent
6. Damage caused by ice sleet will undoubtedly have influence on the water balance by increased evaporation, reduced water retention, increased surface erosion and reduction of the effects of water self-cleaning ability by the forest.
7. The measures supported by the EU directives will be implemented with the help of European funds. More difficult will be the implementation of measures for adaptation to climate change and measures for wastewater treatment of small and medium-sized settlements. Solving of these will require innovation; otherwise measures will not be financially sustainable. Local communities do not have experts in project preparation and financial resources for co-financing. Participants were also of the opinion that it is necessary in new RBMP make it more realistic economic analysis, which was quite unreliable in the previous one.
8. Participants at the consultation called upon the active inclusion of the President of the Republic in the national dialogues on water.
9. In the international arena, Slovenia has fantastic opportunity to strengthen cooperation in the water sector due to its good experience and knowledge in the field of integration of macroand trans-boundary water cooperation. Water as one of the greatest global challenges of the modern world must have a visible place in the objectives of sustainable development and the overall development agenda of the UN by 2015.

