

SDG Summit 2015

Report from GWP Chair Dr. Ursula Schaefer-Preuss

At the occasion of the High Level Session of the UN on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in New York from 25 to 29 September, I participated in high level panels and side events focusing on water, gender, other relevant sectors and areas of the new 2030 SDG agenda, and took advantage of this important gathering to meet strategic partners.

In the afternoon of the first day of this High Level session, Friday 25 September, in the presence of 9 Heads of State and many Ministers (among them the Heads of State of Brasil, Germany, South Africa, and Sweden) the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was approved by 193 member states, a groundbreaking event with a shared vision of humanity, as ASG Thomas Gass of ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council of the United Nations), has quoted many of the high ranking representatives.

It is now time to implement this agenda: national processes have to be strengthened in all parts of the agenda, with partnerships being the *sine qua non* for successful implementation.

The next important steps on our journey for this far-reaching and people-centered undertaking (“leave no one behind”) are COP 21 (UNFCCC climate conference) in Paris in December and the session of the UN Statistical Commission in March 2016 where decisions will be taken on the monitoring and implementation mechanisms for the 2030 SDG Agenda.

Water has a prominent place in the challenging 2030 SDG agenda. But there was agreement among all partners that a more binding institutional arrangement in the UN context is needed and has to be decided by member states. The work of the technical coordination mechanism of UN Water and partners will continue to play an important role, but it is not enough just to raise awareness of the urgency of pushing for a water secure world.

An intergovernmental commission in the context of ECOSOC appears to be emerging as a solution. ASG Thomas Gass indicated that by using existing frameworks such as ECOSOC, a Commission for Water could be established, also preparing for the next High Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development, foreseen in the 2030 SDG Agenda.

In this context it is important to await the proposal to be made to the UN Secretary General by UNSGAB (the UN Secretary General’s Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation) in their final ceremony on November 20, 2015.

Among the many side events and workshops devoted to the manifold aspects to the SDGs, just a couple focused on water and related aspects. Health, gender, cities, climate change, education, private sector had a more prominent space.

I attended a high-level special event “Catalysing Implementation and Achievement of the Water-related SDGs” by invitation of Tajikistan, where I had a dedicated speaking slot. I also attended a side event “Making it happen: ending inequalities and ensuring sanitation, water and hygiene for all as a basis for achieving the SDGs” by invitation of the Netherlands on behalf of South Africa, Hungary, and Bangladesh with the opportunity to speak from the floor.

In my interventions I made strong reference to the importance of our partnership approach as being

important on the journey to leave no one behind, and that GWP is happy to provide space for action based on our community based platforms, experience sharing, and knowledge sharing on water resources management related issues across sectors. I made reference to our Gender Strategy and Youth Strategy, by that contributing to a more people centered approach on our way of working together with stakeholders through our broad based networks in implementing the SDG agenda.

It is important to note that Ms. Nomvula Mokonyane, Minister of Water and Sanitation of the Republic of South Africa, has been pushing an initiative, together with other delegations, to launch the UN International Year Water and Women in 2017. South Africa does this as Chair of the G77, and already has all 56 AMCOW (African Ministers' Council on Water) members as official supporters. The Netherlands, Switzerland, and Finland are also supporters. They want to submit a draft resolution to the 2nd Committee of the UN at the end of October in order to get final approval by the General Assembly before the end of 2015. It is important for GWP to support the proposed resolution by informing its partners on this initiative.

UN Water, through its technical working group, will continue to be actively involved in the follow up of the monitoring and indicator designing process, and it is highly appreciated that GWP will provide continuous support and input into this work.

As my take-away from this exciting time in New York during the initiation of this new phase of human development together with all member states, it is my urgent message to GWP to continue to be involved in the global processes in the UN/ECOSOC context and beyond with the UN family and international organizations such as financing institutions, agencies related to water security (including water and disasters), and other important thematic processes at the global level, in order not to lose ground which has been built up, established, and strengthened over the last three years.

GWP has many entry points to do this proactively, together with our partners on the ground, be it via Country Water Partnerships or Regional Water Partnerships, and in the context of our climate programmes, urban initiatives, transboundary cooperation, our multi stakeholder platforms, and gender and youth – just to mention a few. GWP should make use of this great momentum with the 2030 SDG agenda – and water in the midst of it – to creatively take advantage of the innovative work we have started in pursuit of our vision for a water secure world.