

## Water: the Connecting Link to Climate Change Adaptation

“An integrated approach to managing and developing the world’s water resources is vital for not only driving world economies, ensuring human well-being and security from hunger, but can also serve as an essential building block for enhancing coherence on adaptation,” said Dr. Ursula Schaefer-Preuss, Chair of GWP at a side event at the Bonn climate change negotiations. “Water is the connecting link because climate impacts are largely felt through the medium of water,” she said.

This was one of the main messages at a side event on Monday, June 10, 2013, “The connecting link: Water Security and Adaptation.”

The global climate community is addressing adaptation to climate change under entities such as the Nairobi Work Programme, the Green Climate Fund, the Adaptation Committee, and others. The Adaptation Committee is working to ensure coherence on adaptation in the various negotiation streams in the climate change process.

Another message from the side event was that until the world puts water security at the centre of adaptation as part of national development, gains made in economic growth and development will continue to be undermined by water-related disasters such as droughts and floods, threatening food security, energy security, and livelihood security worldwide. “Water is as important for adaptation as energy for mitigation,” said Dr. Schaefer-Preuss.

“We have to realize that droughts are here to stay and floods are here to stay,” said Alex Simalabwi, GWP’s Global Coordinator for the Water and Climate Programme. “The world needs to prepare for this new reality,” he said.

Mr. Simalabwi said governments need to ensure investments for climate resilient development. But he recognized that there are several challenges, such as low absorption capacity in national planning systems, inadequate institutional capacity, and lack of policy coherence across various economic sectors.

Capitalizing on the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) was acknowledged as key, but it was also pointed out that water resources do not respect national borders so transboundary solutions are essential.

GWP and AMCOW (the Africa Ministers’ Council on Water) are supporting climate change adaptation from the global to the local level through their joint Water and Climate Programme. For example, in Africa the Programme is working in five transboundary river basins such as the Bugasera, shared by Rwanda and Burundi. Through a partnership approach, the Programme is bridging the divide between the climate, development, and water communities.

At a press briefing the next day, the following statements were made:

Dr Ursula Schaefer-Preuss, GWP Chair: “Adaptation has received more focus in the climate change negotiation process which means a greater importance for water. Water and climate are two sides of one coin, and we need to reduce silo thinking when talking about adaptation measures”.

Bai Mass Taal, AMCOW Executive Secretary, outlined the joint AMCOW-GWP Water, Climate and Development Programme for Africa, and commented: “Africa is all about water security, because without water Africa cannot achieve economic growth”.

Lovisa Selander, Communications Manager at the Stockholm International Water Institute: “There can be no successful adaptation measures without taking water into account. Water runs across all sectors so whatever issue you address, you have to talk about water”.

Sabina Bokal, Project Manager of the Integrated Drought Management Programme (IDMP) for GWP Central and Eastern Europe: “Although the Central and Eastern European region is currently facing major floods, drought is a very serious issue in the region. GWP runs a programme together with the region and countries to make them more proactive instead of being reactive to the impact of drought.”

Pervais Amir, representing GWP South Asia, said: “South Asia has one-fourth of the world’s population and faces challenges such as melting glaciers, floods, droughts, and coastal sea rise. In a region which is vulnerable to conflict - there is already a war on terror - we don’t want one on water”.

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