

A Week to Remember

2300 participants from over 130 countries and 200 collaborating organisations gathered in the Swedish capital for the 2008 World Water Week in Stockholm. They met to improve a global situation where more than 2 billion people are without access to safe drinking water or suffer ill health due to poor sanitation and where growing, richer populations mount pressure on limited water resources.

Hosted by the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), the week is the leading annual global meeting place for capacity-building, partnership-building and follow-up on the implementation of international processes and programmes in water and development. In 2008, it served as a flagship event in the UN International Year of Sanitation. United under the theme “Progress and Prospects on Water: For A

Clean and Healthy World with Special Focus on Sanitation”, over 40 sessions took up critical sanitation and hygiene topics.

Anders Berntell, Executive Director of SIWI, provided a forceful kick-off to the week by calling on all actors to make solving the sanitation crisis a primary concern. Noting that 2.5 billion people lack access to adequate sanitation and the millions who die of related diseases each year as a result, he lamented that current progress towards the Millennium Development Goal Sanitation Target – to halve by 2015 the amount of people living without access to adequate sanitation – will be missed by 700 million people. “Governments, donor agencies and financial institutions, local authorities and municipalities, headmasters in schools and husbands in families – everyone needs to start prioritising sanitation.”

At the High Level Panel, titled “For a Clean and Healthy World – The Role of

Sanitation for the MDGs”, H.E Marc Ravalomanana, President of Madagascar, echoed this sentiment on the key role of leadership to not only stimulate investment in latrines but to also ensure that people want to use them. Leaders, especially at the local level, set the example and become role models for the rest of the community. “Only the chief of the village can initiate and lead the change of the people’s behaviours and habits,” he stated.

Fellow panellists, Hon. Mamphono Khaketla, Minister of Education and Training, Lesotho, Dr. Nicholas Alipui, Director of Programmes, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Mr. James P. Leape, Director General, WWF International, Dr. Maximilian Martin, Global Head, Philanthropy Services, UBS, Switzerland and Mr. Anders Nordström, Director General, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), agreed that improved



Photo: Thomas Henrikson

Panellists at the High Level Panel: For a Clean and Healthy World – The Role of Sanitation for the MDGs (from left): Moderator Mr. Jon Lane, WSSCC; Dr. Maximilian Martin, Global Head, Philanthropy Services, UBS, Switzerland; Mr. Anders Nordström, Director General, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida); Mr. James P. Leape, Director General, WWF International; Hon. Mamphono Khaketla, Minister of Education and Training, Lesotho; Dr. Nicholas Alipui, Director of Programmes, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and H.E. Marc Ravalomanana, President of Madagascar.

communication in the sector is paramount. Sanitation and hygiene are the most cost-effective investments for poverty reduction and human health. This key message, they stressed must be better communicated using plain language, simple terms and clear illustrations to convince local and national governments to finance hygiene education and latrine provision.

For the first time, the week featured an “Asian Water Day” and two full “Water and Climate Days”. Asia Water Day, co-convened by Asian Development Bank (ADB), Asia-Pacific Water Forum (APWF), Global Water Partnership (GWP), UN-HABITAT and others, discussed the challenges faced in the rapidly growing region of over 4 billion people. Water resources are coming under extreme pressure as a result of urbanisation and industrialisation, pollution, and climate-induced natural disasters. “Inspired leaders who champion reforms, mobilise resources and involve communities can play a key role in helping Asia meet its many water and sanitation supply challenges,” said Xianbin Yao, Acting Director General of ADB’s Regional and Sustainable Development Department.

Hot Climate Discussions

Over Water and Climate Days, the climate debate stormed on, with its eye now focused on adaptation throughout a series of seminars, presentations and high level debates. Prof. Nigel Arnell, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and Director, Walker Institute for Climate System Research, University of Reading, United Kingdom, presented the 2008 IPCC Technical Report on Climate Change and Water and illustrated climate change as a driver impacting water resources. Seminars stressed that natural systems and growing populations face increasing risks and vulnerability to climate change. Effective adaptation will require education, improvements in both the quality and availability of information and above all smart freshwater management to deal with changes in water availability.

Key Messages to Take Home

Discussions throughout the week emphasised the central role of water in the connected challenges presented by rapid global change. Climate, food and energy crisis, population and economic growth will demand we govern and consume water resources more prudently. In many regions, water resources are or have already been over-exploited while larger and richer populations increase demand for water intensive products.



Photo: Thomas Henrikson

H.R.H. Prince Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands, Chair of UNSGAB, stated in his opening session speech: “One world, one dream” may be the slogan of the Olympic Games, but it applies equally to us. Let us pursue our goal with the same spirit and determination as our top athletes. The inscription on our medal reads ‘sanitation for all.’ That is our end goal. Silver is no option, we are going for gold!”



Photo: Anna Sjogren

Former Swedish Olympic Champion and UNICEF ambassador Kajsa Bergqvist inaugurated the exhibition “Sanitation-is-dignity” in Normalmstorg in Stockholm on Saturday before the Week. The campaign, run in parallel to the World Water Week, is an initiative of the German Toilet Organization, supported by UN-Water. For more information: www.sanitation-is-dignity.org

More than technology and technical machinery, the outcome of these challenges will be determined by the choices we make as individuals, and the priorities pursued by society. Sanitation and water must place high.

Businesses, governments, agriculture, and individuals can and must reduce their consumption of water resources. Prof. John Anthony Allan, who received the 2008 Stockholm Water Prize during the week

for his innovative creation and application of the virtual water concept, the groundbreaking tool behind the water footprint, helped show how this can be done. The first step is learning the water footprint of one’s activities. The next steps are to increase water productivity and reduce consumption, waste and inefficiency.

The urgency, necessity and opportunity presented by the threat of converging crises creates an exciting chance to create solu-

tions through innovation collaboration. International Finance Corporation (IFC) Executive Vice President and CEO Lars Thunell, stated in the closing session, "I believe we are at a tipping point ... The specter is of a food, fuel, and water crisis in an increasingly populated world facing climate change. It means the private and public sectors have a shared interest in working together to solve the world's water and sanitation challenges... the moment is right. We can avert a crisis – as partners, working together."

New Reporting System

The official 2008 World Water Week Synthesis is now available. The document represents the World Water Week's broader global water and development contribution. It contains Overarching Conclusions from SIWI, as well as for the first time a reporting on five thematic areas by specially appointed World Water Week Rapporteur Teams on Sanitation, Transboundary Water, Water and Climate Change, Pollution Abatement and Ecosystem Protection and Water Resources Management.

Looking Ahead to 2009

The 2009 World Water Week in Stockholm will take place August 16-22, under the theme "Accessing Water for the Common Good" and will be the first year under a new three-year niche entitled "Water – Responding to Global Changes". Special attention will be paid to transboundary basins where coordinated policies and comanagement are of utmost importance and best approaches to generate positive outcomes for different entities, such as developed and developing countries and diverse social groups, must be shared. In addition to the special focus on Transboundary Waters, cross-cutting issues in water, food, finance, sanitation, climate and development will be discussed. To learn more, please find the First Announcement and Call for Abstracts and more information at www.worldwaterweek.org.

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The World Water Week Sponsors

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Voices from the World Water Week 2008

Why do you attend the World Water Week?



"I am here for the chance to learn more about water and sanitation issues, and also to network and interact with people from all over the world."
Kariuki Mugo, Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor, Kenya

"I will present a poster and I look forward to making great contacts. I also really enjoy seeing the Junior Water prize winners projects, they are really great!"
Dimitry Makarov, Researcher, Ecological Microbiology, Saint-Petersburg Pasteurs Institute



What are the Most Pressing Challenges in Your Region?



"Water is unevenly distributed in Uganda. There is a need for controlling the sharing between the different sectors in order to reduce the risk of conflict and quality of water."
Liliann Idrakua, Water quality manager, Uganda

"Low capacity and shortage of skills and resources. This is worsened by wide spread corruption and mismanagement."
Iftekhar Zaman, Executive Director of Transparency International Bangladesh



What Needs to be Done to Make the International Year of Sanitation a Success?



"In Pakistan the main issue is wastewater treatment. There, greater interaction between public and private wastewater treatment, better technology, higher education and local action are needed."
Zaigham Habib, Specialists for water resources, The Planning Commission Pakistan

"The most important thing is to work together, from the governmental leaders down to the grass root level. We must use advocacy to influence our leaders and raise awareness on the local level."
Aishatu Hamza, Water analyst, Hurpa Community Development Initiatives, Nigeria



"First of all people need to talk about sanitation issues and overcome taboos. Secondly, to realise the productive side of sanitation that makes it a good investment. Moreover, to offer different sanitary solutions for people with different needs, social practices and economic situations."
Roland Schertenleib, Environmental Engineer, Switzerland

What Will You Take Home from World Water Week 2008?

"The biggest thing I will take home is new ideas and ways to help bring innovative thinking to and from the older and younger generation"
Nighisty Ghezae, Head of Scientific Program, International Foundation for Science, Eritrea



"Different points of view from specialists from all over the world about the trade-offs between water, energy and food issues."
Vladimir Sizonenko, Senior Researcher, Institute of General Energy, Ukraine