

World Water Week Opening Statement, 2 September 2013

Mr. Torgny Holmgren, Executive Director, SIWI.

Excellencies, Deputy Secretary General, Honourable Ministers, Mayor of Stockholm, Stockholm Water Prize Laureates and Award winners, Distinguished guests, and Dear Friends.

I am honoured to welcome all of you to the World Water Week 2013 in Stockholm.

Since I joined SIWI a year ago I have seen how the findings and ideas from the World Water Week last year on Water and Food Security have received huge attention in international policy, practice, and in media.

My desire is that this 23rd World Water Week further develops its status as the annual global meeting on water for reviewing achievements, staying up to date on current affairs, and for shaping the policies of the future.

However, none of this will be possible without the commitment of every one of you in this room. Thank you all for bringing all your views and ideas that this forum is founded upon.

I would especially like to thank the Advisory Committee, the Scientific Programme Committee and the Prize Juries. Your brilliant minds are the backbone to the success of the World Water Week!

In this context I would also like to name the Week's [main] sponsors: PepsiCo; Nestlé; Elsevier; Fundación Femsá and Sweco, and our media partner, the Guardian.

My deepest appreciation goes to all the organizations and companies that support the Stockholm Water Prize, the Stockholm Junior Water Prize, and the Stockholm Industry Water Award.

Thanks also goes to our key collaborating partners this year: the Global Water Partnership, the World Wide Fund for Nature and the World Business Council on Sustainable Development.

Finally, I would like to mention the core funders of SIWI's activities: The City of Stockholm, the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (Sida) and the Government of Sweden.

Dear participants,

This year we come together in the spirit of water cooperation and partnership.

The Week is actually built upon the foundation of partnerships. The more than 100 sessions that will take place over the course of the week will be done through the cooperation of 260 convening organizations.

Let me mention three reasons why cooperation on water is more needed than ever.

First, scarcity of water.

The world is facing a global water crisis. Competition for limited water resources continues to increase dramatically to meet the demands of growing populations and economies. The OECD estimates that by 2050 the world's demand for water will grow by 55 percent. The World Economic Forum has identified water supply crisis as one of the most dangerous risks facing the modern world.

Mortgaging our future by draining water from the ground, surface and sky faster than it can be replaced by nature is untenable and unwise. It will undermine the stability and security of our entire civilisation.

We have a simple choice to make.

We need to change the way we use and value water. The health of our economy and our planet depends upon it. A water secure future is achievable, by embracing good governance, applying effective economic policy tools, investing in the right technical solutions, and building strong partnerships between water users.

Second, shared water resources.

Nearly half of all available water crosses national borders. As demand for water grows, competition between nations over common water resources will most likely escalate.

For decades, transboundary water has been presented as a potential reason for violent conflict between nations. Fortunately this has happened very seldom. Instead, water has more often been a source of cooperation, even in situations of political tension.

Still, we can cooperate much more effectively over transboundary waters than we do today. Initiatives such as the UNDP Shared Waters Partnership show how to build the trust needed for governments to develop legal agreements for cooperation on common water resource.

A *third* driver of why cooperation on water is becoming more important is the accelerating urbanisation worldwide.

We stand at a crossroads: Over the next twenty year huge investments will be made in urban infrastructure that will be with us for the next 50-100 years. This is an opportunity to build smart cities that are fit for our future. These decisions are too important for any actor to make alone. Households and the private sector must partner up with the public sector to ensure that our growing cities provide clean and healthy environment for their citizens.

Turning to the immediate future, the international community is now gearing up towards formulating a set of sustainable development goals by 2015.

As a contribution to this global discussion we are formulating a Stockholm Statement calling for a dedicated global goal on water. We have a draft statement available on our website, having had open consultations during the summer. We are still eager to hear your views until Wednesday. I will present the final version of the Statement during the Closing Session on Friday.

Finally, I would like to express a special welcome to Dr. Peter Morgan, recipient of the Stockholm Water Prize this year. You will inspire us throughout the week with your tireless commitment and inventive genius that has helped millions of people gain access to clean sanitation and drinking water.

Also, a warm welcome to Netafim, the winner of the 2013 Stockholm Industry Water Award. Your remarkable achievements in drip- and micro-irrigation technology are helping farmers all over the world to “grow more with less”.

Dear Friends,

We have a fantastic week ahead of us. I sincerely hope you take advantage of this time together and build the foundation for partnerships that will prosper for years to come.

Thank you.