



High-Level Experts and Leaders Panel on Water and Disasters Dialogue

“From the Bandung Spirit Water Summit to the UN 2026 Water Conference”

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Water is the essence of life and its cornerstone.

Water provides irrigation for our fields, safety for our hospitals, it supplies our industry, and guaranties biodiversity. As a universal gift, it is not the property of anyone but belongs to everyone. It crosses geographical boundaries and transcends political and social realities.

However, water faces climate divagation, urban anarchy and population burst. It is a source of vulnerability, instability, tension and sometimes conflict.

Where it lacks peace vacillates. We live in a world where so many old balances are being questioned, and new international orders are gradually being established.

Yes, dear colleagues, navigating this century is travelling between war and peace, inflation and deflation, poverty and prosperity. Because human beings generate benefits and harms.

This is the reason why, in the spirit of Bandung, the spirit of peaceful coexistence, the spirit of mutual respect and tolerance, the World Water Council is pleased to participate in this most welcome dialogue today.

Our responsibility is huge, to overcome egoism and dogmatic oppositions. Our responsibility is to clarify the issues, determine the objectives and undertake actions to make it possible to guarantee safe access to water resources, to guarantee human development as well as nature protection.

Ladies and gentlemen, navigating the world today, and probably tomorrow, means navigating between excess of water and lack of water, between flood and drought. This is the consequence of climate divagations. Not so long ago, we tended to consider that the world was divided into arid



and wetlands. And we, here, took so many years to admit that drought was also a form of water disaster.

Many recent weather events are a good illustration of this.

In eastern Spain, severe drought until spring of this year, then catastrophic floods in Valencia caused nearly 330 deaths. In California, in recent years, long periods of drought and then floods happened in February and November 2024.

In Pakistan, the terrible floods of summer 2022 with several thousand deaths, were preceded and followed by drought in Sindh and Baluchistan, along with food insecurity and malnutrition. And not only! But also in the Middle East, in the Horn of Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, in Somalia, in Mali, in Morocco.

The conclusion is clear. “Droughts and Floods” are the same fight to secure water resources in terms of quality and quantity. With new consequences in terms of additional infrastructure and financing.

And with the obligation to reconsider land use, territorial planning and establish early warning systems as it was done in Banda Aceh in Indonesia, after the Tsunami.

But beyond the climate, we must look at evidence of the growing link between water and demography. The world population growth will remain significant until the end of the century. And regardless of our efforts to promote digital innovations and sobriety policies, it is certain that large additional bodies of water will be essential to the survival of many human communities.

One example among many, highlighted by demographers, is Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo, which had 6 million inhabitants in 2000, 18 million today and 22 million are expected in 2030. This will gradually represent between 100 and 120 million cubic meters per year, in the six coming years, for domestic use only.

This also has significant implications for investment in infrastructures, treatment and supply for these additional water volumes.



And additionally, there is the anxious question of the need for water to produce food for at least 2 billion more people by the end of this century. This is the importance of the concept of “more crop per drop”.

We could here and now go further in the review of the situation considering the precious link between water and natural resources. But we need to give priority to action and call for action to respond to threats and provide concrete answers and ground solutions that are expected by the poorest, the most deprived, permanent victims of the disturbances of this world.

As our World Water Council has been saying for more than 15 years, these solutions are based on 3 major pillars, as you also mentioned Ms Retno Marsudi last November 4th, in New York, saying that: “*Global acceleration of SDG6 must focus on financing, innovative data and governance*”.

Yes, the 3 pillars of water are knowledge, governance and finance.

First, knowledge. Trying to find the right balance between human intelligence and artificial intelligence. Transfer water over large distances, better use of groundwater, desalination of seawater and above all recycling of used water and so many other perspectives...

Secondly, governance. Governance should be accepted and not imposed. Decentralized governance to ensure water use as close as possible to local communities.

And finance, third. We need increased funding, accessible funding, and funding which is not begged for. It is a huge job because water needs money, and money needs water. We have long called for the cancellation of the water debt of the poorest countries, the implementation of sub-sovereignty, the generalization of blended finance, the creation of a world mechanism for public guarantees and more de-centralized financial mechanisms.

Additionally, three priorities must be put forward:

First, water for health, rapid detection of pandemics and waterborne diseases, a real place for sanitation and stormwater management.

The second is water for food by reducing losses in irrigation and rethinking more water-efficient food models.



The third is to find a better balance between water for humans and water for nature through “nature-based solutions” in order to guarantee biodiversity and protect air, land and marine ecosystems.

These priorities need to stop working only in vertical silos, like “Integrated Water Resources Management”, but today require a horizontal approach such as the "Five Fingers Alliance" which create interaction between water, energy, health, food and education.

This justifies the complementarity between technical and political approaches. "Water is Politics" was said and repeated before and during the Bali Forum. This is the whole effort of awareness to be amplified towards decision-makers, the general public and especially towards the young generations.

For this purpose, we advocate mandatory education on water and disaster prevention from primary school. And the acceptance of youth delegates at all levels of international and national governance, as our Council does.

It is now time, dear colleagues, to move from politics to hydro diplomacy. A new form of hydro diplomacy which generates aqueducts of cooperation, fostering dialogue between nations, sharing transboundary rivers and aquifers. We want Peaceful Shores and not “war of the rivers”. Cooperation rather than confrontation, association rather than division.

So, dear Hang Seung Soo, dear Retno Marsudi, here are some of the issues that we are putting on the table of our work today and tomorrow: security, law, governance, financing, diplomacy.

In Bali, during the 10th World Water Forum which was an unforgettable success thanks to the tremendous commitment of the Indonesian people and government, we said to the younger generation: Be water warriors in a peaceful fight! to make the cause of water a great cause of this century, a cause in the spirit of Bandung, water for peace and peace in the world.