UN-Water Expert Panel on Water Security

25 September 2012
Grand Hyatt Hotel, New York

Background

It has been long recognized that secure and sustainable access to clean water is essential to human health, economic growth, and a range of other critical uses from food production to navigation. At the same time, there has been a growing appreciation of the relationships between water, peace and security at both local and regional levels and an increasing need to focus global attention on these challenges (see following 2012 publications: *The Global Water Crisis: Addressing an Urgent Security Issue* and *the National Intelligence Council's Intelligence Community Assessment on Global Water Security)*. This had led to a definitional challenge between "water security" as a reference to secure and sustainable access versus the use of "water security" to describe water as a contributor to conflicts and tensions.

Over the past three years, UN-Water has started addressing this definitional gap in a systematic manner, with some recognition that water security must be described in its broadest sense and accommodates issues of human development, ecosystem protection, national and regional security, and hazards and risks through disasters. The work of UN-Water has thus focused on developing a "working definition" of water security that provides a broad framework for addressing global water challenges (including cooperation on shared surface and groundwater resource). This effort takes into account the fact that the international community has faced some difficulty in agreeing to a definition and description of water security that would suit everyone's perspectives, and often, vested interests.

UN-Water has started developing an Analytical Brief on water security that would describe the broader set of issues that are of concern to the United Nations and its member states, and describe policy responses by the UN system as well as other actors. Such a document would define the consolidated position of the UN system on water security and identify avenues through which water security concerns could be addressed, including but not limited to the UN Security Council. The dialogue in this Expert Panel is intended to provide direct inputs into the development of the Analytical Brief, which will be launched on the World Water Day 2013.

The Expert Panel will also benefit directly from a high-level UN General Assembly side event organized on the same day focused on water, peace and security. The side event – designed as a foreign ministers roundtable – aims to increase political will to address the challenges associated with managing shared waters. Some of the key questions to be considered include: Where do water challenges pose the most significant threat to development and security? And, how should the global community respond to these threats?

Objectives of the Expert Panel

The Expert Panel will analyze the political dialogue at the UNGA Side Event and offer recommendations and ideas that might contribute to furthering the work of UN-Water on Water Security.

Specific objectives are:

- To place the political dialogue in the context of the state of knowledge and contemporary perspectives on water security issues – a broad spectrum that includes peace and security issues;
- To identify international development issues that correlate directly with water security concerns;
- To discuss areas or regions of concern where water security is, or may soon become, a major concern; and
- To agree on the themes and areas for which work at the UN can make a significant impact – essentially outlining ideas and issues to be incorporated into the UN-Water Analytical Brief.

Expert Panel Outputs and Outcomes

The primary outcomes of the panel will be insights into advancing the international dialogue on water security and triggering further research and policy work on the topic. It is anticipated that the organizations and individuals participating in the Expert Panel will continue to engage with UN-Water as it continues its work on water security.

The following key outputs are anticipated:

- Expert Panel summary report; providing a synthesis of the key discussion points and recommendations.
- Inputs to the UN-Water Analytical Brief, including summary of findings emerging from the UNGA Side Event.
- Inputs to the UN-Water website and other related dissemination channels

Proposed Agenda

15:30-15:40 Welcome Remarks by the UN-Water Chair
Mr. Michel Jarraud, Secretary General WMO

15:40-16:00 Update of the work of UN-Water on water security issues, including summary of key recommendations from the UNGA Side Event on water security
Dr. Zafar Adeel, Director UNU-INWEH,
Co-Chair UN-Water Task Force on Water Security

16:00-17:00 Expert Panel Discussion
Moderator: Dr. Zafar Adeel

Panelists: (each panelists has 5 minutes for introductory comments)

- Prof. Patricia Wouters
  Former Director, UNESCO Centre for Water Law, Policy and Science
- Dr. Anders Jägerskog
  Director, Knowledge Services, Stockholm International Water Institute
- Dr. Charlie Iceland
  Senior Associate/Manager Aqueduct Alliance, World Resources Institute
- Dr. Peter Gleick
  President, the Pacific Institute
- Mr. Johan Gély
  Senior Water Policy Advisor, SDC
- Mr. Chris Holmes
  Global Water Coordinator, USAID

Rapporteur: Ms. Harriet Bigas, Project Officer, UNU-INWEH

17:00-17:45 Open Dialogue on Water Security

17:45-18:00 Wrap up and summary of recommendations for UN-Water
Dr. Zafar Adeel together with Ms. Harriet Bigas

18:00-19:00 Reception