

# **CHAIR'S SUMMARY**

(FINAL December 4<sup>th</sup>, 15:15pm)

Excellencies, honored guests, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

I have the honor, on behalf of the Chairperson of the Summit, to present the summary of the Summit.

The outcomes and key messages from the 1<sup>st</sup> Asia-Pacific Water Summit are strong, tangible and wide-ranging. The challenges and opportunities facing our region were discussed in all their complexity over the last two days. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to compress such a rich discourse in only a few minutes. I will, instead, attempt to convey the general sense of the proceedings. If I have omitted any particularly relevant information, I seek your indulgence.

After Mr. Mori, as the Chair of the Summit's Steering Committee, opened the Summit and his Imperial Highness, the Crown Prince of Japan set the stage with his inspiring remarks, Mr. Fukuda, the Prime Minister of Japan, addressed the delegates and described how three main water problems were affecting the Asia-Pacific region: the lack of access to water and sanitation, water-related disasters, and the need to secure water for agriculture. He concluded by stating that IWRM is the solution to these problems, and added that water would be on the agenda of next years' G8 Summit.

In his presentation on the Messages from the Asia-Pacific Water Forum, Prof. Koh, Chair of the APWF's Governing Council, presented the work of the APWF has been doing since its creation in March 2006 – less than two years ago. Prof. Koh presented the Policy Brief, a report that was prepared by members of the APWF family. **He reminded the participants of the urgency of the water-related problems facing the region as well as the innovative work being done in many countries.** He urged all Summit participants, leaders and high-level decision-makers in particular, to step forward and commit themselves to making a real difference by bringing water to the top of the political agenda and to work together to solve our region's water problems. This was imperative in order to support efforts at development and poverty reduction.

Sanitation was the focus of the Keynote Speech delivered by His Royal Highness Prince Willem-Alexander of The Netherlands, who also serves as Chairman of the United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation. Noting that solving water problems in both rural and urban contexts is one of the keys to unlocking economic growth, the Crown Prince went on to make the link between the Priority Themes of the Asia-Pacific Water Forum and the six areas most in need of focus from the Hashimoto Action Plan.

Warm words of encouragement were then given in a video message from United Nations Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who emphasized the critical nature of the region's water problems,

especially in the context of climate change, and underlined the urgent nature of this Summit and the need to commit to action.

Finally, in his Memorial Lecture, His Imperial Highness, the Crown Prince of Japan, offered insightful perspectives about the linkages between water and human development, with historical examples from Japan and from his experiences from his many travels. This enriched the subsequent discourse over the next two days.

**Every one of the presentations from the opening plenary was delivered with a sense of urgency. Coming from leaders at the highest levels, their messages did more than simply set the stage for the Summit. Collectively, they stressed that progress in the region was possible, provided the proper commitment and support was made available.**

After the election of the distinguished chair and vice-chairs, and the adoption of the agenda, we heard from a number of heads of state and government who talked about water-related challenges in each of their countries and presented some of the solutions they have been working on.

The leaders from the Central Asian countries of Tajikistan the Kyrgyz Republic described how their countries economies were particularly vulnerable to water-related disasters and the need for a cooperative approach to solve water-related issues including those of the Aral

Sea Basin. Increasing investment levels, particularly in rehabilitating their countries aging water infrastructure requires immediate attention.

Noting that water scarcity was an inherent challenge to low-lying islands, mainly because of their lack of river systems and vulnerable groundwater resources, the Leaders of the Asia-Pacific small island states of Kiribati, Palau, Nauru, Federated States of Micronesia, Niue and Tuvalu hoped that the Summit would mobilize an increased commitment to financial and technical support. For several of these states, the real threat from projected sea level rise and increased cyclonic activity associated with climate change is a major concern to their lives and livelihoods.

The Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan described how climate change has led to rapidly receding glaciers, which in turn pose the threat of glacial lake bursts which leads to flash floods that affect human settlements in the downstream valleys.

The Secretary General of UNESCO, offered the scientific experience of the organization in seeking solutions to water related problems in the region.

**Although clearly focused on water, it is interesting to note that all the speeches in the plenary identified climate change as a critical challenge to effective and sustainable water management. This clearly demonstrates the need to mainstream adaptation to climate change into the programmes and actions we will be**

**undertaking to solve the water problems of the Asia-Pacific region.**

The session on Climate Change, Glaciers, and Water Resources in the Himalayan region called attention to the fact that several glaciers have been shrinking at an accelerated rate in recent decades, and to the need to increase regional cooperation among the countries in the Himalayan region to gather and share information for assessing and monitoring climate change and its consequences for water resources management.

The CEO's Roundtable brought together corporate and issue leaders to review the Asia Pacific Water Scenario, with a focus on the challenges that are having a growing impact on their businesses and their communities, as well as to identify opportunities. The session showcased a number of corporate best practices, offered policy recommendations, and called upon business leaders across the region to support the Global Compact CEO Water Mandate.

The session on Monitoring of Investment and Results in Water showed how various experiences in the region point to the urgent need to improve policies for the regional and national monitoring of investments and results, and that this monitoring should be linked to priority issues such as investment and its impact on IWRM and water and sanitation.

In the Regional Launch of the International Year of Sanitation – 2008, the participants recognized that sanitation, in combination with the capacity to practice hygienic behaviors, is fundamental to the achievement of most of the other Millennium Development Goals. The participants called on Governments to enhance efforts for far more effective implementation of the Hashimoto Action Plan, including the formation of regional fora to address the challenge of sanitation. They also requested that Japan include sanitation on the agenda of the 2008 Toyako G8 Summit.

The Small Island's Dialogue on Water and Climate called attention to the vulnerability and particular needs of small island countries to effectively manage their water resources under a highly variable and changing climate. One of the main discussion points included the need to change the paradigm for dealing with the vulnerability of small island States from disaster response to disaster risk reduction and disaster management.

In the session dedicated to Ensuring Water Security in the Aral Sea Basin, we learned about the difficulties of trying to balance demands from different water use sectors such as irrigation, hydropower, and the environment, particularly in a multi-country and multi-jurisdictional setting. There was however a sense that cooperation was improving and that the rich human resources and technical expertise in the Central Asian region would be a real asset in addressing these challenges.

The session on Water-Related Disaster Management focused the challenges of integrating water-related Disaster Risk Reduction into national development plans. Participants called for the recognition of adaptation to increasing risks from climate change as an issue of the highest priority. The impact of disasters on women and the steps needed to adapt solutions from a gender perspective was an area that required urgent attention.

The session on Water for Development and Ecosystems was devoted to discussing how to secure water for long-term, multi-sectoral needs, generating both development and environmental dividends. The session acknowledged the importance of empowering local actors and fostering good governance as essential means of creating win-win situations in the region. The political dimensions of these developments were recognized as being particularly important. Specific initiatives have and are being launched to take the recommendations forward as mentioned in the Policy Brief.

Recognizing that investing in water is to invest in poverty reduction, the Session on Knowledge, Financing and Capacity Development discussed various finance mechanisms, such as proper cost-sharing between governments and users, and the utilization of the additional resources accrued from the recent rapid economic growth for much needed works for sewerage, sanitation and agriculture.

And, last but not the least, the session devoted to Increasing Capacity for Local Actions presented a series of concrete initiatives,

including to the creation of capacity building hubs for increasing local capacities. These hubs will serve as an active link with the various country's NGOs, civil society and local governments to support advocacy towards the three APWF Priority Themes.

**The ten Topic Sessions were much more than a mere forum for discussion. They were critical stepping stones towards achieving progress under the three Priority Themes and five Key Result Areas of the Asia-Pacific Water Forum. A number of Concrete Initiatives were announced, and these will ensure that progress will be made towards solving our region's water problems. There is a clear sense of a real political commitment to change, with innovative programmes and initiatives in many parts of the region. However, it was also made clear during several of the sessions that strengthened support from the region's leaders and decision makers is absolutely essential in order to attain the levels of progress needed to improve the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people in our region.**

This concludes the Chairperson's summary.

Thank you