

Messages by the Swiss Community

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2018 will be a crucial year for the water community to put all efforts into and advocate strongly for an acceleration of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Never before in the history three global panels reflected on key issues relevant to the acceleration of the 2030 Agenda: the UN/World Bank High-Level Panel on Water; the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace and the High-Level Experts and Leaders Panel on Water and Disasters.

At the same time, it will be the first time the United Nations High Level Political Forum (HLPF) will conduct a high-level political review of the SDG 6 and the Global Synthesis Report on SDG 6 will be launched. This will allow to identify challenges and solutions regarding the implementation of the water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda. Further it allows to ensure comprehensive and integrated monitoring, follow-up and review of the global implementation of all water-related SDG targets. Finally, it will serve to promote policy coherence in the water sector as well as to engage in an inclusive and regular dialogue allowing for coordination, knowledge exchange, and efficiency.

Consequently, Switzerland supports the strengthening of the UN-coordination and support to Member States on water.

The Swiss Water Partnership together with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation would like to draw the attention of the World Water Forum participants to the following critical points to achieve tangible results in the field of water:

1) WATER AS A SOURCE OF PEACE AND COOPERATION:

Fresh water resources are subject to competing uses, interests, approaches and are unequally distributed, which can lead to tension and conflicts. But in many places of the world, water can also be a source of cooperation and thus contribute to stability and peace. It is with that vision that the Blue Peace Movement, a global water movement, is driving the water and peace agenda. Switzerland has been part of the Global High Level Panel on Water and Peace, which presented its report in September 2017, elaborating on concrete recommendations to push forward the agenda of water and peace globally. Switzerland will focus its efforts on three of the seven recommendations published in the report.

- First, expanding its water diplomacy efforts which facilitate dialogue and mediating between stakeholders to alleviate tensions linked to the management of water resources. To manage water resources well, we need to understand exactly what is at stake.
- Second, Switzerland will therefore also support the exchange of water-related data and the development of standards to facilitate talks.
- Finally, Switzerland will work to secure funding for studies to promote transboundary water infrastructures that are both economically viable and environmentally friendly.

2) THE ACCELERATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS TO WATER AND SANITATION:

The states have an obligation to progressively achieve it, also in light of the 'leave no one behind' principle of the 2030 Agenda. It requires confronting the challenges of quality, affordability, accessibility, equality, sustainability, and reliability of drinking water supplies for all with a particular attention to the needs of the more marginalized and the most disadvantaged, including through human rights-based approaches to water, sanitation and hygiene.

3) COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR THE SDG's:

As water is a key resource for competing users, sustainable water management needs to be addressed in accordance with all (public and private sector, civil society, academia, etc.) and at basin level. To make the 2030 water vision a reality, effective engagement with all actors, including the private sector - both as an enabling partner and as a key player that needs to be held accountable - is indispensable. The 2030 Agenda together with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development require us to come up with new development instruments and partnerships as well as diverse forms of financing. Together, the public and private sectors can foster sustainable investments by sharing the high initial risks and costs, or engage in blended financing initiatives to actively promote sustainable development.

4) SOCIAL BUSINESS FOR INNOVATION:

Achieving universal access to safe water and adequate sanitation requires **innovation**. We have to move towards creating an enabling environment for **social businesses** that not only allows for income and job creation, but also ensures sustainable provision of services. It is about enabling people to invest for themselves, and to invest in local capacities.

5) ENCOURAGEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE:

The way we manage water resources today and the policy decisions we take have long-standing implications on the availability of and access to safe water for future generations. Today's generation of young people is the largest the world has ever known and is disproportionately affected by water, sanitation and hygiene challenges. It is important to consider ways to empower young people and give them a stronger voice in decision-making processes at the local, national, regional and international levels and to promote young people-led innovation and initiatives, quality education, training and employment opportunities.

6) GENDER EQUALITY:

The central role of women and young girls in water, sanitation and hygiene has to be further highlighted and their position strengthened. Despite progress in the area of domestic water supply and sanitation, the lack of access to adequate water and sanitation services, including for menstrual hygiene management, especially in schools, is negatively affecting gender equality. In addition, the central role of women in water management is often overlooked by policy makers.

7) THE RECOGNITION OF NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS FOR WATER as a viable and cost-efficient alternative and/or complement for traditional infrastructure and its contribution to filling the financing gap in the water sector.

8) GROUNDWATER, often forgotten as invisible to the eye, its protection and adequate management, need to be further highlighted and put in practice, both at national and international level.

9) PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE TRANSBOUNDARY WATER COOPERATION:

Promote and encourage coordinated, equitable, reasonable and optimal water utilization in transboundary basins and increase transboundary water cooperation according to international law, and recognize that transboundary water cooperation based on win-win solutions can contribute to sustainable development and sound management of the transboundary waters between riparian countries.