

Future Contribution Of The Istanbul Water Consensus To Urban Water Management¹

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SUMMARY

At the end of the 5th World Water Forum, many outcomes were achieved under the framework of the political process which is including some components. One of those components is named as “the Local and Regional Authorities’ political process” which have produced a very concrete document entitled as “the Istanbul Water Consensus (IWC)”. By signing the IWC, participating cities commit to prepare some action plans to analyze water-related challenges and implement strategies to cope with them, to set up a series of indicators and to report on the progress at the next World Water Forum.

Mayors and local/regional elected representatives from different parts of the world met in Istanbul, in March 2009, and agreed to participate in this IWC to develop water management strategies in the face of global changes.

With this paper, it is an aim to give some detailed information regarding to the context of the Consensus and to state some estimations and views about how the Consensus and its outcomes as follow-up works would be affecting the urban water management.

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1.INTRODUCTION

It is known that the world's population is divided roughly evenly between people living in rural areas and those living in urban areas. The population in urban areas continues to grow while the world's rural population is expected to remain fairly constant. According to the discussions during the sessions of the 5th World Water Forum, March 2009, about 80 percent of the world's mega-cities are located in developing countries, about 60 percent of the world's population resides in coastal areas, two-thirds of all cities larger than 2.5 million people are located in coastal regions and several of these them are now at or below today's sea level, more than one-third of the fast-growing urban population in developing countries lives in slum conditions, almost half the population of the developing world - approximately 2.6 billion people - live without improved sanitation.

1.1.The World Water Forums

The World Water Forum, the world's largest water-related event, is organized every three years as a joint venture between the World Water Council and the government of the host country. After previous Fora in Morocco (1997), the Netherlands (2000), Japan (2003) and Mexico (2006), the 5th World Water Forum was held in Istanbul, Turkey in March 2009. The Forum is an open, all-inclusive, multi-stakeholder process, which is the culmination of over two years of preparatory activities. In this way, the World Water Forum is not just a week-long event; it is a process which aims to raise the importance, awareness and understanding of water issues and propose concrete solutions to address global challenges.

The World Water Forum is the main water-related event in the world which is organised every three year by the World Water Council with the aim to increase awareness and understanding of decision-makers on water issues at the national and local level.

1.2.5th World Water Forum

In Istanbul, from 16-22. March 2009 was held 5th World Water Forum, under the name "Bridging Divides For Water", that emphasizes not only the geographical crossroads between Europe and Asia, the Middle East and Africa, but also the barriers between traditional and modern culture for the use of water. The thematic themes of the Forum highlights the need for greater interaction, communication and functional coordination of different entities which are involved and affected by the problems of water management. The 5th Forum has been organised under three main process, namely thematic, regional and political ones. Local Authorities are one of the four key actors (with Heads of State, Parliamentarians and Ministers) involved in the innovative Political Process designed for the 5th World Water Forum in Istanbul (March 2009).

1.3.Political Process

The Political Process of the Forum aimed to bring together politicians and elected officials from all over the world, not only those responsible for water, environment, agriculture or energy policies, but also for finance or other domains, in order to create understanding for the urgency of positive and pro-active policies on water-related issues.

Based on the experience developed further during the 4th World Water Forum in Mexico, the Political Process of the 5th World Water Forum in Istanbul involved three interconnected political groups, namely national governments, local authorities and elected parliamentarians, as well as a limited number of Heads of State, who were invited for a Heads of State Summit.

The process was, as much as possible, directly related to and fed by the thematic and regional frameworks and other processes of the Forum. Political groups were requested to provide their perspectives on key issues and prepare a series of recommendations and commitments for action. The process was therefore rooted in local and regional realities: the regional activities conducted during the two years prior to the Forum involved as much as possible local political representatives who were requested to provide action-oriented contributions to the process. As part of the component of the local authorities, in Istanbul, a new initiative on the urban water management has been developed.

2.PREVIOUS URBAN INITIATIVES

The World Water Council (www.worldwatercouncil.org), the owner of the World Water Forums, has compiled a list experiences of how cities are responding to water-related challenges. The database contains over 30 examples of initiatives taken by single jurisdictions and coalitions of local officials. It provides a special emphasis on capacity building, management skills and cooperative efforts among local and national governments, user groups, domestic and international financial institutions, and civil society organisations. Examples include:

- The LoGo Water Project in Southern Africa unites local governments in the Limpopo River basin. Scientific research is compiled to help local authorities improve their ability to manage water resources and advance on water-related MDGs.
- "Quadrilogues" - a joint effort of the French Institute for Public-Private Partnerships, the World Water Council and other organisations to encourage negotiations among government agencies, local authorities, service operators (public and private) and user representatives in the pursuit of universal access to basic services. The first efforts have taken place in Benin, Ghana and Togo. Quadrilogues representatives will be at the World Water Forum in Istanbul to discuss their work.
- Sustainable Water Management Improves Tomorrow's Cities' Health (SWITCH) - funded by the European Union, this action-research programme aims to guarantee more sustainable and integrated urban water management in 30-50 years. A consortium of 33 partner organizations, it is working in 15 cities in Europe and the developing world. SWITCH representatives will be at the Forum in Istanbul to discuss their work.

- Two UN initiatives - Agenda 21 and the Regional Centre on Urban Management - shed light on water management issues faced by local governments and help guide municipal authorities on how to educate, mobilise and respond to citizens clamouring for water.
- Agenda 21 promotes environmentally sustainable development through a comprehensive set of policies that links demographic trends, resource use and appropriate technology. Its research shows how demographic trends compound the challenges to water resources and offers strategies for mitigating the adverse impacts of urbanisation, degradation, climate change and natural disasters. These forces compound the scope of problems that already strained municipal authorities must resolve.
- The Tehran-based Regional Centre on Urban Water Management, launched in 2002, focuses on proper responses to water scarcity. Backed by 11 countries and five international organisations, the centre studies how to manage water resources in arid and semi-arid regions of the Middle East, Southwest Asia and the Commonwealth of Independent States countries.

2.1.The Process of Local Authorities: Towards “Istanbul Water Consensus”

The Local Authorities’ Process is aimed at promoting action concerning water resources on a local level around the world. The primary output is the “Istanbul Urban Water Consensus”, a non-binding agreement among cities across the globe to initiate action on urban water issues in the face of global changes, including urbanization and climate change. This process was initiated on World Water Day 2008 by Istanbul’s Mayor, Dr. Kadir Topbas. The Consensus is intended to strengthen the commitment of Local Authorities and to bring their issues to the attention of governments, legislators and the international community.

Over half of the world’s people now live in cities. They depend on the leadership of their Local Authorities. With the Consensus, Istanbul’s Mayor Kadir Topbaş gives mayors a unique opportunity to demonstrate the high priority of water on the political agenda of the world’s cities.

The Istanbul Urban Water Consensus invites mayors and local government leaders to make a united commitment for urban water resource management in the face of global changes such as climate change, urbanization, population growth and land-use changes.

2.2.The second phase of the process: The 5th World Water Forum Week

At the 5th World Water Forum March 2009 in Istanbul, Local Authorities participated in a special day of debate and deliberation on the commitments set forth in the Consensus. The theme of the 5th World Water Forum is “Bridging Divides for Water,” and special meetings were structured to “bridge the divides” between local authorities and central governments. Local authorities had the opportunity to make sure their water-management priorities are heard by the ministerial delegates and become part of the Ministerial Agenda, the foreseen output of the Ministerial Process.

At the 5th World Water Forum, Local Authorities developed next steps for collecting more commitments to the Consensus from cities around the world and for subsequent actions and implementation.

Within the World Water Forum, Local and Regional Authorities' Days was held from 18-19 March 2009 and gathered the politicians and representatives of regional and local authorities from all over the world in order to create understanding and emergency response positive and proactive policy of water issues. Discussions representatives of local authorities were focused on the importance and role of national and local levels in the management and provision of water to all citizens, treatment of waste water, as well as on the process of implementation of decentralization policy.

Representatives of local authorities have promoted the actions taken in connection with the water management throughout the world and in dynamic discussion invited mayors and local government leaders to unite in order to save and recover resources of urban water. In this context, participants were presented non-binding agreement between cities around the world - "Istanbul Water Consensus" which aims to strengthen the commitment of local authorities in the regulation of urban water management in the global climate change.

250 Local and Regional Authorities from 43 countries were represented in Istanbul and more than 400 Mayors have already signed the IWC. Ten big cities like Vienna, Lausanne, Incheon, Paris and Buenos Aires have even committed to become "champion cities" of the IWC and will build on the momentum and coordinate the work carried out for specific subjects.

The Local Authorities Process documents which were endorsed during the Forum can be found in the <http://content.worldwaterforum5.org/files/PoliticalProcess/>. E-mail exchanged would be made via the official e-mail address of consensus@worldwaterforum5.org.

2.3.The Content of the Istanbul Urban Water Consensus

The Istanbul Water Consensus contains a series of commitments to improve urban water management. The document has been released in draft version for comments.

The Consensus consists of 3 sections:

- *Universal Call for Action:* The first part of the Consensus is an overall call for action by mayors that is universal in nature;
- *Adaptation Plan Development:* The second part includes the identification and assessment of emerging challenges and the development of adaptation plans;
- *Commitment Definition:* The third part of the consensus consists in specific commitments designed to be tailored to the circumstances of the individual city or local authority. This last part should be completed after signature, in a second step, once the assessment of the situation is realized.

The Local Authorities' process is aimed at promoting action for water on a local level across the world. The primary output has been the "Istanbul Urban Water Consensus", non-binding agreement among cities around the world to initiate action on urban water issues in the face of global changes, including urbanization and climate change.

2.4.The Follow-up Process of the Istanbul Water Consensus

The Istanbul Water Consensus comprises two main parts:

- A joint declaration of local authorities to be ratified during the Local Authorities Summit at the 5th World Water Forum;
- A series of commitments tailored by signatory cities to their specific local circumstances, need and priorities.

The implementation of the Consensus will be led by 'Champion Cities', which include Rotterdam, Paris, Marseille, Buenos Aires, Istanbul, Brisbane and Chicago. Through the Forum, cities in developing and industrialised countries were encouraged to make cooperative pacts. The Champion Cities will coordinate debates on the issues that rank high on municipal water-related agendas, such as decentralisation, regulation, citizen participation, anti-corruption schemes and cost overruns. There will also be discussions of how to provide incentives for global suppliers in lower and middle-income regions and how to generate adequate financing for water projects, especially those designed to meet the needs of the poor.

The 5th World Water Forum marked the beginning of a continual process of implementation, follow-up and monitoring. Local authorities who have signed the Consensus will continue their work by identifying key challenges, developing adaptation plans and working to meet their own specific targets under the IWC.

Regarding to the main outcomes and recommendations, the Istanbul Water Consensus for Local and Regional Authorities acknowledged, inter alia, that:

- Good quality water supply and sanitation is a basic human right;
- Water is a public good that should be under strict public control;
- A consistent approach at the local, regional and national levels is needed to adapt to global change and achieve equitable and optimal sustainable management of water resources;
- Water security should be based on the principle of equitable and reasonable allocation;
- Capacity building, creative finance mechanisms, and regulatory frameworks should facilitate access to water and sanitation; and

The Istanbul Water Consensus called on national governments and international institutions to:

- Shift water security higher in national and international policy priorities;
- Speed up the implementation of commitments made on access to water and sanitation and the fight against poverty;
- Develop innovative financing mechanisms and regulatory frameworks to facilitate access for local and regional governments to direct financing and increase financing for local water and sanitation infrastructure;

3.CONCLUSION - WHAT IS NEW WITH IWC?

From the aspect of the influence of representatives of regional and local authorities in relation to water issues, the conclusion is that some local authorities are still in critical situation when it comes to enabling the provision of water services, access to water supply and sewage. The progress and improve may come if institutional, financial, technical and professional capacity of local authorities be clearly defined, developed and strengthened.

One of the main outcomes was achieved in the Local and Regional Authorities' political process through the Istanbul Water Consensus (IWC). By signing the IWC, participating cities commit to prepare action plans to analyse water-related challenges and implement strategies to cope with them, to set up a series of indicators and to report on the progress at the next World Water Forum.

The added value of the IWC in relation to the previous Local Administrations' declaration is its second part where Local Authorities are committed to define some action plans (with targets to implement until the next World Water Forum) to improve the management of water and sanitation services. The declarations has currently more than 400 signatory cities (<http://worldwaterforum5.org/?id=2554>) but the difficulty now is to push them to define these commitments. The process has received some commitments from cities of Paris and Montreuil. As an example, a table is attached to include some commitments defined by the Mayor of Montreuil (Ms. Dominique Voynet), France. The idea is also that Champion Cities (Istanbul, Baguio, Incheon, Marseille, Lyon, Brisbane, Paris etc.) set an example. It is known that the city of Istanbul chairs the UCLG (Union Cities and Local Governments) Water Committee who will follow the implementation and follow-up process of the IWC.

As a conclusion, it can be definitely stated that IWC, which is a new and developed initiative with its continuing follow-up process, would be utilised now and in the future as a global joint facility to improve the urban water management at the different levels.

Table 1. Commitments of Montreuil (as an example)

<i>Water resources</i>	
Reduce water consumption	Develop and implement policy for public buildings and services Initiate recycling of treated waste water and rainwater use
Reduce groundwater pollution	Better control the use of pesticides by municipal services
<i>Waste water</i>	
Improve waste water collection	Survey of missing connections Improve planning
Improve the monitoring and control of effluent quality	Sign agreements with industry Improve performance of “separative” sewers
Infrastructure management	Develop asset management tools for the waste water treatment infrastructure, improve maintenance
<i>Rainwater, floods</i>	
Reduce inundations hazards	Engage in a pilot study
Reduce rainwater infiltration in sewers	Implement innovative techniques

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Biography

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After receiving his B.Sc. Degree from Department of Meteorological Engineering, Istanbul Technical University, in 1984, he started serving for the General Directorate of State Hydraulic Works (DSI). He has received MSc degree from the Environmental Department of Hacettepe University, Ankara.

He has more than 25 years of professional experience in the State Hydraulic Works, His engineering specialisation area mainly includes project hydrology, water resources assessment, planning and management, environmental impact assessment as well.

After retirement from DSI, he has been dealing with project hydrology as a senior hydrologist. Presently, he is serving for water resources planning and designing of hydraulic structures.

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