

The multidimensional challenges we face today call for integrated and cross-sectoral solutions for a just transition of our societies towards a water and climate-secure future for all. It is more needed now than ever.

Due to the immense transformative ambition of the SDGs, achieving its targets is inherently a collective action problem—one that needs to incentivize joint action by individuals and organizations in the pursuit of common goals. At the same time, the action has to be rooted in local realities, to alleviate the hardship of those most in need. This ambition to link global goals with local action is difficult and complex—but that is why it is so important.

We applaud all individual and organizational proposals which resulted in the collection of hundreds of voluntary commitments in the Water Action Agenda. But the real challenge now is to breathe life into it, so that it may carry us closer towards the Future We Want. This ongoing collective action exercise, to be designed and driven by all of us, will need to create simplicity within complexity by organizing action into smaller, more specific multi-stakeholder constituencies, where everyone's voice can be heard.

We will need solid coordination mechanisms to enable actors to self-organize, to provide moments to meet and converge thinking, and to benefit from peer review. And we will most importantly need people – politicians and organizations – to actually do what they say they will do.

It will also require strong leadership to drive systems change. This is not only the global leadership of a UN Envoy for Water and Sanitation, which would also be very welcome, but leadership and accountability of each and every one of us to assume our shared responsibility for making sure we advance on the 2030 agenda together. We all need to drive that momentum forward, become leaders for change within our own spheres of influence, and inspire others to act. We want to inspire action so that it has a viral effect, that of a blue wave sweeping the globe.

At the same time, we will need to become comfortable with a poly-centric governance system where action is no longer top-down nor bottom-up but can co-exist and advance together. Bad governance and institutional failures, on the other hand, will render economic policy measures and financing options inefficient and counterproductive.

Finally, all actions in the Water Action Agenda need to be gender transformative. It goes without saying that a majority of the planet's population is female, yet women remain largely marginalized, especially from higher level (water-related) decision-making and planning processes. According to UN Water, involving women can increase the effectiveness of water projects between six and seven times. Also, gender inclusive peace processes have been found to last longer and be more resilient. One key UN report from 2015 states that women in peace processes push for the commencement, resumption, or finalization of negotiations when the momentum had stalled or the talks had faltered.

As the Concept note for Interactive Dialogue 5 on the Decade for Action states: "Cooperation and coordination across sectors are no longer a luxury but an imperative." Indeed, water connects all the Sustainable Development Goals. The triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution cannot be addressed without cross-sectoral coordination. Holistic management approaches are required to reach the ambition of the entire Agenda 2030.

Of greatest importance, to be successful, this action agenda needs to be embraced by other communities, those of health, food, energy, oceans, climate and finance, for example. Those communities need water and they need us. We shall reach out and learn together about how to overcome the water challenges they encounter to achieve their goals. It is only when people outside of the water community become staunch defenders of the cause of water that we will be able to quadruple our impact.

SIWI is committing to collective action that addresses issues holistically and inspires innovation. This will lead to more robust decisions, policies, and investments, effectively bridging silos and fostering cross-sectoral cooperation. As it has done for years, SIWI invites collaboration with others through the World Water Week, the Action Platform for Source-to-Sea Management, the Water for Climate Pavilion collective, and many other initiatives.

The international agenda is such that we have multiple opportunities for public and private actors to come together, take stock, realign and pursue action as a long-term change process, like steppingstones on the path to sustainability. It is hard and it is messy work, but it is not impossible, and we have 7 more years to prove to the world that we can do it. This conference is not the end of a journey, but just the beginning. Let us join hands and advance together for the good of humanity.

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