



WORLD FEDERATION OF ENGINEERING ORGANIZATIONS

FÉDÉRATION MONDIALE DES ORGANISATIONS D'INGÉNIEURS

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Statement from the World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO)

Prof. José Vieira, WFEO President

The World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO), the peak international body for professional engineering institutions worldwide, is a member of the UN Scientific and Technological Community Major Group, and has an official Associate status with UNESCO. Founded in 1968, under the auspices of the UNESCO in Paris, WFEO is an international, non-governmental organization bringing together national and continental/regional engineering organizations from some 100 nations, representing more than 30 million engineers.

Global water problems, including droughts and floods, pollution caused by natural and anthropogenic-driven events such as extreme rains, rising sea and river levels, bushfires and untreated domestic and industrial effluents, are key challenges which required innovative engineering solutions and adequate and efficient water management in order to meet the growing demand for clean water.

SDG 6 aims to provide universal access to clean water and sanitation by 2030. However, it will not be achieved for a long time in a great number of developing countries at current rates of progress where rapid and often unplanned urbanization has put a strain on drinking water supply and sanitation systems. Despite the progress made an estimated 2 billion and 3.6 billion people still lack safely managed drinking water and decent sanitation services, respectively. Also an estimated 2.3 billion people do not have access to handwashing facilities with soap and 494 million people still practice open defecation.

The WFEO has committed itself to mobilizing the global engineering community towards accelerating the delivery of the UN Sustainable Development. Milestones in this strategy include key partnerships with UNESCO, especially the UNESCO first and second Engineering Reports published in 2011 and 2021, the WFEO-UNESCO Paris Declaration on “Advancing the UN SDGs through Engineering”, and the proclamation of the UNESCO World Engineering Day for Sustainable Development, that we celebrate each 4 March from 2020. The daily work of WFEO is mainly conducted through its Standing Technical Committees and Policy Implementation Committees, which are required to focus on particular SDGS and report and publish on how those goals can be achieved through engineering, or how engineers contribute to progress.

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In 2022, the WFEO established as a Standing Technical Committee aiming to provide a strong platform to coordinate the engineering water work around the world and so, WFEO will be able to make a significant contribution to accelerate the delivery of SDG 6.

Global institutions and governments must cooperate to accelerate the capacity building through STEM, and encourage young people, especially girls, to become engineers and study hydrology to make a significant difference in improving the life quality of their community. WFEO also mobilizes its resources to take part in joint projects led by NGOs in partnership with UNESCO, to fund hydrological training sessions for a dozen African countries, in order to support local NGOs projects related to water access and sanitation, as well as water basic education.

Engineers are needed to design and operate dams and reservoirs, channels, pipelines, water treatment plants, and also for planning and managing water resources. We want to promote the emerging nature-based engineering solutions to improve the rivers, underground aquifers and urban drainage management. We also want to accelerate the technological development for safe wastewater reuse, desalination, and new irrigation technologies for agriculture pressing needs. More engineers are also needed to contribute to disaster risk assessment and management, to help prepare for floods and droughts to reduce economic losses from natural disasters.

An important step in acknowledging the growing challenge of water scarcity is the launch of the Water Action Decade for the 2018-2028 period, to mobilize actions that will help transform how we manage water. Engineers must be deeply involved in this process, to turn words into action, strategy into effective projects, and the vision into field initiatives. SDG 6 can only be achieved with the help of technology, and by building partnerships at global and local levels. Civil society has the most important role to play here: through our membership, we are linking the scales of UN agencies and the local projects. We aim as well to articulate the targets of SDG 6 with the relevant stakeholders in the field, and with the right skills and technologies. The whole point here is mobilizing to leave no one behind.

Prof. José VIEIRA
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