



UN
2023 WATER
CONFERENCE

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UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

[Achieving a balance between protection and development – Water for rural prosperity]

[March 23, Thursday 12:30 - 13:45, Side Event Room 9]

Organized by: [GWP-China, IWHR, IRTCES, UNESCO-IHP, GWP, IAHR, ICID, INBO, UNICEF, AWC]

Background on the event (one paragraph)

Due to the particular industrial structure, the specific geographical location and the need for river source protection, the vast rural area and some remote countryside located in headwater areas are usually economically underdeveloped. This has led to the increasing gap between urban and rural areas. To reach the 2030 UNSDG agenda in an all-round way and leave no one behind as requested by the global initiative, we need to adopt a whole package of policies and measures in order to achieve a balance between development and protection for rural areas by, for instance, coordinating the development requirement of upstream and downstream regions, renovating development mode and patterns for headwater areas, improving the water use efficiency and modernizing water pollution treatment facility in countryside, to name a few. Besides the overall planning at the policy level of the central government or river basin authority, cross-sector engagement and multi-stakeholder participation, public awareness raising and professional training are also needed.

Water Action Agenda (one paragraph, if possible, please include the link to your commitment in the [Water Action Agenda database](#))

First, to complete an international assessment on development disequilibrium on river basin scales and its impact. **Second**, to roll out the concept of "one river, one goal", "shared river, shared future", establish the basic principle of balanced development of river basin, go beyond the political or administrative boundaries towards the common prosperity of the whole basin, formulate the sustainable development model and roadmap through integrated planning to realize urban-rural equality and the upstream-downstream coordination, and reach a balance between development and protection. **Third**, to increase the investment in infrastructure building and water protection in backward areas, mobilize and integrate the forces of multi-stakeholders including government, institutions, society and non-governmental organizations for poverty reduction and education campaign, and develop a harmonious regional relations based on common development. **Fourth**, to advocate ecological compensation to balance the water development output and environmental protection input, beef up the international aid and investment for the upper reaches of rivers and

poverty stricken rural areas. **Fifth**, to set up model river basins for balanced development and protection. The typical cases and pilot regions shall benefit from the technical, financial and managerial assistance and guidance from the government and international community.

<https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/balancing-conservation-and-development-pay-attention-rural-and-backward-areas-0>

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- Delivering Actionable Science and Community-based Implementable Solutions;
- From Sponge Cities to Countryside Mops: The Role of Rural Areas in Enhancing Water Storage;
- Coastal Agriculture & Environmental Protection in Southern Italy;
- Protection and Development of Water Source Area: Practice in China;
- The Role of the Basin Organizations on Securing the Different Water Uses and Establishing Solidarity;
- Successful practices of Switzerland in balancing rural development and protection of eco-environment;
- Practices to revitalize rural areas through water supply, irrigation and small-scale hydropower projects for developing countries;
- To see development and protection from the youth's perspective.

Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)

- The meeting highly recognized the point highlighted by Mr. Li Guoying, Minister of Water Resources of China, raised during the General Debate of the Conference that access to safe drinking water is a basic human right. It is especially relevant to improving the living and development conditions of women, children and indigenous people, helping them shed hunger and poverty, and implementing the sustainable development goals (SDGs) globally.
- The meeting actively responded to the initiative emphasized by Minister Li Guoying that it is our common responsibility to conserve the limited, precious freshwater resources on Earth. Countries around the world have the responsibility to comprehensively promote agricultural water conservation, strengthen the integrated rural water resources management, develop efficient water-saving irrigation, irrigation by unconventional water sources, and smart irrigation, etc. to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of agricultural water use, so as to ensure the eradication of hunger by 2030 and safeguard global food security.
- The meeting highly recognized the call raised by Minister Li Guoying that in the face of the severe global climate change challenge, all countries should form a strong synergy to jointly respond to the water security crisis. Governments should pay attention to the response to climate change in rural areas, and leverage a portfolio of measures to mitigate its impacts such as developing water source projects, using efficient water-saving irrigation, and planting water-saving crops. The resilience of food production and safe drinking water in rural areas should be protected.
- The meeting jointly committed to translating the above consensus into action on their own and through their working institutions, and jointly promoting global agricultural water conservation, rural safe drinking water and rural climate change response from multiple dimensions such as technology, policy, investment and financing, and capacity building, so as to ensure food security, help eradicate poverty and hunger, and revitalize sustainable rural development.