UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

Climate Resilience needs a Water-Smart Society

22 March 2023, 12:30-14:30 EST, EU Delegation, 66 Third Avenue, 31st floor, New York

Organized by: Water Europe, Consulate of Sweden in New York, Ragn-Sells, BioAzul, Suez, University of Thessaly, Xylem

TWO PAGE MAXIMUM

Background on the event (one paragraph)

Climate Resilience cannot be achieved without considering the Value of Water. Ensuring sustainable management of water and sanitation for all is directly linked to climate resilience and our capacity to build Water-Smart Societies. The World Economic Forum identifies as top risks for our societies the failure of climate-change mitigation and adaptation as well as natural resource crises. We need all together to embrace our societal responsibility and accelerate a paradigm shift towards circular and resilient approaches, processes, and methods. The objective of this side event is to highlight the urge for key stakeholders such as SMEs, utilities, industry, academia and governments to take actions in accelerating the deployment of circular processes while extracting values for the benefits of our rural and urban communities. One must value water of its own activities and exploit the value embedded in wastewater. Resource recovery, water reuse and energy savings are interlinked; therefore, relevant stakeholders need to use a systemic and inclusive approach, leaving no one behind. By taking examples from the European Research and Innovation programme and some flagship solutions from the European market, this event will demonstrate how the local partners can act locally and globally to impact and accelerate the implementation of key solutions. Water Europe and Ragn-Sells in partnership with the Consulate of Sweden in New York, Bioazul, Suez, Xylem and the University of Thessaly invited stakeholders to discuss the needed actions to deploy circular solutions for climate resilience and their benefits in line with the 2030 Agenda.

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

Build a Water-Smart Society in Europe: Water Europe envisions a European society driven by inclusive and open innovations with modern governance structures, solutions and pricing mechanisms reflecting the value of water, technologies to reduce, re-use, recycle and cascade water streams, a redesigned water infrastructure as well as more profound water stewardship programmes. These innovations will manoeuvre the water market towards a 50% reduction of pressure on our natural water system and a more effective resilience against the impact of demographic and climate change. Water Europe aims for this purpose to support the achievement of a Water Smart Society, in which the value of water is recognised and realised. This means that all available water sources are managed in a such way that water scarcity and pollution are avoided, and that the water system is resilient against the impact of demographic changes, droughts and floods which are exacerbated by climate change. Achieving a Water Smart Society requires involving all relevant to guarantee sustainable water governance, while water and resource loops are largely closed to foster a circular economy.

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- How to correctly consider the value of water?
- How to accelerate a paradigm shift towards circular and resilient approaches, processes, and methods?
- Which solutions can be exploited from research and innovation programmes?
- How critical resources are exploited from wastewater and water sources?
- Which new policies can help societies transition to a “care for resources” view?

Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)

- Circular solutions in use of water have the potential to not only support with adoption but also with mitigation
- Industry leadership is important to achieve a circular economy as well as cooperation.
- Wastewater treatment plants need to become resource plants to achieve a circular economy, particularly phosphorus recovery. In addition to the resource recovery, the water reuse should become critical particularly for industry and agriculture.
- In wastewater treatment management, the quality of the product will have to be considered first, rather than the origin, to accelerate circular processes.
- Research supports the development of holistic methods to accelerate the deployment of such circular and smart solutions that address climate challenges and enhance resilience (eg. H2020 ARSINOE and PRIMA BONEX and MAGO projects)
- In the European context, the urban wastewater treatment directive is the relevant tool to accelerate the circular water use and reduce freshwater demand.
- A water funds in the European context would be welcome to support the needed investment.
- the Water Energy Food and Ecosystem (WEFE) Nexus interlinked approach contribute to circularity and resilience of the food systems.