CODE-W-74

Theme :Sustainable Utilization and Equal Access to Clean Water through International Research and Advocacy

:

On March 22nd, the confederation of NGOs of Rural India (CNRI) in collaboration with Sri Balaji University, Pune along with the Lehigh University, Pennsylvania USA and the World Corrosion Organization conducted a virtual event to mark the first United Nations-wide conference on water in 46 years.

Key Issues discussed:

- A key challenge before the water community is how to ensure that development, climate and biodiversity finance serve water needs. Water must be affordable, but, as patterns of high wastage are not sustainable, change must be encouraged. Thought leadership from government and development partners, including the private sector and industry, regarding circular ecosystems that reduce water pollution is necessary. International and national financing institutions have a critical role to play in financing water for sustainable development.
- Global trends of climate change, depleting natural resources, population growth and global fragmentation: How is the climate induced changes in water availability (longer periods of intense drought, shorter periods of intense rainfall) is a crucial issue that leads to social tensions, shortages, disruptions, migration flows, extremism, organised crime – climate change is not just an environmental issue, it is also a security and geopolitical issue.
- Water scarcity and pollution, droughts and floods contribute to reduced ecosystem functions and related ecosystem services and can increase the likelihood of pests and diseases. The predicted increase in frequency, severity and duration of droughts will contribute to long-term degradation, aridification or desertification and disruption of societies and livelihood options. Food and nutrition security are seriously impacted as

about 70 per cent of all freshwater withdrawals are used for agriculture globally; the percentage can reach more than 90 per cent in agrarian economies.

- New ways of doing business, what is the role of the private sector (dredging industry) in applying Nature-based Solutions: how the knowledge held by large corporates can be redirected to apply NbS.
- New economic models: fundamental, transformative change of our economy is necessary to order to support life on Earth and to give rise to a regenerative society.
- Sustainable finance: from a business-case to a value case.
- There is a need to focus on enabling conditions that are necessary at the national level to attract private finance in support of water investment. Such an enabling environment would combine water policies and institutional arrangements, which would include the broader policy framework for investment, capacity to develop projects and an economy-wide water lens (a focus on water that ensures that investments in other sectors contribute to the broader water agenda).

Key recommendation for action:

- We cannot bridge the gap by producing more in the way we have, we need to work multi-laterally towards new circular solutions in order to meet the needs of future generations.
- There is much to be done on the demand side of the equation. To become more creditworthy and able to tap into new sources of investment, water services providers, whether utilities, irrigation agencies, or local or national governments, need to become more technically and financially efficient. Governance arrangements need to become clearer and more transparent. Similarly, the economic regulation of water services has a role to play in enhancing the performance and creditworthiness of service providers.
- Incentives to improve performance and attract private finance require the economic regulation of water services. Such regulation can: (a) set performance standards; (b) monitor and compare performance; (c) provide incentives for better performance through tariff policy and privileged access to public finance, among others; and (d) promote transparency. This can include incentives to agglomerate service providers to reach economies of scope and scale.
- Partnering with NGO's, scientists, indigenous communities is necessary to ensure the solutions are holistic, inclusive and future-proof. Governments alone cannot provide innovation. The private sector, including smaller enterprises, plays a particularly fundamental role. Innovation emerges from complex interactions between the public and private sectors, shaped by institutional frameworks to support human capacity development, research and development, and business support.
- We must include everyone in NbS projects – to protect or restore their autonomy and value in society.
- Changing the financial systems and reforming capital markets is a crucial step we have to take now in order to mitigate global economic instability due to the impacts of natural resource depletion and climate change
- Renew focus on the role of women, Indigenous communities, the young and vulnerable populations in ecosystems stewardship and water governance. These voices must be incorporated into water governance models that are future -oriented and equitable in outlook.
- Top-down financial incentives are necessary: policy change and regulation change must make certain thing mandatory to change the way banks and financial take into account impact and value into their investment decisions and monetizing externalities.

Include security dimension in policy and plans, develop tools and engagement strategies that are security proof.

- Multilevel governance and integrated regional and urban planning, including compact city models, can conserve and rehabilitate water resources, storage and retention and promote investment in climate-resilient infrastructure;

Conclusion:

The UN Water Conference 2023 was a significant step towards addressing the global water crisis and achieving water security for all. The conference highlighted the need for international cooperation and collaboration to address the water crisis and emphasized the importance of adopting sustainable water management practices. The launch of the Global Water Security Framework is a significant milestone in this direction, and it is expected to guide policymakers and stakeholders in achieving water security for all. The conference called for an increase in private sector participation, as well as a greater global knowledge base to ensure that investment decisions reflect current needs and foresee trends. Water is essential for food production, enabling the production of over 95 per cent of the food on land. By 2050, to meet future demand, the global production of food, fibre and feed will need to increase by 50 per cent compared to 2012. To meet this goal, 35 per cent of additional water resources are needed.