

Water Security as the Central Factor in achieving the SDG's and Post MDG's in the Post 2015 Agenda

In July 2010 the United Nations General Assembly formally recognized the Human Right to Water and Sanitation. They acknowledged that clean drinking water and sanitation are essential for the realization of all Human Rights. To truly implement the right to clean drinking water and sanitation for all in present times and inclusive of future generations, an adequate quantity of freshwater is required. How to potentially achieve this is a vital factor, which needs to be addressed. This is critical in achieving a successful Post 2015 agenda, which accords with the Millennium Development Declaration.

The Right to Water emphasizes that water should be treated as a social and cultural good, and not primarily as an economic good. It also stresses that the manner in which this right is realized must be sustainable and in the interest of all, ensuring that the Right can be realized for present and future generations. All Human Rights have their basis and foundations in freshwater security. However universal access to clean drinking water and sanitation is dependent upon there being adequate quantity and supplies of available freshwater. This is impossible to realize if the very freshwater cycle itself is compromised. The Analytical Brief affirms:

***“Maintaining the integrity of ecosystems before they become compromised is an essential component of achieving water security and reducing the potential for conflicts. The continuous pace of human development is threatening the capacity of ecosystems to adapt, raising concerns that ecosystems will reach a tipping point after which they are no longer able to provide sustaining functions and services, and will become unable to recover their integrity and functions.*”**

2013, The International Year of Water Cooperation reflects the global recognition that freshwater is an absolute necessity for achieving internationally agreed upon Sustainable Development Goals. These include the nexus between water security, food security, poverty eradication, gender equality, human health, equity, peace and prosperity. It also reflects the emerging global understanding that the safeguarding of ecosystems and their life-supporting functions, needs to be implemented to resolve current and future water challenges. ‘The Future We Want’. Paragraph 122 states:

"We recognize the key role that ecosystems play in maintaining water quantity and quality and support actions within the respective national boundaries to protect and sustainably manage these ecosystems."

Unlike resources such as coal, oil and gas the freshwater cycle is a renewable and regenerative one. It is an infinite renewable and has the ability of being constantly replenished. However this cycle is utterly dependent upon healthily functioning ecosystems such as mountains with their snows, glaciers and mixed mountain forests and wetlands. The critical importance of this issue was acknowledged as the central factor in achieving water security in the United Nations Water Analytical Brief 22/3/13. It states:

“Ensuring that ecosystems are protected and conserved is central to achieving water security – both for people and for nature. Ecosystems are vital to sustaining the quantity and quality of water available within a watershed, on which both nature and people rely. Maintaining the integrity of ecosystems is essential for supporting the diverse needs of humans, and for the sustainability of ecosystems, including protecting the water- provisioning services they provide.”

Regardless of status or species nearly all life on Earth is presently threatened by the same looming freshwater crisis. Unless solutions are found and applied poverty, hunger, inequality and conflict will inevitably increase. This will not only happen in developing countries, it will also happen in places, which are presently enjoying relative stability. Rather than ignoring or running from this threat, as there is ultimately nowhere else to run to, it would be in our best long-term interest to face it and take effective measure while we still can.

At the Budapest Water Summit in October 2013 Sibylle Vermont of the UNECE stressed the need for a Water Sustainable Development Goal to address the whole water cycle rather than just water supply and sanitation.

The content of the Post 2015 agenda could establish the way, by which we use our highest intelligence to work collectively, in a concerted manner on remedying these problems, while it is still conceivably possible. Government obligations need to include legislation that both protects and restores the environments, which the hydrological cycle is utterly dependent upon. These include mountains (the water towers of the world), mixed mountain forests, rain forests and wetlands.

Thank you for your consideration.

Stella Joy (Co Director Active Remedy Ltd.)

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