



UNFCCC COP 25

Outcome Document Water Action Event: *Just Add Water: Solutions for the 2020 NDCs and beyond*

Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action

6 December 2019
10:00 – 13:00

Organised by Alliance for Global Water Adaptation (AGWA); Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ); French Water Partnership; Global Alliances for Water and Climate (GAFWAC); International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN); Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI); World Water Council

MPGCA WATER: *Just Add Water: Solutions for the 2020 NDCs and beyond*

Section 1

Key Messages:

As we move into the post-2020 era, the time for talking is over. We face a climate crisis that demands immediate, sustained, science-based action from all sectors to ensure a just transition to a sustainable, low-carbon future for all. This future will not be possible without water. Water enables all life on earth. So too, water enables the implementation of the Paris Agreement. It is embedded deeply in all of our climate change mitigation and adaptation plans – whether it is recognized or not. If the water needed to sustain the green energy transition is not available when, where and in the quality it is needed, we will not realize our shared ambition of a 1.5 degree future.

At the same time, resilient water management can not only reduce risk, but it can provide important co-benefits for GHG mitigation, such as maintaining important carbon sinks such as peatlands and mangrove forests, and adaptation, by reducing the impact of floods and droughts. Nature-based solutions, such as floodplain reconnection, combined with traditional water management tools such as asequias or qanats and modern grey infrastructure can help our cities and rural communities improve their resilience in the face of shocks and stressors. In this way, water can also contribute to meeting our sustainable development and disaster risk reduction goals. Cities are the incubators of climate action, and urban water resilience is essential to this work. Simultaneously, new governance approaches that integrate water management from source to sea are needed to ensure that actions taken in one area do not negatively impact other regions downstream. This year's event focused on these two themes – cities and integrated ecosystems – and what the water community is already doing to take action.

At the same time, the 2019 Water Action Event has highlighted the achievements reached since COP22 and stressed the need to continue and enhance the Marrakech Partnership Platform for the engagement of non-party stakeholders after 2020.

Outcomes (please complete under the following headers, concrete input on how your event addressed the questions)

Pre-2020 action:

- *What are the current challenges, opportunities and metrics (such as data and analysis) for pre-2020 actions to realize the transition using technology, innovation and finance for this thematic area?*
- *What are the pre-2020 actions that have been implemented that accelerates systemic transformation, including changing behavioural patterns and leapfrogging conventional development paths? What needs to be improved or enhanced?*

In this session we heard from practitioners working around the world to address our most pressing climate and water challenges. From Madrid to Manila, the Niger basin to the basins of central Mexico, our colleagues are working to improve urban climate resilience and enhance the capacity of river and groundwater basins to provide essential services to communities and ecosystems. We also heard about innovative new financing schemes to help us tackle complex, multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder climate and water adaptation measures from source to sea, such as the new Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance (ORRAA), which was launched at the UN Climate Summit in New York in September 2019.

While we are encouraged by the increased recognition of water within the climate agenda, and indeed over 90 per cent of all NDCs with an adaptation component include water, there is still more to do. The role of water and water-related ecosystems for mitigation are still largely absent from national climate plans. For example, the potential for wetlands to store carbon is thus far mentioned in only 10 NDCs. These are critical ecosystems for both mitigation and adaptation and they are being lost at an alarming rate, turning these important carbon sinks into sources of GHG emissions and threatening clean water supply and biodiversity. As we move into the post-2020 era, we must do better.

We also need new research and data related to the complex relationship between ecosystems such as forests and water. As countries around the world commit themselves to increasing global forest cover, there is a need for better data on the water demands of the planted trees to ensure that such activities can be successful over time. Expanded monitoring of these complex systems is urgently needed as climate change continues to impact the health of forests, rivers, and oceans around the globe.

References to or evidence of in the Climate Action Pathway/Yearbook of Global Climate Action/Global Climate Action portal (NAZCA)

- Our vision is that by 2050, the water sector will be largely decarbonized through the use of alternative energy sources such as solar and combined heat and power (CHP) cogeneration, as well as through aggressive conservation and reuse efforts. Water policies and infrastructure will be designed and built to be both robust and flexible across a range of possible climate futures, providing reliable service and improved performance over time. Water resources management will be integrated into climate planning at all levels (including transboundary), and across sectors to ensure that water is available in adequate quantity and quality at the time it is needed for both people and ecosystems. This is being accomplished by instituting climate-resilient water governance, institutions, basin organizations, and regulatory and legal frameworks. We must do better to ensure full inclusion of all stakeholders, especially disadvantaged and underrepresented groups, such as ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples and other vulnerable groups. The private sector is beginning to contribute by analyzing and sharing water-related risks, measuring and reporting water use data, funding innovation, and taking steps to reduce impacts on water in operations and throughout the value chain. But there is a long way to go.

Water resources contribute to the recovery and maintenance of terrestrial and marine carbon sinks including wetlands, peatlands, and mangrove forests. In turn these ecosystems are improving the resilience of communities around them by providing habitat for inland and coastal fisheries, buffers from extreme weather, water filtration, storage in times of water scarcity and additional absorptive capacity during floods. But more is still needed to ensure that societies thrive due to improved access to water and sanitation, which leads to



lower rates of water-borne illness, forced migration and resource conflict, higher rates of school attendance, reduced poverty, and improved economic productivity.

- We are transforming the ways in which water is managed: traditional management approaches assume climate stationarity. This is no longer a reasonable assumption meaning we need fundamentally different ways of managing water resources that can adapt to dealing with periods of shortage or overabundance (or both). These new methodologies should be built into the NDCs.

2019 United Nations Climate Action Summit

- We, the organizing entities of this event, are committed to reaching the objectives of the Global Commission on Adaptation's Water Action Track, which was launched at the Secretary General's Climate Summit in September 2019. The three pillars of this work: resilient river and groundwater basins, resilient national policies and resilient cities, are aligned with the objectives of our organizations, and will be working through this platform over the next decade to improve the water resilience of over 50 countries, 100 basins and 100 cities worldwide. Please follow the action and join us in adapting our world! Learn more here: <https://gca.org/global-commission-on-adaptation/action-tracks/water>