



RACE TO ZERO

November Dialogues Outcome Document “Water”

Thursday, 12th November 2020

Organised by Jennifer Jun, James Dalton and Cate Lamb

Dialogue: Vision of a zero-carbon, resilient future through Water

Section 1

Key Messages:

Through thoughtful contributions from the likes of Johann Rockstrom, Inger Anderson, Ma Jun, Ertharin Cousins, Matt Damon and Akhona Xotyeni, we showed that water is key to a resilient, zero-carbon future. By showcasing innovations in agriculture, energy and wetland restoration we demonstrated that acting on water security is key to accelerate our climate ambitions, while reversing the destruction of nature. Smart management of water resources and freshwater ecosystems can offer a range of significant solutions to mitigate carbon emissions, safeguard people and establish a nature-positive economy. For example, the current use, storage and distribution of water coupled with the lack of wastewater treatment collectively contributes to approximately 10 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Equally, the event highlighted some of the trade-offs that will inevitably be navigated as we run our race. Interventions from the International Energy Agency, TNC and WWF for example, explored ways in which water can be used to provide renewable energy whilst maintaining healthy ecosystems, and how this type of water-sympathetic energy planning must be normalised to optimise outcomes.

Through a broad range of exciting innovation areas and examples, we demonstrated that water solutions exist, and that they deliver remarkable outcomes for people, planet, and our collective prosperity. To succeed in driving the adoption of these solutions at an industrial scale it became clear that business, finance, cities, NGO's and national governments need to do more, in cooperation, and do it faster. There are significant and growing commitments from non-party stakeholders to deliver on climate goals through water, including outstanding contributions from indigenous communities around the world. They all agree that ambitious action is needed and call for greater ambition on water from Governments.

In numbers:

Diversity of speakers: 29 female speakers and 23 male speakers from across 26 countries and every continent other than Antarctica. A dedicated spotlight session voiced the importance and concerns of the indigenous peoples and their actions when it comes to the interconnections between water, climate change and nature based solutions. The vision statement of the Water Climate Action pathway was delivered by a youth representative and a young environmental activist offered concluding statements.

Total views: 1,468

Social media impressions: 106,084

Social Engagements: 1,257

Outcomes

Race to Zero Ambition

The Dialogues highlighted the following as evidence of growing support within the theme for the Race to Zero:

- *Spotlighting net zero by 2030 commitments from Water UK and Aguas Andinas*
- *The launch of early stage, net zero aligned commitment platforms and initiatives from UN Water, CDP, WBCSD, SIWI, WaterAid and the Water Action Track*
- *Announcement of the growth in the number of global companies, financial institutions and cities acting and reporting on water.*
- *A call to collaborate and share knowledge and data from the leading environmental watch organisation in China, the IPE, through the Blue, Garbage, and Carbon mapping programs, as well as a similar call from CDP's Cities Water Disclosure program.*

Climate Action Pathways

- *The event built support for the water climate action pathway by presenting a vision of the change we need to see in the world and highlighting water's largely untapped potential for carbon mitigation and resilience. Through Mentimeter polls deployed throughout the segments, we asked participants to vote for key aspects of the pathways they are willing to support and commit to and to share their willingness to support more ambitious NDCs to deliver the Paris Agreement objectives as soon as possible.*
- *Given the renewed focus on basic hygiene protocols (i.e. hand washing), the event specifically explored the often-underrepresented linkages between climate change, water, health and community resilience, showcasing the opportunities to combat the spread of covid-19, protect people and build back better.*
- *It brought together a wide range of stakeholders and helped to forge the collaborations needed to transform the sector and provide a platform upon which to build a suite of short-term campaigns leading up to COP 26.*

2019 United Nations Climate Action Summit

The event provided opportunities to build solutions aligned with a number of existing initiatives from the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit in the following ways:

- *Exploring specific solutions relating to access to safe drinking water and sanitation, such as the Cities Water Disclosure program and Aguas Andinas of Chile's Clean Urban Mopochu campaign, related closely to the objectives of **UNCAS's Building Climate Resilience for the Urban Poor***
- *Encouraging an expanded focus on restoring wetlands and peatlands for carbon sequestration are aligned with the objectives outlined by the **Global Campaign for Nature***
- *Presenting cross-sectoral solutions related to urban water and wastewater management, highlighting the necessity of involving the financial sector in particular, can help meet the objectives of the **African Adaptation Initiative***
- *SIWI's Source to Sea Action Platform demonstrated how improved management of water resources and wastewater onland can contribute to **Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance (ORRAA)***
- *Transforming Investments in African Rainfed Agriculture (**TIARA**) programme developed by SIWI highlighted the importance of investing in rainfed agriculture to build the resilience and food productivity of smallholder farmers. **This contributes to the Support for Smallholder Farmers initiative.***



- [Risk-Informed Early Action Partnership \(REAP\) \(UNCAS\)](#)

Section 2 – Outcomes in 2021

There was clear support from participants for the top line goals from the water [Climate Action Pathway](#) coupled with some material suggestions of actions and campaigns to strengthen it ahead of COP26. These included:

- *Participants agreed the **top line goals from the climate action pathway for water were those most likely to succeed** in delivering a resilient, 1.5 degree future. There was acknowledgement that **further input would be needed from experts in Sub-Saharan Africa as well as South and Southeast Asia** if we are to deliver true global transformation and tap into global innovation and knowledge.*
- ***Wetland conservation is vital for climate change mitigation and adaptation**, and for the protection of nature and water resources. There is an urgent need to establish an **ambitious goal for wetland conservation** around which existing initiatives can coalesce. Support from the Climate Champions in this endeavour was welcomed.*
- ***Clear agreement on the importance of the water-energy-food nexus** and the need for more detailed, **action-orientated dialogues on this issue to identify best practice and investment needs** to manage the inherent tradeoffs and to avoid maladaptive outcomes.*
- *The importance of **cross-sectoral and scale-aware climate-resilient water management for balancing trade-offs between mitigation strategies** and ensuring that these strategies are themselves resilient over the medium-to-long term.*
- ***Wastewater reuse remains largely untapped as a sustainable and potentially energy and nutrient efficiency solution**. A global campaign to mobilise non-state actors around a common goal here is a huge opportunity for both adaptation and mitigation interests in the race to net zero.*
- ***Securing access to water, sanitation and hygiene for people was recognised as a fundamental criteria for a resilient 1.5 degree economy**. It was felt that **further work will be needed to strengthen the campaign messages and climate-related evidence** around this, particularly in the Race for Resilience.*
- *Financial institutions and the private sector role was explored, with them **offering tangible solutions for business needs**. However, these voices need to be heard louder, with rigorous evidence on impact, greater transparency on actions, and at greater depth down value chains. These are the key stakeholders in the race to resilient economies.*

Overview of progress to date

UK Water and Aguas Andinas commit to net zero emissions by 2030 mobilising their unique water-related solutions including wetland and peatland restoration, wastewater reuse and conversion into bioenergy.

GCA-WAT commitment to support the Water Climate Action Pathway and coordinate with key partners to ensure alignment and complementary when it comes to implementation of actions and policy recommendations.

The SDG6 Global Acceleration Framework catalyses action across forty international partners and over thirty UN Agencies to support achieving the water and sanitation objectives under SDG6 by 2030.

Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewage Board commit to continue expanding the use of wastewater reuse programs and desalination techniques, as well as better implementing the curricular economy approach, to alleviate stress on local reservoirs and rivers during droughts in their region.

Organizations such as UNESCO-IHP, AGWA, IWMI and others commit to expanding their work on national capacity building for climate-resilient water management in 2021 through initiatives such as the UNFCCC Consultative Group of Experts' Adaptation Academy, which will provide free training to dozens of national climate focal points starting in 2021.

Actions in support of Pathways for completion by COP26

The following stakeholders have reached out to support following specific Pathway actions that will be completed by COP26:

Ramsar Convention
WaterAid
Water.org
IWMI
WMO
Wetlands International
CEO Water Mandate
UN-Water
Source2Sea Action Platform
WWF
GCA- Water Action Track
GIZ
UNECE
UNESCO
SWA
WCMC
Water Witness International
GWP
Asian development bank
World Bank