

Discussion Points for Karin Gardes, AED SIWI

Event: SDG6 Review at HLPF “SDGs in focus: SDG 6 and interlinkages with other SDGs – Clean water and sanitation”

When: July 11th, 10:00-13:00

Where: Conference Room 4

Speaking points:

- Your excellencies, distinguished colleagues...
- I would like to thank the organizers for having included SIWI to present a non-state actor perspective in this conversation, because the challenges are, indeed, so great that we really need to collaborate much more seriously if we are going to make significant progress on achieving the SDGs. This implies cooperation between sectors, between government, civil society and private sector, and between global, national and local entities for a just transition of societies towards a more secure future for all, especially for those most in need. I dare to believe that more cooperation will lead to the quadrupling of impact that we are aiming for, since we can do more, better, when we tackle it together.
- That is the spirit in which the Water Action Agenda with over 800 voluntary multi-stakeholder commitments was created and with which over ten thousand people gathered in New York in March: A desire for true transformative action, because it is clear that we won't reach SDG6 without a shift in how we think about these interconnected systems. We can't keep doing the same things and expect different results.
- Contrary to what some might think, the Water Action Agenda is a hugely valuable mosaic of water action already happening throughout the world that can further enable more coordinated action and the establishment of various multi-stakeholder constituencies and partnerships at different levels. Those constituencies must then be empowered and enabled to act simultaneously and in complementary ways, embodying the emergence of polycentric governance systems.

- Consequently, the Water Action Agenda needs to provide a set of coordination mechanisms to support collective action, rather than monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, to enable all actors involved to self-organize, meet and converge thinking over the long-term towards their common goals. This support can be provided by different platforms at different times, offering multiple opportunities to take stock of progress and coordinate further action together towards a common horizon on an ongoing basis.
- To support this shift towards continuous collective action will require good, holistic and gender transformative governance, political will and leadership. I am looking specifically toward the Co-Chairs of the Interactive Dialogues from the Water Conference to drive these conversations further, politically speaking, especially with those outside the water sphere. Why is water not sufficiently valued by those who require it for their productive activities? Why are we still lacking political will to prioritize water action as a pre-requisite for SDG achievement when the Secretary General himself has acknowledged that water needs to be at the center of the global political agenda? Why is water not a more integral component of various declarations and why will water be virtually absent from the SDG Summit agenda? We need more champions who are not afraid to be vocal, to lead by example, to encourage countries to weigh in on water in negotiations so that the outcomes and successes of the UN 2023 Water Conference are acknowledged, prioritized and followed up on. And countries need to take concrete steps to embed water at the heart of national development plans and climate strategies, encourage more inter-ministerial dialogue to bridge silos, together with other stakeholders, and allocate means to implementation.
- Ultimately, each and every one of us needs to take responsibility for the future we want and advocate for it within our own spheres of influence, inspiring others to act. A poly-centric governance system is emerging where action is no longer top-down nor bottom-up, but both need to co-exist and advance together, across boundaries and borders.

- Holistic, all of society systems approaches and strong multi-centric governance systems need to be applied in country to enable cross-sectoral cooperation. SIWI and its partners support these approaches, notably through the Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition and also through the Action Platform for Source to Sea Management that I invite you to learn more about during a Sweden-convened side event on July 18th here in New York.
- In short, we must prioritize political will and partnerships to benefit people and planet. SIWI is prepared to lend its platforms to this end, as formulated in its own Water Action Agenda commitment. Thank you all and let's continue to plan action together at the World Water Week in Stockholm in August.