Daegu-Gyeongbuk Water Action for Sustainable Cities and Regions

Draft as of 14 April 2015

Local and Regional Authorities play a vital role in ensuring water security in a context where already more than half of the world's population lives in urban areas, and urbanization is accelerating. At the same time water and sanitation services are lagging behind and infrastructure systems are often in dire need of repair or replacement. While the majority of Local and Regional Authorities is in charge of providing water and sanitation services for their populations, they are also responsible for a much broader palette of water-related tasks, including local economic development, provision of energy, ensuring adequate access to food, poverty reduction, environmental management, resilience to climate change and disasters, and addressing public health issues.

Since 2006, Local and Regional Authorities have been joining forces to promote sustainable practices in water management through dedicated events at the triennial World Water Forums. In 2009, at the Fifth World Water Forum, Local and Regional Authorities endorsed the Istanbul Water Consensus, expressing their commitment to sustainable urban water management. Since then, over 1,000 Local and Regional Authorities from all around the world have signed the Consensus.

Five months before final decisions will be taken by the United Nations General Assembly in New York in September 2015, it can be expected that the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will include several water-related goals, amongst them one which is specifically dedicated to water. If adopted they will open a new phase of strong commitment for the achievement of sustainable water management by relevant stakeholders at all levels and in all sectors, including for universal access to water and sanitation.

We, 95 Local and Regional Authorities from 26 countries, gathered at the 7th World Water Forum Conference of Local and Regional Authorities in Gyeongju, Republic of Korea, on 13 and 14 April 2015, rise to this challenge. Building on the foundation provided by the Istanbul Water Consensus; our earlier commitment to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals; the soon to be agreed Sustainable Development Goals; the preparation of a new urban agenda via the Habitat III process; the dialogue between local authorities and water and sanitation utilities launched by GWOPA in Barcelona in November 2013; and in line with the Global Action Agenda for water, supported by Implementation Roadmaps developed within the frame of the 7th World Water Forum held in Daegu-Gyeongbuk from 12 to 17 April 2015, we are committed to scaling up progress in sustainable water management at local and regional levels by endorsing the Daegu-Gyeongbuk Water Action for Sustainable Cities and Regions.

With this document, we also express our expectation that the political process of the 7th World Water Forum will lead to concrete actions all across the globe that will be implemented in a wide variety of creative collaborative projects, such as the pilot

initiative called 'Sustainable Basin Management in Urban Areas' launched by the Korean Government at the 4th Local and Regional Authorities Conference in Gyeongju on 14 April 2014. These projects should reflect the values of multi-level governance and stakeholder engagement and be suitable to achieve measurable results so that they can be shared at the next Local and Regional Authorities Conference organized in the context of the 8th World Water Forum in Brazil.

We hereby recognize the contribution of the partners, Daegu-Gyeongbuk Development Institute (DGI), ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, the National Committee of the 7th World Water Forum, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), UN-Habitat's Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance (GWOPA), and the World Water Council, in outlining an implementation strategy that is aligned with the global policy processes mentioned above.

PART I – Strategy for Local and Regional Authorities

(1) From the LRA Conference in Gyeongju in April 2015 to the UN General Assembly in New York in September 2015:

In this historic moment which is on the brink of a new global policy for sustainable development, Local and Regional Authorities are determined to take advantage of the global momentum for stepping up sustainable water management at all levels. We therefore agree on the following strategy, which recognizes the new paradigm that will be set with the adoption of the SDGs in September 2015.

Our highest priority until the UN General Assembly will be to join forces with our national associations for cities and regions in order to urge our national governments to endorse the water-related SDGs – including the related monitoring framework - and to commit themselves to achieve these goals by 2030.

(2) From the UN General Assembly in New York to achieving the implementation of the water-related SDGs in 2030:

In order to ensure progress in implementation and to achieve the commitments made we will call upon national governments to develop and provide enabling policy frameworks for Local and Regional Authorities so as to create conducive conditions for them to effectively engage in the required actions at local and regional level. (See also Part II.)

However, notwithstanding the outcome of the global process that is promoting the SDGs and not just waiting for our national governments to introduce relevant institutional reforms in the water sector, we will also accelerate locally feasible solutions and enter into targeted alliances with stakeholders at all levels.

a) Accelerating locally feasible solutions

Building on the Istanbul Water Consensus and in the spirit of promoting sustainable development and the cultural, historic and traditional values of water we are committed:

- To apply the principles of good governance, in particular the principles of equity, transparency and accountability, including the enforcement of existing water laws;
- To link water management more closely with urban planning, design and development as well as other relevant urban management sectors;

- To step up integrated and circular approaches, in particular by making water of different quality fit for different purposes and promoting the reuse of treated wastewater;
- To take into account nature-based approaches such as enhancing ecosystems services and green infrastructure solutions for more sustainable water management, in particular for storm water management;
- To use the tariff system to regulate water demand and encourage water conservation while ensuring the affordability of water and sanitation services for all;
- To enhance the sharing of experiences on innovative financing mechanisms such as Payment for Ecosystem Services
- To accept that long-term investments in the water sector will yield their benefits only beyond local election periods and will need the courage of elected decision-makers to enter into debt in the short term;
- To manage water at local and regional level by including the appropriate consideration of water needs and multiple uses in the wider catchment;
- Create widespread public awareness about the value of water and the need to treat it as a precious and limited resource.

b) Entering into targeted alliances with stakeholders at all levels

Conscious of the persistent gaps in water sector mandates and often insufficient means at the sub-national level and aware of the values and benefits of participation for strengthening sustainable development, Local and Regional Authorities will enter into targeted alliances with relevant stakeholders in the water sector. Priority will be given to the following actions directed at these stakeholders:

- Vulnerable groups: Local and Regional Authorities will strive to make the voices heard from those groups who are affected most severely by poor water management – in particular those living in informal settlements -- and address their needs with prime attention.
- Water operators: Local and Regional Authorities will work closely with their public and private water operators and continuously build their capacity – as far as feasible within given mandates and means. While collaborating with private water operators they will keep oversight on their performance and ensure that social responsibility and accountability vis-à-vis the public are not compromised.

  Local and Regional Authorities will pay special attention to small scale entrepreneurs, especially informal service providers, and give priority to working with private sector utilities employing local workers and adhering closely to international labor standards.
- Other Local and Regional authorities: Local and Regional Authorities will create partnerships with their counterparts in the vicinity or further away to pool finances and knowledge; perform their water services more efficiently; share and thus mitigate risks; and enhance their credit rating to have easier access to loans for larger investments to be made.
- Higher levels of government: In the case of absence of official rules for collaboration, Local and Regional Authorities will engage with higher levels of government in informal communication mechanisms such as dialogues and roundtables to come to a better understanding and identification of each other's objectives, roles and constraints.

- Universities and research institutions: Local and Regional Authorities will participate in partnerships for joint learning initiatives to build their knowledge and understanding of all components of the water cycle at local and regional level which is a prerequisite for any integrated management approach.
- Water users in other sectors: Local and Regional Authorities will engage in dialogues with all major water users to harmonize policies for multiple uses, coordinate demand and supply, and realize the benefits of a nexus approach in order to share the costs, risks and benefits of jointly managing an equally vital and vulnerable resource.

PART II – Call on national governments for creating an enabling environment for Local and Regional Authorities to contribute to accelerating the achievement of national policies and globally agreed water-related goals.

Water is the most vital resource for life and thus also for any kind of development. Managing water sustainably and achieving national and global policy goals while providing equal access to water and sanitation services to all and safeguarding water for ecosystems, all levels of a country's government – national, regional and local - need to closely coordinate their actions.

To enable Local and Regional Authorities to deliver their share of responsibilities in the most effective and efficient way, National Government need to consider the following lines of action:

- To institutionalize the regular and formal participation of Local and Regional Authorities in national-level policy making on water-related issues;
- To apply the principle of subsidiarity, i.e. to decentralize relevant mandates and means to the lowest governance level most appropriate to achieve tangible progress towards nationally and globally agreed water-related goals;
- To offer a wide range of opportunities for Local and Regional Authorities to build their institutional capacities as well as the capacities of their staff – i.e. their awareness, knowledge and skills – to manage water sustainably;
- To build and continuously update a comprehensive national database containing validated facts and figures, visual presentations, development scenarios and other relevant information on the country's water resources, their quantity and quality, the state of aquatic eco-systems, the different water uses, water demand, access to infrastructure and services etc. which contributes to both national and global monitoring efforts and can be easily accessed by Local and Regional Authorities;
- To establish innovative solidarity financing mechanisms and opportunities for decentralized South-South and North-South cooperation between Local and Regional Authorities;
- To remove barriers to direct access to technical support and global financing mechanisms for Local and Regional Authorities that are offered by donors and multilateral financial institutions.