



**4th Asia-Pacific Water Summit:  
Water for Sustainable Development**  
Best Practices and the Next Generation  
Kumamoto, Japan, 23-24 April 2022

## Chair's Summary

### Preamble

This Chair's Summary shows the pathway toward quality growth and is part of the Kumamoto Declaration process. In the Asia-Pacific Region, quality growth is by definition resilient, sustainable, and inclusive. This Summary compiles the outcomes of two rich days of presentations and exchanges of views to answer questions raised in the Declaration, which was adopted by the Heads of State and Government at the 4th Asia-Pacific Water Summit. It includes the key messages of four integration sessions, which built on the outcomes of nine thematic sessions and two special sessions. Despite the difficult times of the Covid-19 pandemic, in these sessions, Heads of State and Government and other leaders, such as policymakers, heads of government agencies, practitioners, scholars, representatives of civil society organizations, as well as the private sector, discussed a wide range of water-related issues, found challenges and opportunities from the perspective of governance, finance, as well as science and technology, and proposed concrete actions alongside a wide range of perspectives shared by the participants in the sessions.

Over the decades, the Asia-Pacific Region has considerably improved in terms of water security but is currently facing difficulties responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and multiple kinds of hazard. The Region also needs to address water-related risks exacerbated by climate change. I hope the Heads of State and Government of Asia and the Pacific, alongside the other leaders, will accelerate their concerted action, engage youth and the generations to come, from the drawing board all the way to implementation and evaluation, and lead the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Outcomes of the Summit Sessions Synthesized by the Overall Integration Session

The following outcomes of the Summit sessions are the answer to the inquiry by Heads of State and Government at the 4th Asia Pacific Water Summit (APWS):

#### 1. Towards a Sustainable Society

As the primal contribution to building an overall sustainable society, the water sector should achieve all water-related SDG targets such as SDG 6.1-6.6 and 11.5. We are, however, alarmingly off-track from the path towards the achievement of SDGs, and were so even before COVID-19. The water sector should transform itself in the three key areas of governance, finance, as well as science and technology if we hope to achieve SDGs.

**Governance.** Mainstream integrity and transparency practices across water organizations as a foundation to transform all water subsectors. Invest in human resources, inter alia, to achieve this result. Creating trans-sectoral, stakeholder-inclusive and fully transparent governance is key. The concept of valuing water should be embedded in the minds and actions of all stakeholders to promote behavioral change and facilitate holistic collaboration by all. Specific recommendations include: use the digital transformation to improve and visualize water management efficiency; integrate water management principles at national to provincial and district levels; improve the decentralization of decision-making processes; and apply mentoring and peer-to-peer approaches to build the capacities and skills of small and emerging cities.

Basin-wide water management based on IWRM should be the norm rather than the exception. Increase policy coherence and develop legal and other frameworks at all levels, taking into account a source-to-sea and IWRM approach to restore and keep a sound water cycle. Not only freshwater, but also solid water including glaciers, aquifers, oceans, and islands should be within the scope of the framework. Further recommendations include: strengthen regional legal frameworks and institutions; hold inclusive regional dialogues; and upgrade existing arrangements to enhance transboundary cooperation. Governance and finance systems need to be tailored towards the diverse climate, geographic, and socio-economic conditions of the Region (Asia+) and should be developed based on research and dialogue. The issues of Small Island Development States (SIDS) should be given special focus to address these challenges.

**Finance.** Given the off-track status of SDGs, drastically increase total investment in the water sector. Direct and indirect benefit of water investment should be numerically articulated to convince finance institutions and taxpayers and attract investors by developing and standardizing the analytic method for this purpose. Specific recommendations include: encourage cost sharing

and pooled resources, support water security actions from multiple funding sources, and ensure that investment and management of water-related infrastructure and technologies are designed to be multi-purpose.

**Science and Technology.** We cannot improve what we cannot measure. The collection, archiving, and sharing of water data and information, including those of water risks, should be promoted through establishing appropriate frameworks and organizations, as well as prioritized investment. Transboundary information sharing is particularly important. Building global observatories should be supported by the Region.

Water can broadly contribute to global socio-economic advancement by helping building peace and regional stability. For this purpose, enhance the leaders' awareness that cooperation on water, particularly on water emergencies, such as disasters, can be an agent for peace and promote effective actions; promote the use of "Principles to Foster Peace before, during, and after Water-related Disasters" which was launched at the APWS; use traditional technologies such as cylindrical water distributors and a locally nurtured culture of peacefully sharing water in society.

## 2. Towards a Resilient Society

COVID-19 reminded us how our society and systems were unprepared for sudden disturbance and changes. Water can and should play a critical role to build a post-COVID-19 society that is more resilient and adaptive to sudden and slow onset disturbances such as pandemics, disasters, and climate change. Decision-making by leaders should be quick and evidence based.

**Science and Technology.** Here, science and technology plays a critical role. For this: Position science and technology as "a game changer" towards a fully resilient post-corona society through three actions: Promote water cycle consilience by accelerating the Open Science policy, particularly focusing on observation, modeling and data integration; Foster "Facilitators," that is, catalytic beings who can lead the way toward resolving problems by providing professional advice on-site using a broad range of scientific and indigenous knowledge; and Work together beyond disciplines and sectors among different levels while taking an end-to-end approach.

Slow-onset changes should be given special attention. Yearly and seasonal hydrological patterns and those of water demand are changing quickly due to climate change and other socioeconomic changes. Those changes should be addressed by adaptive policies, as well as resilient and green infrastructure. Demand management of water should be given higher attention.

## 3. Towards an Inclusive Society

An inclusive society is a must not only for the achievement of SDGs but also as an engine for socio-economic growth, by fully tapping diverse capabilities and talents of human beings. The water sector should be an enabler. For this purpose: make gender equality and social inclusion a core goal for any institution; to aim all budgets to be at least responsive to gender and vulnerability; carry out gender and inclusivity analysis at all levels as a core component of research; empower youth to provide solutions and demonstrate their expertise in areas of technology, innovation, and data; encourage, initiate, and support Meaningful Youth Engagement (MYE); to strengthen Youth-Government Partnerships at all levels; promote direct investment in actions for, of, and by youth, including startups.

## 4. Towards the UN 2023 Water Conference and Beyond

Water, Climate Change, and disaster risk reduction (DRR) were discussed in most thematic sessions and all integration sessions of the 4th APWS. As such, connection and linkage of these three elements were the core focus of the Summit. The resulting recommendations and proposals of action on these three issues reflect the Region's rich experience and relevant practices. The Kumamoto Water Initiative announced by the Government of Japan at the Summit focuses on these three issues in an integrated manner. As such, we recommend that Water, Climate Change and DRR are discussed as a key topic for global processes, particularly the UN 2023 Water Conference. It is expected that the Kumamoto Water Initiative will make progress by enlarging the circle of commitments in the Region and beyond.

As related recommendations were and will be shared at major processes, such as the Bonn Conference, the 9<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum, the Dushanbe Water Process, as well as the Lisbon Ocean Conference, messages and recommendations of the APWS including those in this document should be closely connected with those of the other processes.

Commitments and actions of the APWS do not end today but will start again from tomorrow. The organizers expect that all participants in the Summit will keep their steady progress and decisive steps towards the solution of every water challenge and build a quality society in the Asia-Pacific Region and the world.

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President, Asia-Pacific Water Forum  
Former Prime Minister of Japan