

**THE SUSTAINABLE USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES
IN SOUTH ASIA:
THE POTENTIAL FOR REGIONAL CO-OPERATION**

Thursday, 19th September 2013

KAS, Avenue de l'Yser 11

1040 Brussels

Context:

Whereas in the not so distant past progress and development tended to be measured in tonnes of coal, barrels' of oil or gigawatts of electricity consumed, our age paradigm became how to obtain as much economic value as possible out of as little energy as possible, that is, in our day: less means more...

A variety of factors led us to this evolution; from an increased perception of the resources limits, the conscience of the value of nature preservation and the costs of pollution to the most recent concerns with the climate impact of energy use.

This change of paradigm had a strong influence as well on social relations; whereas the old archetype stressed competition between societies for the domination over scarce resources, present day model tends to stress co-operation in a World where wild nature and healthy environment are valued as belonging to the common World heritage and effects on climate are, by definition, global.

This change of perspective is being felt as well in South Asia and in crucial issues such as water management. In the past, there have been two major treaties on water sharing between India and Pakistan, and India and Bangladesh for two major riverine systems – the Indus and the Ganges. But these treaties seem to fall short of fully addressing all water issues at stake.

Major disputes on water sharing and water projects have been growing on in various regions. Western Bengal in India prevented an agreement of this country with Bangladesh, whereas Tamil Nadu and Karnataka passed unanimous parliamentary conflicting resolutions regarding water management. The Indian states Jammu and Kashmir vehemently opposed Pakistan water pretensions whereas in Pakistan the Indus River Authority System collapsed over disputes among the various states regarding the construction of the CJ canal.

The failure of agreements is only one of the aspects of the deep crisis in water governance, others being the absence of technical research, widespread corruption on the telemetric system and, last but not least the "water war discourse" that goes as far as to call for war in general and the use of nuclear weapons in particular in the context of what some are calling "water jihad".

The water debate is being monopolised by 'Non-Water Actors' who attempt to hijack it from those who are actually at the receiving end to all sorts of conflicting perspectives.

If the water issue needs to be addressed in South Asia, the dialogue should be led by societal actors rather than governmental actors. While the governments see water as a commodity, people see it as a life line. For centuries, these 'Water Actors', mainly the farmers, have evolved an understanding and have lived with other communities. The State should provide hard facts and data, in order to allow the water actors to be the primary negotiators of the problem. Institutionalised structures for an informal dialogue between societies and exclusively on water issues is needed in South Asia.

In this context, as it was the case in Europe, water basins might be more relevant geographical areas to organise discussions than countries or their states.

SADF-Gallup last study on the region focussing Bangladesh (please, see site for the full report – www.sadf.eu) made it clear that the overwhelming majority of Bangladeshis think regional co-operation is the best way forward to sort out most difficult issues in water management.

This gave us reason to think that water – in the context of sustainable land and energy use in the region – could be seen progressively as being a part of the solution for a peaceful and co-operative South Asian framework rather than the reason for future confrontations.

Our main aim is to present a comprehensive set of recommendations regarding European policy priorities for South Asia co-operation in water policy as well as business solutions for the beneficial water treatment in the region. Conclusions and recommendations should aim at influencing the international community at large, European institutions such as the European External Action Service, International institutions such as the World Bank, and most in particular SAARC and SAARC Member states most directly impacted by the issue.

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Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Brussels

2013/09/19

09:00 Welcome remarks by the organisers SADF and KAS

09:15 Inaugural session

Opening address by:

- **H.E. Alejo Vidal-Quadras, Vice-President of the European Parliament**
- **H.E. Ambassador Darius Pranckevicius, Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union**

09:30 Panel I: Challenges and opportunities of water cooperation in South Asia

Questions to be discussed:

- Why have standing agreements not delivered yet the desired outcomes?
- What are the main challenges?
- Do Water Actors have to be promoted in their role as primary negotiators in water debates?
- Should society dialogue be promoted rather along river basins than along country or state lines?

Moderation:

* **Dr. Faramarz Tamanna**, Director General, Centre for Strategic Studies of the Afghan Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Kabul, Afghanistan

Speakers:

- * **Mr. Paulo Casaca** Executive Director, South Asia Democratic Forum
- * **Prof. Delwar Hossain**, Director of the East Asia Study Centre (EASC), Dhaka University (DUIR), Dhaka, Bangladesh
- * **Dr. D. Suba Chandran**, Director, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), New Delhi, India

10:15 Discussion

10:30 Coffee-Break

10:45 Panel II: Sharing best practices of European and international experiences

Questions to be discussed:

- Can joint water management be a catalyst for regional integration?
- To what extent can regional bodies provide necessary frameworks or impulses in cross-border water management?

Moderation:

- * **MEP Jo Leinen**, Former President of the Environment Committee in the EP

Speakers:

- * Presentation on water governance in Europe, the case of Portugal and Spain
 - **Paulo Canelas de Castro**, Associate Professor, Coordinator of the Master's Program in European Union Law, International Law and Comparative Law, Jean Monnet Program at the University of Macau, Board of Directors, Association of Studies on the European Union – Macau, President, European Union Studies Association - Asia Pacific
- * Presentation on the Mekong basin experiment (the role and potential of ASEAN cooperation)
 - **Mr Eric Tilman**, Founder and Administrator of riversnetwork.org
- * Presentation on the potential for water management as a key element in regional cooperation and integration (vis à vis trade and foreign policy issues)
 - **Dr. Mallika Joseph**, Executive Director, Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS), Colombo, Sri Lanka
- * Presentation on the potential of regional bodies as facilitators / stakeholders in water management
 - **Dr. Nishchal Nath Pandey**, Director, Centre for Strategic Studies (CSAS), Kathmandu, Nepal

11:45 Discussion

12:00 Lunch Break

13:00 Panel III: Smart use and management of water resources

Questions to be discussed:

- How can we avoid the impact of too many trade-offs of water use?
- To what extent can new technologies and innovations contribute to fulfil more human needs using less natural water resources?

Moderation:

- * **Dr. Siegfried O. Wolf**, Lecturer, SAI, Director of Research, SADF

Opening Address:

- * Video intervention by EU Ambassador to India

H.E. Joao Cravinho

Speakers:

- * Expert presentation on water based energy production
 - **Prof. Dr. Miroslav Marenc**, Associate Professor in Storage and Hydropower, UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education
- * Expert presentation on water sanitation
 - **Mr Robert Fraser**, Senior Officer, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
- * Expert presentation on water quality preservation and recycling by INCBIO
 - **Mr José Marques**, CEO, INCBIO
- * Expert presentation on food security
 - **Mrs Hilary Motsiri**, Senior Officer, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
- * Presentation on the needs for international support
 - **Asst. Prof. Arshi Saleem Hashmi**, Assistant Professor, Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, National Defence University (NDU), Islamabad, Pakistan

14:30 Discussion

15:00 Summary and Closing Remarks (KAS/SADF)