

Intervention by

By

Mr. Benedito Braga: President, World Water Council

COP 18 High-level Side Events: Open Interactive Dialogue

Sustainable Solutions for Climate Action: Food Security in Dry Lands under a Changing Climate

Date: Tuesday, 4 December 2012, from 1:15 p.m. to 2.45 p.m.

Venue: Conference Room 1 at the Qatar National Convention Center

[Proposed: “Mr. Braga, water is one of the most vital resources on earth and poses, perhaps, the greatest resource challenge of our times. Climate change impacts water in extreme ways: either too little, too much, or too sudden. You represent the World Water Council, an organization of more than 300 institutional members from over 60 countries who are united in their commitment to addressing the world’s global water issues. Can you point to some joint initiatives or partnership that succeeded in addressing adaptation of water management to climate change?”]

Response:

Let me start by saying that the World Water Council is honored with the **privilege to participate** at such a distinguished panel. I would like to thank the Secretary General H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon and H.E. Mr. Fahad Bin Mohamed Al-Attyia, Executive Chairman of the Qatar Food Security Program, for this kind invitation. I guess this is the **first time that a professional Water institution** is invited to a major climate conference and I would like to commend you for this initiative. You have shown wisdom because, indeed, it is the **water sector that is most affected by climate variability and change**. Peoples’ concerns about climate are not climate per se, but the consequences of excess or lack of water resources due to climate change. By and large all the impacts of climate variability are manifested through, by and with water whether you talk about impacts on ecosystems or hydrological extremes.

The **World Water Council** has launched last month, at meeting at UN Headquarters in New York, a proposal of creating a **Pact for Water Security**. As you know, water security consists primarily in attaining basic human needs of everyday life for **safe drinking water, hygiene and health** while maintaining the good **functioning of ecosystems**. Water security also consists in guaranteeing **economic and social security** through the use of water to produce food, energy and the goods and services needed for **development and for the rising of living standards**.

Climate variability and change plays a very important role in the implementation of this planned Pact. Due to the uncertainties in precipitation patterns and consequent streamflows in rivers and creeks, the **implementation of this Pact will require the consideration of more resilient hydraulic infrastructure and more efficient water management systems**. The big challenge here is basically the issue of how to increase the resilience of our systems? This clearly necessitates **adaptive water management, including the tools of management both on the supply and the demand side**. When it comes to demand, no doubt that we need more careful conservations measures. On the supply side there is no doubt that we need to increase the role of engineered systems whether one talks about storage, increased inland navigation or the use of hydropower.

Initiatives addressing adaptation of water management to climate change have been circumscribed to **academic circles where the non-stationarity of the hydrologic series** due to climate change poses important challenges in the design and operation of storage reservoirs. Certainly, **we need to re-tool our toolkits** as the design methodologies we currently use are designed for **stationary climate and are not valid anymore**. The platform of solutions presented at the 6th World Water Forum in Marseille, has

proposed a range of solutions related to adaptation of water management for food security including the case of dry lands. The Council will work with interested governments and organizations towards their implementation.

This is the reason why I think that adaptation to climate variability and change must be given priority in the climate debate. Poor countries in Africa are already suffering with the vagaries of climate today. Annual GDP of some countries in that continent have a straight correlation with annual rainfall. Low rain, low GDP. Therefore, if we **store more “rain”**, that is to say more water in reservoirs, then we will be able to solve this equation. That is why the profession advocates **to re-think the reservoir and hydropower debate** sine ire, sine studio.

We would do well to take up the recommendation of the recent **UN High Level Expert Panel on Water and disasters**, to incorporate disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation as essential components of development planning. We should ponder: do the **rich countries have high resiliency** to water related disasters because they are rich or did they **become rich because they invested** in water resilience measures even when poor?

Recent World Water Council dialogs on water, climate change and adaptation revealed virtual opposite views of what the rich countries prioritize versus what the poor countries prioritize for water adaption measures. The **developed** countries are more likely to think of environment and security in terms of **global environmental changes** and **developing** countries are more concerned with the human security implications of **local and regional problems**. Water uses and the role of water are different in the different socio economic circumstances of people.

At the Council we believe that when it comes to the **post-2015 development goals** we must have a SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) to the **development of climate adaptive water resources management strategies** and I would like to invite your community to support those efforts.

In closing, the World Water Council, that I represent here, would like to recommend, therefore, that the **climate negotiators turn their attention to water issues** not only for the reason that water connects climate change to all the natural and social cycles, but also for **the simple reason to bring fresh impetus to the current climate talks**. People do not care about abstract legal arguments advocated in sophisticated intergovernmental talks; however, they do care a lot about the water security of their family.

This is your opportunity.

Thank you.