

Session's Report

SG

Title of the Session:	Cross-border Water Issues and Diplomacy
Chair:	
Moderator:	Stéphane Grumbach , Senior Scientist, INRIA, France
Introduction of the Session's topic:	A topic with both essential historical roots and complex contemporary geopolitical dimensions. Our goal is to understand history, and design sustainable solutions for the future, while discussing what role innovation can play towards this objective.

Panelist:	Fariz Ismailzade , Executive Vice Rector, ADA University, Azerbaijan
Title of the presentation:	Water resources in the Caspian basin
Outline/ Issues addressed:	Presentation about the water resources in the Caspian basin, the ongoing challenges that the sea is facing due to the oil and gas industry, climate change, industrial pollution as well as the rapidly decreasing levels. At the same time, recent cooperation efforts between the Caspian states were highlighted and future necessary steps were identified for the effective cooperation and diplomacy for the sake of preservation of the flora and fauna of the sea.
Key-Takeaways:	How to foster diplomatic efforts in conflicting areas for preserving essential environmental resources.

Panelist:	Etienne Monbaron , Head of Hydrology & Hydraulics Sector, Geneva State Water Protection Agency, Switzerland
Title of the presentation:	Tools for transboundary management of water and water uses in greater Geneva

Outline/ Issues addressed:	<p>The existence of a community of practices, functioning in the transboundary dimension and cutting across different sectors</p> <p>The existence of a shared political will and vision, carried forward by regional policymakers with more room for manoeuvre than central governments</p> <p>The evolution from an essentially sector-based, troubleshooting outlook to an integrated, pre-emptive perspective</p> <p>The role of civil society</p>
Key-Takeaways:	How different legal organizations increase the complexity of trans border discussions.

Panelist:	Jean-Eric Aubert , President, Université Internationale de la Mer, France
Title of the presentation:	Some success stories
Outline/ Issues addressed:	<p>In search for useful principles for the management of cross border waters, the presentation sketched out three success stories of different « granularity » : the Senegal river, the Antarctic Ocean and the Pelagos marine area in Western Mediterranean.</p> <p>Common features could be derived from the three cases: initial modest, clearly focused objectives, followed by gradual extension to broader goals; fair sharing of benefits between involved nations; agreed mechanisms for monitoring and controlling the engagements. The question was then raised: can such principles be applied to deal with situations already affected by conflictual relations between concerned nations (such as the Mekong Delta, the Nile sources, the Eastern Mediterranean basin, etc)?</p>
Key-Takeaways:	a few success stories of management of cross-border large rivers and marine areas, and draw possible lessons for broader application.

Panelist:	Muna Luqman , Founder & Co Founder, Food4Humanity & Women in Solidarity Network, Yemen
Title of the presentation:	Community Based Approaches to Water Conflict Mitigation

Outline/ Issues addressed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both global and local climate change impacts are likely to matter for future development, given Yemen’s high levels of food import dependency, food insecurity, and poverty. • The international community should aim at providing urgent support livelihood programs focusing on the agriculture and fisheries, livelihood sectors and support fishermen/women, farmers and agricultural laborers and provide specific grants to support their contributions to food security. • Access to safe, dignified livelihoods mitigates the risk of exploitation and abuse and reduces violence. • Strengthening gender equality and women’s empowerment in fragile situations is critical for achieving sustainable peace and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). • Gender inequality, conflict and fragility are key challenges to sustainable development, and they are inextricably • Food4Humanity is helping empower women and youth to bring their communities out of poverty and dispute by providing close, clean water supplies, awareness programs and income generating projects through holistic approaches
Key-Takeaways:	The difficulties and impacts of practical actions on the ground in a time of war

Panelist:	Majid Labbaf , Professor and UNESCO Chair, University of Nizwa, Oman
Title of the presentation:	Water War and Peace in the Middle East
Outline/ Issues addressed:	In the Middle East, a population that grows out of proportion to the available water resources may convince us that a water conflict is always around the corner. Nonetheless, some scholars rule out the possibility of an impending water war, based on their historical evidences. In the history of the Middle East, the rarity of actual water wars is attributable to “hydro-political borders” and “virtual water”, both of which have lost their historical functions in the modern geopolitical paradigm, exposing the Middle East to “water war”.
Key-Takeaways:	The importance of looking back at history to better plan the future

Issues raised during discussions with audience	The session triggered a number of different issues related to the capacity of diplomatic means to successfully ensure safe water access to humans populations and the natural environment, as well as a strong applaud to the projects of Muna Luqman in Yemen.
Conclusions of the session	This session addressed a very fundamental issue, source of increasingly many conflicts today, but which is deeply rooted in history, and in fact contributed greatly to the shape of past and present societies. The diversity of speakers and topics allowed to address a large spectrum of topics of very diverse granularities.