

### A Slow Start – Dublin 1992

Over the last fifteen years, the concept of water security has become central to the international development agenda. Yet, that has not always been the case.

At the Rio Conference in 1992, water was not high on the agenda and one of the preparatory conferences for Rio, held in Dublin in January 1992, had a greater impact. Out of this preparatory meeting came the Dublin principles:

- Freshwater is a finite and vulnerable resource, essential to sustain life, development and the environment;
- Water development and management should be participatory—involving users, planners, and policy makers at all levels;
- Women are central to providing, managing, and safeguarding water; and
- Water has an economic value in all its competing uses and should be recognized as an economic good.

### On the Agenda at Last!

It was the 2nd World Water Forum, held in The Hague in March 2000 (the first forum took place in Marrakech in March 1997), that brought the water crisis to the top of the international agenda. More than 5,000 water stakeholders, 100 ministers, and over 600 journalists attended.

Principal to the achievements of the forum was the introduction of the concept of ‘water security,’ alongside environmental security and food security, and the notion that “*Water is Everybody’s Business*”—that all parts of society should have a say in the management and distribution of water and that the political, economic, and social systems should be open, fair, and equal for all. In other words, *Good Governance*.

This momentum continued with the International Freshwater Conference in Bonn in December 2001, which provided a specific, solution-based approach through the Bonn Keys. These Keys consisted of meeting the water-security needs of the poor; the importance of decentralization and partnerships; cooperative arrangements at the waterbasin level; and stronger, better-performing governance arrangements.

### The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The goals of Water Security for all were adopted as international, global principles at the United Nations’ Millennium Assembly in October 2000, when it was agreed “to halve, by 2015, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty, and to halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger and are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water resources.”

ADB Adopted its Water Policy “Water for All” in 2001.

### Reinforcing the Goals – The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), Johannesburg

Water and sanitation saw some of the most specific action-oriented outcomes at the 2002 summit, with delegates reinforcing the

commitment to halve the proportion of people who lack clean water by 2015, as well as adding access to sanitation to this commitment. Clean drinking water and sanitation are now a central component of the MDGs, as well as a precondition for success in the MDG goals to fight poverty, hunger, child mortality, and gender inequality.

### Signs of Progress—The Third World Water Forum, March 2003, Japan

In March 2003, The 3rd World Water Forum was held in Kyoto, Shiga and Osaka, Japan. The Forum, the largest water conference in history with 24,000 delegates and 130 ministers attending, resulted in the publication of a report—World Water Actions—which included 3000 actions and provided significant evidence that progress had been made since the 2nd World Water Forum.

ADB played a prominent role at the forum with the launching of four new initiatives: Water for the Poor – Partnerships for Action, the Water for Asian Cities Program, the Network of Asian River Basin Organizations (NARBO), and the Gender in Water Partnership. All have seen notable results since their launches.

Another key milestone at Kyoto was the report of the World Panel on Financing Water Infrastructure, chaired by Michael Camdessus, which estimated that water financing should double with the conclusions integrated into the plan for the G8 Evian Summit in 2003. ADB participated in the panel, has launched a number of innovative and flexible financing mechanisms, and is now a member of the Gurria taskforce, which focuses on financing for local government and agriculture.

### Water For Life – The International Decade for Action 2005-2015

On World Water Day—22 March 2005, the United Nations passed a resolution on an ‘international decade for action’ to help achieve the water-related goals of the Millennium Declaration. The goals would be to focus more on water-related issues and implementations and deepen cooperation at all levels. Water and sanitation, along with human resettlements, were selected as the focal issues for the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) process, the mechanism for putting the WSSD Plan of Implementation into practice. On that day, ADB developed a rapid action in Dhaka to improve water and sanitation to millions of people.

### ‘Local Actions for a Global Challenge’ – The 4<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum

The guiding principles of the 4th World Water Forum, to be held in Mexico City in March 2006, are i) to value local knowledge and experience as a key factor in the success of water policy-making; ii) produce concrete and policy-oriented outputs aimed at supporting local action on a worldwide scale; and iii) seek to enable cross-cutting dialogue between sectors and stakeholders.

ADB will participate in the 4th World Water Forum to promote higher investments in rural, urban, and basin water together with the necessary reforms and capacity development.