WOMEN WATER FORUM

Bridging Voices to Actions

Pre-conference event, 19 June 2018, Dushanbe, Tajikistan

Synthesis Report
Cover Picture: “We Rise with Pride” a Coffee Painting by HRH Princess Dr. Nisreen El-Hashemite, Executive Director of the Royal Academy of Science International Trust (RASIT).

Colors were modified by Bilal Wazir to fit with the theme of Water Action Decade.
On behalf of the organizers of the “Women Water Forum” Pre-Conference Event held on 19 June 2018 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan; the UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, and the Royal Academy of Science International Trust (RASIT), are pleased to present this synthesis report of the Women Water Forum “Bridging Voices to Action”.

Gender equality and women’s empowerment are essential to sustainable development and to the realization of human rights: the charter of the United Nations. Both SDG 5 and SDG 6 are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda. We will not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals if access to sufficient and safe water for domestic and productive uses remains out of reach for millions of people, and if there is no accelerated action to empower women in all spheres of life.

We are strongly committed to driving the international community to take action on the Forum’s outcome document and to increase the participation of women expert and practitioners, including those specializing in the sciences in the provision, management and safeguarding of water.

This report synthesizes the outputs of the 2018 Women Water Forum which convened at the eve of the High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development’ 2018 – 2028. It combines the insights of expert panelists with the voices of women’s civil society. It focuses on the role of women experts to illustrate the components and processes of women’s empowerment and their inclusion in water governance, and to determine women’s priority challenges and areas of action for the Water Action Decade.

In amplifying the Forum’s call to action, this report is intended to help prioritize critical actions and create longer-term momentum for transformational change that will attain SDG 6 and all water-related goal and targets. It presents practical recommendations and advocates the creation of an enabling environment to accelerate its impact.

We congratulate the organizers of this Forum, the panelists, participants and all of the stakeholders for their substantial contribution, dedication and commitment to this important goal. In addition, we wish to thank the members of the Organizers’ Team for their invaluable support to the Forum.

Finally, we thank the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan for its generous hospitality and support of the Forum.

Princess Nisreen El-Hashemite, BSc MSc MD PhD
Executive Director
Royal Academy of Science International Trust

Ms. Alia El-Yassir
Regional Director Interim
UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia
The Women Water Forum ‘Bridging Voices to Action’ has been the joint achievement of many partners, both organizations and individuals, who have contributed means, knowledge, skills and expertise and countless hours to the success of this event creating the foundation for a Women for Water Process as part of the Water Action Decade.

A special word of thanks goes to the National Organizing Committee, whose members have relentlessly and successfully pursued the high level of attendance and substance.

The organizers and participants highly appreciate the generous hospitality of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan.

This report of the Women Water Forum is the product of the collective efforts of the panel members, the Forum participants deliberations in the break-out sessions and the working groups. Their diverse and valuable contributions in the preparatory phase, during the Forum as well as in the analysis and synthesis of the outcomes are highly appreciated.

The report was prepared by Professor Amal Qattan, a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Science International Trust (RASIT), in close collaboration with Ms. Alice Bouman-Dentener, Honorary Founding President of the Women for Water Partnership, and the organizers’ Secretariat.

Other members of the Secretariat team supported the production of this report: Nargis Azizova, UN Women; Viloyat Mirzoeva, UN Women; and Nazokat Isaeva, FinWaterWEI II.

The professional production team of the Royal Academy of Science International Trust (RASIT) was critical in producing a report that is both attractive and highly readable.

Many thanks, finally, to the entire team of the Organizers, the Secretariat, Panel members and participants for its steadfast commitment to bridging the voices of the diversity of women experts and practitioners to actions that will accelerate the achievement of women’s empowerment and leadership to achieve Sustainable Development Goals.
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I: BACKGROUND

I.1: International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development 2018-2028

Persisting lack of access to a safe source of drinking water, basic sanitation and sound hygiene, together with water scarcity and water pollution, constitute major challenges to the international community, with particular regard to developing countries. Increasing water-related disasters, climate change, population growth, drought, and limited capacity to ensure integrated water resource management further exacerbate this situation. Access to water and sanitation is a precondition for life and a declared human right. Water is vital to sustainable development in every area, from health and nutrition to gender equality and economics.

Over the coming years, our water-related challenges will become more urgent. The increasing demands of a growing population and rapidly developing global economy will aggravate the lack of access to water. In fact, many experts argue that an unpredictable supply of water could constrain the world’s socio-economic progress in the future.

To address these interlinked challenges, on 21 December 2016 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution to declare 2018-2028 an International Decade for Action on “Water for Sustainable Development”. The objectives of this Decade comprise:

(1) Sustainable development, including matters contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SD) and integrated management of water resources for the achievement of social, economic and environmental objectives;
(2) The implementation and promotion of related programmes and projects;

(3) The furtherance of cooperation and partnerships at all levels in order to help to achieve internationally agreed water-related goals and targets; and

(4) The need to promote the efficiency of water use at all levels, taking into account the nexus of water, food, energy, and the environment, including the implementation of national development programmes.

The purpose is to mobilize the efforts of governments, UN institutions, and international and non-governmental organizations, as well as other stakeholders at all levels, for the effective implementation of water-related SDGs and the goals and objectives of the International Water Decade.

At the high-level conference on the International Decade for Action on “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028, in the city of Dushanbe Heads of State and Government, ministers and other high-level dignitaries together with representatives of international and regional organizations, local governments, civil society, the private sector and academia discussed and agreed on the way forward to achieve the objectives of the Decade, contained in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 71/222 of 21 December 2016, in order to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. There was a focus on means of implementation, including monitoring, financing, capacity development, access to technology and multi-stakeholder partnerships that unite relevant actors including the private sector and civil society.

The conference program included plenary sessions, a number of thematic and interactive sessions, and side-events. The conference was preceded by Pre-Conference Events providing an opportunity for the Major Groups Academia and Women as well as for Children/Youth and the Climate Change community to discuss the relevant topics in their own peer group.
I: BACKGROUND

I.2: The SDG 5 – SDG 6 Interface

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development propagates integration and synergies across the SDGs. The water-gender-development nexus was already identified during the previous water decade “Water for Life” 2005 – 2015 as an important area of work to achieve sustainable and equitable development. A series of international conferences, inter alia the Dushanbe Gender Forum of 2013 and 2015, the Water–Gender-Development conference in East London, South Africa in 2014, and the Women Fora in connection with World Water Forum 5, 6 and 8 identified gender and women inclusive water governance as a largely untapped connection that needs urgent attention.

According to the World Water Development Report 2015, “The principle of equity, perhaps more than any technical recommendation, carries with it the promise of a more water-secure world for all”. Gender equality is considered a key factor to boost water management and access, and the inclusion of women in decision-making on water development and management at all levels is called for.

Acknowledgement of the critical connection between gender and ‘water and sanitation governance is gaining traction internationally, but progress is slow. Most recently, the Action Agenda of the High Level Panel on Water ‘Making Every Drop Count’ re-emphasizes the importance of addressing gender equality and social inclusion for achieving SDG 6.

“Women’s close involvement brings multiple benefits. Including women in the design and planning stages leads to creating local ownership and correctly addressing community needs, to building sustainable solutions”

Picture: Faculty Members of Environmental Engineering Faculty, Lehigh University - USA
The Women Water Forum was convened by the Government of Tajikistan’s Committee of Women and Family Affairs, the UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, the Royal Academy of Science International Trust (RASIT), the European Union in Tajikistan, Finland’s Water Management Programme in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (FinWaterWEI II), the Australian Government’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH, OXFAM Tajikistan, the Central Asia an Afghan Women for Water Association, and the Women for Water Partnership (WfWP).
The Women’s Pre-Conference Forum 2018 united the voices of women from different parts of the world and from different sectors in society:

- To illustrate the elements and processes of women’s empowerment and their inclusion in water governance;
- To jointly determine women’s most important challenges and for action in the Water Action Decade;
- To contribute women’s knowledge and expertise to the areas and thematic action panels of the high-level conference; and
- To show how addressing water in conjunction with gender has a positive and lasting impact on community development as a whole.

The main objectives were to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes water security and letting women be involved in decision making and implementation and also strengthening women’s role in reforms to important matters of water security throughout the sector. To this extent, the Women for Water Forum was a platform uniting the voices of women experts from many different backgrounds and parts of the world to take action. One of the main points was that women are key agents of change in ensuring the implementation of the interlinked goals of sustainable development (SDGs). No one ignores access to water for the most disadvantaged people. Strong multi-stakeholder partnerships and communication with Gender Road Maps are key preconditions for the successful implementation of SDGs. Investing in women and gender issues for the sake of giving future generations access to water will improve public wellbeing. Gender equality can contribute to the positive impact of improving and developing the community in all aspects of water processing (clean water and sanitation), which is one of the 17 goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Forum focused on two Sustainable Development Goals 6 and 17. Its theme was the water processing challenges across the whole continent of Asia and it asked how best use can be made of the expertise in several areas, including science.

Discussion began with the importance of specific means of implementation, including monitoring, financing, capacity development, access to technology and partnership with the private sector and civil society; the question raised was how the Member States, relevant UN bodies, the specialized agencies, the regional commissions and other organizations of the UN system, with other relevant partners including the private sector, can contribute to this Decade. This forum ‘Bridging voices to actions’ united the voices of women from various sectors. It helped to determine the most pressing challenges to women and the most important actions to support the Water Action Decade, which began on 22 March 2018, as proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly, and will end in 2028. In the high-level conference which followed, the Forum also determined to contribute women’s knowledge and expertise to thematic action panels and to illustrate the many ways that addressing water in conjunction with gender can impact on community development.
WOMEN WATER FORUM: Bridging Voices to Actions

The Women Water Forum program included a high-level opening session, followed by a plenary segment and subsequent breakout sessions during which all Forum participants could voice their contributions to the key messages and proposed action pathways. The plenary segment was divided into three panels during which experts gave their view on the conference’s main topics illustrated by examples from the field, each panel seeking to develop society as a whole by involving women’s expertise in decision making. The first panel focused on practical actions and asked how women could play a central part in the “provision, management and safeguarding of water”. The second panel discussed building capacity through education, science and technology in support of women’s leadership and participation. The last panel took as its theme investing in the development of “Women for Water” and in partnerships for achieving Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 6, to ensure clean water and sanitation in the region.
The Opening Segment was moderated by Ms. Marlhabo Olimi, First Deputy Head, Committee for Family and Women’s Affairs (CWFA), Government of Tajikistan.

Following her welcome to all the participants to the Forum, Ms. Olimi pointed to Tajikistan’s initiatives with regard to water and the personal initiative of H.E. Mr. Emomali Rakhmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, to host a very high level Water Conference every two years. Ms. Olimi specified the role of Tajikistan as “one of the countries that raised water issues globally at the UN General Assembly, and is making vigorous efforts to include women in all spheres of society, including water management. Effective water management and women’s inclusion in all processes form an effective key to the promotion of women’s role and the improving of livelihoods”.

The Moderator then introduced Ms. Khairinisso Yusufi, Deputy Chairwoman of Majlisi Namoyandagon of the Majlisi Oli of the Republic of Tajikistan.

In her opening remarks, Ms. Yusufi indicated that her country, the Republic of Tajikistan as one of the independent states and member United Nations is using every opportunity of working on water issues through different channels. “Our country has achieved positive results in solving very important issues within the global programmes and SDGs”, she said. She pointed out that water-related issues and access of the population to clean water adds to solving a number of other challenges including health issues. Ms. Yusufi spoke about the actions her country taking in peace, saying: "Tajikistan is also working on other important global issues among them peacebuilding and peacekeeping ones and I do hope that participants of this Pre-Conference Event will also add to the High Level event with their suggestions, recommendations, strengthened partnership to take further steps in achieving more efficient results".
Dr. Pratibha Mehta, UN Resident Coordinator, Tajikistan was then introduced. Dr. Mehta started her remarks by welcoming all of the participants to the Women Water Forum to discuss the implementation of SDG 6 and the General Assembly resolution adopted in December 2016 which established 2018 – 2028 as the decade of water for sustainable development.

Then she reminded the audience of the long way there is still to go, even though action on MDGs and the previous water decade from 2005-2015 had made significant contributions by improving the world’s water and sanitation situation. More than 750 million people still lack access to safe water and nearly 840,000 people die every year from diseases directly caused by unsafe water, sanitation and poor hygiene practices. “Hence this Women Water Forum is a very important arena in which to highlight evidence of unique gender dimensions, the special needs of women in the universal provision of water and sanitation, and the sustainable principle of leaving no one behind in development”.

Dr. Mehta spoke of the importance of investing in water and showed that there are plenty of studies revealing that for every dollar invested in water and sanitation, an average of at least $4 is returned in increased productivity; that investment in water and sanitation can drastically reduce malnutrition, and child and maternal mortality, and can prevent deaths from diseases caused by unsafe water and inadequate sanitation and hygiene. Moreover, she highlighted studies which also indicate that having a water source within 10 minutes’ walk from home increases girls’ school attendance by 12% and also women’s participation in the workforce.

Dr. Mehta closed her speech by declaring that women cannot take it for granted that common sense will prevail. “We all need to work together to sensitize everyone in a position of authority, whether at home, school, in government, the private sector or a commercial firm that lack of safe water and sanitation affects women and girls differently than men; hence women must themselves be directly involved in the planning and management of services. They should have an equal voice in the decision making processes at community level. Active participation in the Women Water Forum and in the main high level international conferences on water is essential in order to support issues by evidence, compelling field experiences and specific messages”. She ended her speech by hoping that men would also campaign for positive change, because their lives are after all, intrinsically linked to the health, well-being, safety and productivity of their mothers, sisters, wives and daughters.

Photos by LLC “ArtAREA”, Tajikistan
Ms. Alia El-Yassir, Regional Director Interim, UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia.

Ms. El-Yassir started by thanking the Government of Tajikistan for continuing to host the High-Level International Conference for the International Decade for Action on “Water for Sustainable Development”. She focused on the impact on women and girls from the management of water resources, to which they also contributed, and described how the 2030 Agenda promises to make human rights significant for everyone, everywhere. Her remarks, focused on sustainability, equality, peace and human progress, provided a powerful counter-narrative to the current rise of extremism, conflict and environmental degradation.

Ms. El-Yassir raised three important points, in detail:

♦ How much we need to put gender equality at the centre of implementation, because strengthening the rights of women and girls has benefits which reverberate across societies;

♦ The urgent need to close the financing gap. When a programme is without adequate resources, progress will remain elusive; and

♦ How to get more proficient at monitoring what works for women and girls.

Ms. El-Yassir closed her remarks by clearly indicating that gender equality and women’s empowerment are recognized as key accelerators for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. She called all Member States to agree and implement jointly a clear roadmap for making gender equality promises come true regarding water management and use, to ensure that the new decade delivers results for all women, men, girls and boys, particularly where poor performance on women’s rights has consequences and better outcomes are possible.

Remarks by HRH Princess Dr Nisreen El-Hashemite, Founder President of the Women in Science International League and the Executive and Director of the Royal Academy of Science International Trust (RASIT).

Dr. El-Hashemite started by thanking the Government of Tajikistan for hosting the Water Action Decade Conference in Dushanbe and the generous hospitality extended to all participants. As a medical scientist, she was impressed by the wide range of very interesting items that the event covered, and as a woman in science she was encouraged to find high on the agenda for 2018 that science and technologies should attain global goals by supporting women’s leadership and participation.

She started by mentioning that it has become commonplace to keep saying that the scarcity of water resources is the most severe
constraint to achieving Sustainable Development Goals: “water crisis and climate change are inevitably interlinked: the impact of global climate change is clearly visible in water resources and poses a serious risk to poverty reduction, threatening to undo decades of development efforts”. Further, Dr. El-Hashemite also stressed the point that armed conflicts are often the reason for a lack of access to clean water and sanitation: “too often we ignore the loss of life linked to the bio-effects of weapons of war employed to create long-lasting destruction. For example the emission of depleted uranium bombs that is mutating the genetic code in every living organism causing in humans, for example, cancer, infertility, congenital defects in new-born babies and many more diseases”.

Dr. El-Hashemite’s speech focused on the sciences can play an important role in sustainable development, from informing the setting up of evidence-based targets and indicators, to assessing progress, testing solutions, and identifying emerging risks and opportunities. “The challenges facing the world’s countries and their prosperity, creativity, exchange, equity, and opportunities will be met only if we deploy scientific knowledge, its skills and methods of inquiry more and more intensively. To thrive we must innovate. In innovation, we must marry progress in technology and the physical and life sciences with insights from studying behaviour, place, the economy and society”, because, she believed that the SDGs and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development pose a number of conceptual as well as implementation challenges that will require enhanced collaboration between the political and scientific communities and other stakeholders. Dr. El-Hashemite called on to finance and invest in robust scientific research and then translate it into practice in the marketplace, and concluded her speech by mentioning that the Government of Malta, with RASIT, championed the UN resolution proclaiming 11 February the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, and said: “If we are looking for equality, peace and prosperity and then sustainable development, we must empower women in science in the decision making process”.

The Opening Segment was concluded and the Moderator then gave the floor to the moderator of the first session.

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III: SYNTHESIS REPORT

III.2: Session 1

On a way to sustainable development: Post-2015 progress on water for all and new actions

The first session was moderated by Ms. Alice Bouman Dentener, Honorary Founding President of the Women for Water Partnership (WfWP). Ms. Dentener is a biologist/ethologist with an international career in sustainable development policies, water governance and gender issues.

This session illustrated some practical actions undertaken by states, CSOs, the expert community and international communities on the water-gender-development interface and how they support the International Water Decade’s commitments. It discussed the Dublin Statement on Water and Sustainable development, notably its Principle 3 “Women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water”. This session focused on the preconditions for women’s meaningful engagement in the water domain as societies pursued sustainable development; it discussed the progress since 2015 on the deployment of water for all, and several other new actions. The speeches highlighted the need for practical action and the importance of including women at the centre of water governance at all levels.

The session started by introducing the keynote speaker Bulgaria’s Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Public Works, Ms. Malina Kroumova. Following up on her introductory remarks in the opening plenary, Ms. Kroumova emphasized the importance of legal frameworks where non-discrimination should be adequately anchored. She also illustrated the importance of women leadership in national government, which has made a difference in her country. From her experience as Deputy Minister for
Regional Development, she underlined the importance to go below national level if we want to apply the “No One Left Behind” principle.

The second speaker was the Head of the Gender Committee of the National Water Agency of Brazil (ANA), Mrs. Consuelo Franco Marra, who focused on the implementation of Dublin’s Principle 3 amongst others through increasing women’s civil society engagement in River Basin Organisations at different levels. She informed the meeting of the gender and water efforts and events of Brazil as host country of the World Water Forum 8, and the commitment expressed as well as action taken by the National Water Agency, ANA to mainstream gender and further women’s inclusion (Dublin Principle 3) across the 27 States of Brazil, which is the largest country in Latin America and the 8th largest economy in the world. She named the persisting gender gaps and often traditional gender norms in her country, the lack of gender sensitivity in the water sector and the low participation of women in decision-making bodies as major challenges to be overcome. As adequate data to address the SDG 5 – SDG 6 interface is lacking, gender and social inclusion analysis is the first step undertaken by the Agency at this point in time. At the same time, ANA cooperates with the ‘Collective Women and Water Network for Latin America’ launched at the World Water Forum 8 to further develop a common agenda.

After this, Dr. Marian Neal, Partnership and Knowledge Manager of the Australian Water Partnership (AWP) presented a speech entitled “Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Water Resources management in Australia”. The speech focused on the inclusion of women’s voices in multi-level water governance. She explained how the different levels interconnect and one should determine the appropriate level of a specific intervention. She reminded us that women have different backgrounds and we should be aware of the different voices and segments in society that they represent. Dr. Neal stated that water governance
institutions can demonstrate leadership by making gender equality and inclusion a core goal. She added that “Water management decisions are informed by gender and social inclusion analysis, to reveal the different uses and knowledge of water by women, girls and others.”

In conclusion, she said, gender parity does not necessarily equal gender-sensitive water governance. The Australian Water Partnership (AWP) understands the importance of gender equality and social inclusion and actively seeks every possible opportunity to involve women equally in water management decision-making. Mindful of the importance to empower women and to create an enabling environment for their meaningful participation, Australia has launched the ‘Water for Women Fund’; it is a flagship program in Australia’s engagement in WaSH in the Indo-Pacific region and is responding to the recommendation made by the High Level Panel on Water to make Gender Equality a core goal. The Fund commenced in December 2017 and will invest about USD$80 million over the next five years. Speaking of the present occasion, Dr. Neal commented, “It was inspiring to experience such a forum attended by so many knowledgeable women and men, all of whom are leading the way in gender, water and sustainable development.”

The sessions included such speakers as Ms. Javohir Akobirova from the Committee of Women and Family Affairs of Tajikistan who focused on the National Strategies on strengthening the role of women: ‘Women at the heart of all we do’. Ms. Akobirova gave a comprehensive overview of the different activities of the Committee of Women and Family Affairs of the Government of Tajikistan including in the spheres of health. She mentioned the cooperation with the water sector in the context of the Water for Life Decade 2005 – 2015 which also came about on initiative of Tajikistan, and continuing in the current Women Forum at the onset of the Water for Sustainable Development Action Decade. She illustrated how cooperation between relevant bodies from different ministries paves the way to work on the SDG 5 – SDG 6 interface. She expressed the commitment to continue to work on the water-gender-development interface with all relevant actors in her country to ensure that the principles of gender equality and women’s inclusion are incorporated at all levels.

Photos by LLC "ArtAREA", Tajikistan
This was followed by Ms. Diana Ismailova, the Gender Coordinator of Oxfam GB, who talked about the concrete work done in Tajikistan to connect the water and gender agendas through the Gender Working Group that was established in the Tajikistan Water Supply and Sanitation Network. A Gender Roadmap was developed to show the ways in which the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Water Sector Reform Programme (2015-2025) can be made gender sensitive and women inclusive. Ms. Ismailova in her talk outlined the inter-ministerial cooperation and identified the roles of the different state entities and development agencies, but she also mentioned the challenge to women’s voices in the field; she asked what we can know about what women want and why it’s so important to consult women and fully understand their perspective, since no one can speak on their behalf. The key approaches for 2018-2023 listed at the end of her presentation included the following points: a) Appropriate Targeting: Serving the unserved and leaving no-one behind; b) Institutional Building: Promoting diversified staffing within projects; c) Working with partners who are committed to resolving gender issues; d) Strengthening the capacity of staff and partners to work with women and the vulnerable; and e) Addressing social issues. She summed up the issues as Access, Voice, and Influence, ensuring the representation and active participation in project cycles of women as rights-holders. Ms. Ismailova emphasized that when working with conflict, staff should promote strategies to address and minimize conflicts over water resources. In advocacy and networking, staff should strengthen the focus of information on gender and water and should use the communication system to ensure transparency.

The first session closed with a presentation by Ms. Rano Mansurova from the Women & Water Association of Central Asia and Afghanistan, who focused on strengthening women’s role in water sector reforms in Central Asia by institutional arrangements, decision-making and implementation. Ms. Mansurova began her talk by referring to the mission of CAAWWA. She indicated the need for women in scientific, technical and policy aspects of water resources management and climate change issues to be enhanced, building up capacity, improving career development and engaging them in decision-making processes to
improve regional and international cooperation. Following this, she went through the process of water sector reforms in Central Asia. Ms. Mansurova closed her presentation by offering some recommendations for enhancing gender sensitivity, including (1) a guarantee that the Women’s Committee was engaged in processes of water reform (including representatives at local level); (2) a guarantee of gender mainstreaming into programmes and projects facilitating the process of WRS; (3) steps to eliminate the gender stereotyping of women’s roles in development processes; (4) the enhanced participation of women in decision making processes and the design, and implementation of strategic plans; (5) support for research and analysis of the gender-specific impacts related to water management; (6) identification of the barriers to women’s participation in water reform processes; (7) the development and running of informational and educational campaigns on themes related to the water reform process which target women, and provide support for them in the form of capacity building and skills development when they try to access the resources they need.

All the speakers took as their themes national strategies for strengthening the role of women, the proposed strategic vision and ways to move forward. They also considered institutional arrangements, decision making and implementation and the central role of women in water provision.
III: SYNTHESIS REPORT

III.3: Session 2

Actions For Capacity Building, Bridging Education, Science And Technologies In Support Of Women’s Leadership And Participation

The second session discussed building capacity through education, science and technology in support of women’s leadership and participation. The session concentrated on the new thinking about the mechanisms that support innovation in achieving SDG 6.

This session was moderated by Ms. Oksana Pyzik, RASIT’s Women in Science Advocate. Ms. Pyzik is a pharmacist and a Fellow of the UK Higher Education Academy. Following her welcome to the panelists and speakers, Ms. Pyzik said it is essential to recognize the important, even critical role of science, technology and innovation for women’s empowerment, for addressing global water challenges, and for ensuring sustainable development that left no one behind.

She then indicated a new series of water pollutants: the effects of pharmaceutical waste in water that even in very low concentrations can harm the environment. Ms. Pyzik revealed that most sewage treatment plants do not filter out pharmaceutical compounds or their metabolites, and pointed out that some medicines are not easily degraded in the environment. She provided data from studies demonstrating a link between antimicrobial resistance and pharmaceutical waste: “Even in Lake Geneva, so close to the home of SDGs, multi-resistant bacteria and antibiotic resistant genes were found in the bacteria where lake water is..."
pumped for drinking water production. To the surprise of the researchers, the number of antibiotic resistant genes actually increased following waste treatment. She further showed how this pollution in many countries has contaminated the groundwater and has seeped into the wells of surrounding villages which have no other source of water. With global travel habits, she warned, the bacteria will move across national borders.

Before introducing other speakers, Ms. Pyzik concluded with the words, “On behalf of the Royal Academy for Science International Trust, I call on the international community to ensure that at the next “Water for Sustainable Development” Conference we have women in science and female experts alongside policymakers and represented at all of the high level panels to present their work, research and vision”.

Dr. Wenling Wang, Asian International Rivers Center (AIRC) - Institute of International Rivers and Eco-Security (IRES), China, was then introduced; her presentation focused on Responding to Gender-Inequity Challenges using a Science-Based Approach. She closed her talk by describing the science-based transdisciplinary approach to assessing women’s exposure to chemicals through water, air, food and daily activities and the way in which age and role in the family affects this exposure, remarking, “Women, community leaders and policy makers should all be educated to reduce these risks to safe levels”. Then she raised the important topic of the Himalayan Climate Change Adaptation Programme (2012-2015) and the way in which the farming system and farmers’ decisions were affected by climate change. It was vital, she urged, to balance river health with hydropower requirements in the Lancang River Basin (2015-2017), and indicated the role of multi-stakeholders. This speaker then concluded by dwelling on the significance of the Transdisciplinary Research Problem, that is oriented research that crosses boundaries of academic, public, and private spaces – aimed at solving “real world” problems (engaging stakeholders to ensure that a science-based plan is developed to change behaviour and policy so that chemical risks are reduced to a safe level).

This was followed by Ms. Nazokat Isaeva presenting on behalf of Ms. Arunima Dhar and Mr. Mike
Kelleher of the World Bank who talked about SDGs and the HER online competition for women entrepreneurs to showcase how they are supporting the SDGs through their business operations. The speaker revealed the objectives of the initiative, which are to recognize the role of women, including the women business owners of microenterprises, in implementing the SDGs and collaborating with private sector partners to share best practices and innovative ideas for attaining the SDGs, in particular SDG 5.

Next, Dr. Khin Ni Ni Thein, Secretary of the Advisory Group to Myanmar’s National Water Resources Committee (NWRC) gave a speech on the role of 360° capacity development in Myanmar’s reform of its water sector. She began by explaining the 360° project, starting with its Thematic Directions, Institutional Structure/Organogram (including Country Characteristics), and Capacity Building whether at individual, institutional or society levels. The project is structured to cope with changing situations in natural conditions such as climate change; economic conditions involving the definition of GDP; political conditions such as democratic and federal systems; water management philosophy and paradigm shifts; international water diplomacy and global environmental governance; and international development partners with strong interest in Myanmar.

Dr. Thein then revealed the progress of the 360° project, starting with completed legal water frameworks and policy, and the River Basin project. The speaker went on to indicate the importance of Myanmar’s Water Sector reform through the 360° project for peace and reconciliation in Myanmar between all the native ethnic peoples through water rights, responsibilities, and risk sharing arrangements.

Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), guided by the Dublin Principles, including Dublin Principle 2 on stakeholder engagement and Dublin Principle 3 on women’s inclusion, are at the core of the water sector reform in the country. She said that Myanmar was empowering women and young people in water governance and bridging their voices to actions for nation-building and sustainable developments to improve

Photos by LLC "ArtAREA", Tajikistan
the country’s water sector; and was recruiting active and meaningful multi-stakeholder processes to contribute to Myanmar’s knowledge and cooperation by playing a proactive role in priority challenges and action areas for the Water Action Decade. This process is still in its initial stages of 1) collection of voices of women and youth from all walks of life across the country, 2) obtaining active and meaningful multi-stakeholders processes as building blocks for inclusive planning, management and decision-making and 3) creating channels for women’s empowerment and their inclusion by merit in water governance, notably in river basin committees, as river basins are the agreed units for IWRM implementation.

The speaker who followed, Dr. Zafar Adeel, Executive Director of the Pacific Water Research Centre, gave a presentation on women as agents of change in conflict situations in the Arab region. He started by showing the relation between water, gender and peace. He also elaborated on water challenges and the situation of women in conflicts, starting with the new living conditions and cultural challenges and the increased responsibilities on women to secure food/water and amenities for their families, in addition to ensuring the family’s health and emotional wellbeing.

Dr. Adeel then drew attention to UN Security Council resolution 1325 and the key action clauses: including the representation of women in decision-making for conflict prevention, management, resolution; the role of the United Nations in appointing more women representatives and envoys, as well as in expanding the role of women in UN field operations whether as military observers, civilian police, human rights, or humanitarian personnel – and in incorporating gender perspectives into peacekeeping operations. He highlighted the need to protect women and girls from violence, rape, and sexual abuse and to take into consideration the needs of women and girl in the design of refugee camps.

Dr. Adeel then emphasized the Arab Region trends of water insecurity and a review of gender mainstreaming, removing discriminatory policies and regulations, access to WaSH and Education, capacity building, and development of infrastructure. He concluded his speech by describing the role of women as Agents of Change and stressed the need for Institutional Reform in the Arab Region.
III: SYNTHESIS REPORT

III.4: Session 3
Partnerships for Achieving SDG 6: Building Coalitions, Investing in Women for Water Developments

This session was moderated by Dr. Alisher Mamadzhanov, an Environmental Affairs Officer of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes - UNECE. The session concerned the development of “Women for Water” and partnerships for achieving sustainable development goals, especially SDG 6. It focused on building effective partnerships between the players and stakeholders, to guide the exploration of financial instruments that could aid the attainment of SDGs. The speeches showed the importance of identifying existing opportunities and advocating the development of specific funding mechanisms for women.

The session started with a speech from H.E. Ambassador Peter Burian, European Union Special Representative for Central Asia, who talked about the priorities of EU gender mainstreaming in Central Asia. Ambassador Burian started his speech by acknowledging that the previous international decade for “Water for Life” has recognized the importance of women as actors in water management and the close interlinkages between gender equality and women empowerment when dealing with water. “However gender equality is not yet a fact, and although important progress has been made, gender inequality is one of the most pervasive forms of inequality and if not addressed properly we believe it will hamper national and international efforts to achieve goals of development agenda 2030” – he said. Because they are promoters, educators and leaders; Ambassador Burian stressed on the importance of involving women in consultation and decision making and their role should be better reflected and respected in national development strategies worldwide. Further, he indicated that gender equality is one of key priorities in the EU developments.
policies, including the European consensus on development and the gender action plan 2016-2020. Ambassador Burian explored the three pillars of the EU-Central Asia strategy adopted in 2007 reflecting the EU comprehensive approach to development and security: Rule of law initiative; Education initiative; and Water and environment initiative. He indicated the importance of regional initiatives and platform in shaping existing programs based on the needs of Central Asia partners: “We need to better use these platforms for gender mainstreaming in education, rule of law and tackling water and environment challenges” – he said.

Ambassador Burian then focused the EU recent gender study for Central Asia that revealed several shortcomings, including problems with realistic planning and budgeting; programmes are not effectively monitored and evaluated; none of the five countries has taken a holistic approach to mainstreaming gender into national and sectoral development programmes; gender analysis and expertise of legislation is not mandatory in most Central Asian countries; and the same applies to gender budgeting which has been piloted for local budgets in some countries, but is not as yet universally undertaken. Then he explained how EU is ready to help in tackling those challenges; and recommendations on achieving SDG 5 and 6, that are common to all Central Asian countries, which could be addressed by the EU and CA partners through partner country projects and Central Asia Regional programmes specifically, these are:

♦ equal access for girls and women to all levels of quality education and vocational training free from discrimination but also indirect obstacles for receiving education because of their home functions

♦ equal access by women to financial services, productive services, including land ownership or leasing, trade and entrepreneurship

♦ zero tolerance to all forms of violence and intimidation or harassment in the public and private sphere (proper training of law enforcement a must); and

♦ addressing discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes, oftentimes falsely justified by specific national traditions or community rules.
Ambassador Burian concluded his speech on highlighting the new strategy the EU is developing in close consultation with Central Asia partners and international organizations that is more focused on private sector development and mitigation of impact of climate change and involving advanced technologies and investments into common efforts, with ensuring that the gender dimension of infrastructure interventions such as water and sanitation and power supply, are thoroughly analysed and addressed. “the most exciting opportunities with greatest potential impact are interventions where the EU through blending IFCA grants could provide cheaper credit for women led SMEs to invest in energy efficiency improvements or water managements. In order for such interventions to have a sustainable impact they need however to go hand in hand with policy dialogue on the financial sector and business regulations, environmental regulations, ownership and governance of public utility companies and tariff policies as well as gender equality. We want to fine tune our instruments for supporting private sector, civil society, media”.

Ms. Josefina Maestu, General Manager and Director of the Environmental Management Company of Navarra, Spain and former Director of the UN Water for Life Decade Office in Zaragoza, Spain focused on lessons on women’s engagement from the Water For Life decade (2005 – 2015). The speech showed the changes made over this period: better information on the specific needs of women and girls to ensure that they benefited when services were improved; recognizing that women’s close involvement in the design, planning stages and implementation leads to creating local ownership and the correct addressing of community needs, the reach of intended beneficiaries, the building of sustainable solutions and the use of indigenous knowledge to prevent expensive mistakes.

Ms. Maestu presented improvements at policy level over the Decade, as women were no longer perceived solely as a vulnerable and disadvantaged group. Gender strategies had been developed to incorporate gender concerns in water policies and practices and to further women’s leadership and full participation in the sector. She further indicated that women’s civil society had risen to the challenge with the implementation of a great many different initiatives, engaging women in water projects and programmes across the globe, for instance, the development of such global networks as the Gender & Water Alliance (GWA), emphasizing gender mainstreaming; the Women for Water Partnership (WfWP), uniting women’s civil society
organizations worldwide on the water-gender-development nexus; or the Global Women’s Water Initiative (GWWI) which is geared towards the training of local women water experts and entrepreneurship.

Moreover, Ms. Maestu pointed out that women’s involvement and engagement in the opportunities provided by the Water Decade were part of a general movement from technical water management to more participatory water governance. The Decade’s focus on women’s meaningful participation in water related projects and programmes has provided a bridge between policy and practice. Women for Water Partnership in particular has built on the Decade to provide the much needed link between the global frameworks and the grassroots level, the day-to-day practice in water management and service delivery, and in the course of the Water For Life Decade has achieved great strides forward to include Women as an equal partners among different stakeholders. She concluded her speech by saying: “We are not there yet. Although gender equality has increased in the water sector, it is a gain that still needs to be further worked upon. There is a need to be vigilant on the gender-responsive implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”.

Ms. Gulbakhor Makhkamova, Chairman of the National Association of Business Women of Tajikistan (NABWT) addressed the session on “From small investments to greater impacts: The role of financial institutions in sustainable projects”. Her talk mentioned major developments based on the policy level, the macro- and the micro- business level. In her presentation, she addressed key points and the progress made in Tajikistan, including women’s economic empowerment and new ways to ensure their participation in economic transformation through increasing their access to resources, credit and markets, recognizing women’s contributions in the management and use of resources; enhancing the overall gender equality awareness, whether at the level of policy-makers or of the entire population; increasing women’s access to land and developing capacity building for women in farming by providing access to training, advisory services, and agricultural extension services; and strengthening information, data and evidence as the basis for pursuing differentiated programmes and reform policies.

Ms. Makhkamova, having shown some successful examples of investing in women, concluded her speech by stressing the value of placing sustainable development at the heart of risk management and risk management at the heart of sustainable development; she wanted further coordination with women’s organizations, NGOs,
cooperatives and professional women’s networks in order to enhance women’s inclusion and economic empowerment.

Ms. Meerim Azimjanova, from the national office in Kyrgyzstan of the Rural Advisory Services of the Jalalabad/Partner Agency of UN Women focused on livelihoods through participation and equal access to water: women’s role in the management of irrigation in Kyrgyzstan. One of the most important recommendations in her talk was to focus on the fair distribution of limited water resources instead of the traditional focus on volume and infrastructure – as an effective approach to sustainable development. She sought to ensure the participation of women, including young and vulnerable groups in decision-making processes at all levels of water management through the empowerment of women and young people in governance. Water resources should be conserved as a pledge of sustainable development. Connections, communication and equal partnership were key to success, she maintained, with the creation of new channels of communication between individuals, national and local institutions and countries.

At the end of the session Dr. Soumya Balasubramanya, Senior Researcher at the International Water Management Institute—CGIAR, talked about women in income-enhancing and effort-reducing interventions, mainly by women in agriculture. Her presentation focused on course-correcting for gender inclusion through tackling persistent myths; investing directly to increase women’s capacities and capabilities; investing to reduce women’s workload; providing credit support for women in agriculture; and designing gender-responsive research.

Breakout Sessions: Synthesizing key messages and the way forward

At the end of the event the group discussions were structured around concrete actions, responsibilities and required resources, based on reflections from panel discussions, to be developed in connection with the main high-level water conference. The discussions took place in three groups, moderated by Prof. Dr. Khin NiNi Thein, Myanmar; Ms. Nargis Azizova, UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia; and Mr. Jeffrey Goldberg, USAID, Acting Director of Office of Water/ Washington.
IV: RESULTS AND KEY MESSAGES

IV.1: Summary of Session Outputs

The Women Water Forum concentrated on the interlinkages between SDG 6 on achieving all aspects of the use, provision, management and safeguarding of water as the foundation and the glue of sustainable development, and SDG5 on gender equality and women’s empowerment, in particular Target 5.5 - ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

The deliberations mostly evolved around SDG 17 on means of implementation, notably in the areas of finance, capacity building, policy coherence, partnerships, and data, monitoring and accountability.

The joint outputs of the panel discussions and break-out sessions are listed accordingly.

Key messages on Target 5.5

1. Vulnerable Group to Agents of Change:
   Women are not only the ones impacted by water challenges; they are also a potential force to contribute to the provision, management and safeguarding of water. IWRM - Dublin Principle 3 of 1992 acknowledges this pivotal role and outlines the institutional mechanisms for women’s meaningful engagement. The Water Action Decade should make these preconditions a reality.

2. Women Leadership in Science:
   Women scientist are underrepresented in the water and development domain. They represent a significant and largely untapped potential to contribute to achieve SDG6 timely and sustainably, and
to adequately address the gender dimension of water-related challenges.

3. Women’s Voices in Multi-level Water Governance:

The intersectionality of gender is poorly understood and women are often looked at as a homogenous group. Gender parity in decision-making bodies does not necessarily lead to gender-sensitive policy making and programming. Social inclusion of women’s groups who represent the voice of the grassroots is needed to ensure bespoke solutions in water governance that address the actual gender reality.

Key messages regarding SDG 17

On Policy Alignment and Interdisciplinary Cooperation:

1. Gender and social inclusion:

   Incorporating gender and social inclusion in water-related development efforts needs policy alignment at national levels; and coordination and cooperation between relevant government entities across the responsible ministries (institutional integration). This is a process that needs significant work and investment, as corporate cultures are different and capacity to understand gender in relation to water governance is often lacking.

2. Bottom-up meets top-down:

   Institutional leadership alone will not change the reality on the ground. Women’s civil society plays a key role to ensure that bottom-up meets top-down. Women’s organisations, especially those uniting the social capital of the grassroots, have the ability to bridge governments and the society they serve;

3. Women’s civil society voices the gender-reality on the ground:

   Gender-sensitive policy making and programming benefits from including women’s civil society as a stakeholder group as they represent the voice of the grassroots and create bespoke solutions that address the actual gender reality on the ground.

On Data, Monitoring and Accountability:

4. Gender disaggregated data:

   Essential knowledge and information is lacking to design approaches to work on the SDG 5 -SDG 6
interface. Gender equality and social inclusion analysis is a pre-requisite for developing adequate and bespoke solutions.

5. **Problem-Oriented Research**

Problem-Oriented Research is needed that is transdisciplinary and connects academic, public and private spaces. Stakeholder engagement is crucial to ensure that science-based plans address the real-world problems and change policies and behaviors alike.

6. **360 Capacity Development:**

Gender sensitivity and social inclusion needs to be addressed at all levels simultaneously, to develop the capacity of individuals, institutions and society as a whole.

**On Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships (MSPs):**

7. **Equal partnerships** are key ingredients to success in the fair distribution of limited resources, opening new channels of communication between individuals, national and local institutions and countries.

8. **Women’s civil society groups** are essential partners in multi-stakeholder partnerships that address water use, provision and management challenges at local and regional levels. River Basin organizations and committees are an entry point for inclusion of women’s voices in decision-making and planning.

**On Finance:**

9. **Bridging the Financing Gap:**

Adequate funding to facilitate women’s meaningful engagement is lacking. The Australian Water for Women Fund initiative to addresses the financing gap for Women and WaSH in the Asia-Pacific Region paying specific attention to enabling women’s civil society to partner with the WaSH sector should be replicated and scaled-up.

10. **Resource Efficiency and Pre-Investment in Social Infrastructure:**

It would be interesting to analyze whether the pre-investment in (women’s) civil society has the potential to cut down the substantial losses due to physical infrastructure not reaching the intended beneficiaries and not being maintained.

11. **Access to resources, credit and markets** paves the way to women’s economic empowerment, enhancing overall gender equality awareness and benefitting women’s participation in decision-making, including in the domain of water which is crucial for development.
IV: RESULTS AND KEY MESSAGES

IV.2: Outcome Document

The outcome document was generated from the recommendations made by panellists and participants, and read and agreed by all.

HIGH-LEVEL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON THE
"INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR ACTION “WATER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”"
2018-2028

20-22 June 2018, Dushanbe, Tajikistan

WOMEN WATER FORUM: Bridging Voices to Actions
Pre-conference event, 19 June 2018, Dushanbe Plaza

Preamble: In June 2015 in Dushanbe at the previous international water conference high expectations to states to STEP It UP by taking very practical and urgent actions to ensure that their citizens live a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature and to implement a clear roadmap for turning gender equality promises for water management and use into action were raised. The principle of equity, perhaps more than any technical recommendation, carries with it the promise of a more water-secure world for all. Equity does not only refer to sharing benefits and having access to sufficient and safe water for domestic and productive uses. It also implies sharing the responsibility for the sustainable use and management of water resources. The reality, however, is that those who are affected most, generally have the least opportunity to influence how water resources are used and managed.

During the previous Decade “Water for Life” 2005 – 2015, which had a specific objective to further women’s meaningful engagement in water-related development efforts, It has been recognised that women’s close involvement brings multiple benefits. Including women in the design and planning stages leads to creating local ownership and correctly addressing community needs, to building sustainable solutions and using indigenous knowledge to prevent expensive mistakes. Involving women in project implementation make them more likely to reach intended beneficiaries. Engaging women who were previously marginalized from decision making brings clarity and energy to projects.

While strides forward have been made, and gender equality has increased in the water sector, significant gender disparities remain. Social inclusion, in particular of Women as an important stakeholder group in water governance at all levels, is a corner stone of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM – Dublin Principle 3), but in general has seen limited progress over the past 25 years.
In the Women Water Forum on 19 June 2018, representatives from women’s civil society in all its diversity, from the grassroots to professional women’s organizations, scientists, farmers, gender activists, indigenous women, and different interest groups gathered with representatives from governments, water specialists and development partners to jointly discuss women’s agency as key contributors to the provision, management and safeguarding of water and to illustrate the importance for women’s empowerment and their inclusion in water governance at all levels. We are fully confident that this would allow for determination of women’s priority challenges and actions areas for the Water Action Decade till 2028. We need to apply women’s knowledge and expertise to bring about transformative changes in regard of ensuring water for all, without discrimination and exclusion. In the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the meeting addressed the interface of SDG5 – on gender equality and women’s empowerment – and the water goal, SDG6, not only limiting ourselves to Women and WASH, but in particular addressing target 6. 5 on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and the underlying Dublin Principles 2 and 3.

There is no one solution that fits all, as gender roles are context and history specific and they change over time. The knowledge base required to determine the water and gender connection is important to enable the creation of bespoke approaches that prioritize action.

Institutional leadership alone will not change the reality on the ground. Women’s civil society plays a key role to ensure that bottom-up meets top-down. Women’s organisations, especially those uniting the social capital of the grassroots, have the ability to bridge governments and the society they serve; and are essential partners in multi-stakeholder partnerships that address water use, provision and management challenges at local and regional levels. River Basin organizations and committees are an entry point for inclusion of women’s voices in decision-making and planning.

The changes we need to achieve are along 3 action areas:

1. **LEADERSHIP** of relevant institutions in the water realm to make gender equality and inclusion of Women a corner stone of their policies and programmes. This includes to deploy sufficient resources – human and financial – to achieve these goals

2. **GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION ANALYSIS** for informed decision-making and bespoke solutions

3. **PARTICIPATION**: the key entry points to address the inclusion of women’s voices in multi-level water governance and the measures needed to created the enabling environment and overcoming the barriers for women to be active partners.

We urge policy makers and implementers at all levels to recognize and apply their practical actions and commitments. More specifically:

**On Leadership:**

♦ Leadership on gender equality by water governance institutions has to be translated into sufficient funding to implement gender equality goals for water management. Gender responsive planning around central and local budgets needs to be applied with focus on improved access to water and sanitation with a bottom up approach;
Addressing gender commitments in the intersectoral coordination and cooperation on water use and management;

Overcoming gender discriminatory practices and norms which create barriers for women’s engagement, contribution and ownership in regard of water resources to secure bridging the gender divide in water supply and sanitation and water resources management. Considering cultural context in identifying hidden examples of gender inequality.

On gender and social inclusion analysis:

- Water management decisions have to be informed by gender and social inclusion analysis and by specific knowledge of women and girls, men and boys;
- Reliable and timely produced and applied data that are gender disaggregated and cover other required disaggregation are important for development, monitoring and assessment of water related policies, and for developing bespoke programs and projects. In particular, data on the use of water services need to be used for monitoring whether water services from a wider range of sources are equitably allocated, safely managed, and assessment of the collective burden for households without water on the premises is key. The consistent inclusion of questions pertaining to time spent on water collection, along with information on the household member who usually performs the task, could help improve the global picture of gender roles in water collection and treatment.

On participation:

- **Gender responsible water governance** is essential to eliminate inequalities and support the most vulnerable people. **Left no one behind** principle has to be applied as a mandatory requirement for policy and decision making on water use and management. The rights of excluded groups – refugees, disabled women and other groups – have to be particularly addressed in water and sanitation policies;
- Social accountability mechanisms should be made gender responsive;
- Effective partnerships are instrumental in promoting water-gender-development nexus and sustained closing of the gender divide during the implementation of the International Decade for Action Water for Sustainable Development. Financing of SDGs, particularly SDG6, will require considerable public and private funding. Entrepreneurs should be capable to adopt business models, which are based on water and energy saving technologies and carefully consider sustainability concerns to increase their chance to get access to investments.
- The implementation of projects on the ground is key to demonstrating benefits of the involvement of women at all levels of water management, specifically at the decision-making level. One of such benefits, is an enhanced level of ownership and commitment from of the entire community. Traditional agricultural water programs have targeted mostly males or farms. A number of course-correcting measures are available to enhance income and reduce efforts for women in agriculture, the most water-intensive economic sector. These measures should particularly target women farmers to ensure gender inclusion, e.g. by investing directly to increase individual and institutional capacities or provide support to access to resources;
- Improving awareness and education by a) investing in education on water management at the
earliest stages of school to provide continuity and opportunity for nationalization of SDGs; and b) awareness raising activities that are inclusive such as the illiterate populations which will require more accessible communication channels and tools. These plans must provide detail on how to engage with the hard to reach groups and provide further facilitation of local self help groups and local led solutions.

- Promoting women in science, water engineers and provide funds for further research, structured career pathways and scholarships. Science must be central to water policies and thus women scientists must be represented from local to high level events. Women scientists need to be included into Water Action Decade to contribute to awareness, practical actions and monitoring and assessment of the progress of the Decade implementation.

**We urge** States and international community to ensure their practical actions in frame of the International Decade and SDGs enforcement meet the following requirements:

- Women are recognized as key agents of change in ensuring implementation of interlinked SDGs goals;
- No one left behind – access to water should be ensured for all disadvantaged and less protected people (especially refugees, disabled, HIV positive, etc.);
- Women’s unpaid and care work in the water sector should be recognized and redistributed;
- Strong women-inclusive multi-stakeholder partnership and communication are supported and facilitated as a key precondition for successful implementation of SDGs;
- Gender Roadmaps in water sector are applied for water sector reforms at the national, regional and global levels;
- Investing in women and gender equality means investment in the future generation with access to water and improved wellbeing;
- Elimination of gender inequality in education and science in water and energy sectors.

**We stress** that effective and inclusive partnerships are instrumental in promoting water-gender-development nexus and sustained closing of the gender divide during the implementation of the International Decade for Action Water for Sustainable Development. We advocate for public-private partnerships that can efficiently close resource gaps and do not neglect and exclude gender perspectives of water management.

**We suggest** States to develop a roadmap that links SDG 5 and SDG 6 and to ensure its implementation during the Water Decade with active engagement of civil society, women activists and leaders at all levels.

**We call** on States to introduce special measures to promote more women in leadership positions at all levels in the water sector and for specialized support for women from excluded groups to enable them to effectively engage in decision making. **We urge** States to take actions for much stronger engagement of women in decision-making in the water sector. Women need to be equally represented on water related dialogues and platforms, WASH committees, service providers and water user associations.
We call on international development partners to mainstream gender dimension in their strategic documents and make sure that gender-inequality reducing actions are pro-actively considered in their ODA implementation.

We re-call on the need for dedicated Women for Water Funds as called for during the High-level Water Conferences in Dushanbe in 2013 and 2015. Sufficient resources should be made available for innovative initiatives aimed to support states to address gender perspectives of water management, to support technology, training and education to optimize work load associated with water, and to strengthen women’s civil society to engage in multi-stakeholder partnerships as equal partners. These initiatives require partnership with private sector, SDG 17, as well as incentivization for example tax code revision. We welcome and suggest to upscale a Water for Women Fund established by Australia for the Asia-Pacific region not limiting to WASH’s focus.

As in 2015 Women Water Forum, we urge for full implementation by the Member States of their commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women as stated by the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and suggested by gender related SDGs targets. We suggest all States report on results of practical enforcement of BPfA in a frame of its 25 anniversary in 2020. We request the Government of Tajikistan hosting the international water conferences in a frame of the International Water Decade to devote the next conference to a comprehensive results oriented review of a progress of implementation of all agreed actions at 2018 conference.

Turning these promises into action holds the potential to transform the lives of women and girls all over the world and for the benefits reverberate across society.
Overall, it was concluded that creating an ‘all-of-society engagement and partnership for poverty eradication and sustainable development is a process. Initiatives like the Dushanbe process of the Water Action Decade are essential for forging action-oriented partnerships through leadership of State and non-State actors creating the environment for cooperation and integration between sectors, segments and layers of our complex societies. Women’s Civil Society in all its diversity stands ready to act, and to continue to work together building on the achievements of the pioneers in the previous decade and supporting the new leaders and actors of this Water Action Decade.

**Steps Forward**

The role of women in achieving the outcomes required an effort of active participation to illuminate important issues by experiences and included evidence to support its straightforward messages. All hands should work together in an effort to advance to our goals. The following suggestions for the future were put forward:

- Promote the integrated management of water resources and galvanize action in support of the implementation of water-related SDGs.
- Mobilize the efforts of governments, UN institutions, international and non-governmental organizations, and of other parties at all levels to implement the Action Plan of the Decade for attaining internationally agreed water-related goals, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Lead relevant institutions associated with water to make gender equality and the inclusion of women cornerstones of their policies and programmes. Sufficient resources – human and financial – should be included to attain these goals.
- Pay increasing attention to the water-related SDGs and targets at all levels.
- Practice general and social inclusion for informed decision-making and bespoke solutions.
- Strengthen cooperation and partnership at all levels to achieve water-related SDGs.
- Extend the key entry points to address the inclusion of women’s voices in multi-level water governance and the measures needed to create an enabling environment which will surmount the barriers to women as active partners.