



A·P·O news

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ASIAN PRODUCTIVITY ORGANIZATION

Global water crisis: the APO's response

The world is facing a water crisis that has been described as the greatest challenge of the 21st century. The problem is multi-faceted as it involves not only the issue of water shortage but also those relating to wastage, pollution, and floods and droughts. In a short span of seven years, there were three world water fora: 1997 in Morocco; 2000 in the Netherlands; and 2003 in Japan. To focus world attention on this problem, to generate a greater awareness of the need to make water available to people and its conservation, and to persuade governments to take immediate remedial actions, the United Nations has declared 2003 as International Fresh Water Year.



Japan's Crown Prince Naruhito delivering the inaugural address at the Third World Water Forum, Kyoto

What is the magnitude of this water crisis? How grim is the picture? Here are some sobering data provided by the UN and other agencies: water use worldwide has more than doubled since 1950; two billion people in the world are without clean water and sanitation; in the worst water-famished countries, people live on just two gallons of water a day, far below the 13.2 gallons stipulated by the UN as the absolute minimum for water needs; in about 20 years time, average water supply per person around the globe is likely to be one-third smaller than it is now; agriculture uses more than 70% of global water and industry about 20%, much of it wasted; Asia has the world's dirtiest water and in Europe only about 10% of the main rivers are clean; more than two million people die annually from water-related diseases like cholera; and advanced countries like the USA and Japan use more water than they need.

The Third World Water Forum held in Japan, 16–23 March, sought to find ways for the sustainable management of the world's water resources and to achieve the UN's goal of halving the number of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015. The ministerial conference that formed part of the forum adopted a declaration that states that water is a driving force for sustainable development, environmental integrity, eradication of poverty and hunger, and human health and welfare. Prioritizing water issues is an urgent global requirement, and each country has the primary responsibility to act.

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"We judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing, while others judge us by what we have already done."

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

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Global water crisis: the APO's response.... *(Continued from page 1)*

The APO was represented at the water forum by Secretary-General Takashi Tajima, Director for Environment Augustine Koh, and Senior Program Officer (Environment) Takuki Murayama. It joined with 50 countries and regional and international organizations in undertaking to fulfill a "Portfolio of Water Actions." The APO's commitment relates to industrial water conservation and safe drinking water. It will sponsor an international symposium on "Water Resources Management (WRM)" in Singapore later this year and an "Asia Water Symposium" in 2004. The Singapore meeting will review the WRM

approaches currently in use, study successful cases, and lay down guidelines for more effective WRM and economic sustainability.

As part of its Green Productivity and Integrated Community Development programs, the APO has been actively involved in promoting water conservation, wastewater management, and access to safe potable water. A number of publications were also issued on water use efficiency in irrigation, productivity of rainfed areas, and participatory irrigation management. 