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Message from the Regional Consultation Meeting on Developing Knowledge and Lessons

Establishing regional water knowledge hubs will help the countries of the Asia Pacific region in addressing their water management challenges of the 21st century

This message presents summary findings and recommendations from the Regional Consultation Meeting for Candidate Water Knowledge Hubs in the Asia-Pacific Region, hosted by Singapore's Public Utilities Board (PUB Singapore) on 29-31 October 2007 at the Singapore *WaterHub*. The consultation was organized in the context of the Asia Pacific Water Forum's (APWF) Key Result Area 1 activities for developing knowledge and lessons. The meeting was attended by 24 representatives from 13 centers of excellence in the region and beyond.

Key findings of the meeting are:

- 1. The region faces unprecedented challenges in water management.** The Asia Pacific region faces unprecedented challenges in water management in the next two decades because of climate change, urbanization, decentralization, environmental degradation, governance reforms, and other profound changes in society. To address these formidable challenges, the countries in the region need to urgently improve their knowledge generation, sharing, and capacity development for delivering water and sanitation services and managing water resources in river basins.
- 2. A new approach is needed for knowledge partnerships and networking.** The meeting explored a new approach to knowledge partnerships and networking in the Asia Pacific region with the help of *regional water knowledge hubs* that focus on key water sector topics (knowledge domains). In this approach, space is created for countries with advanced expertise and existing centers of excellence in the region to offer their services as a regional water knowledge hub to clients and partners in the region.¹

¹ In modern usage, hubs are known as common connection points in a network, as a central server to which clients connect. In airline travel, hubs connect people to their destination. Hub is also used to refer to a center of excellence and business, as in a financial hub. A knowledge hub can be regarded as connecting people to the best information, analysis, and people. A knowledge hub has a reputation for excellence in delivering products and services to clients. For the purpose of this regional consultation meeting, the concept of regional water knowledge hubs was used to refer to centers of excellence that will deliver the best information, knowledge, and capacity development services in their specific area of focus (their knowledge domain). These domains are priority water sector topics to help the countries in the Asia Pacific region in addressing the formidable water management challenges of the 21st century. (From: Lincklaen Arriens, W. and Luijendijk, J., 2007. *Water knowledge networking – partnering for better results*).

3. **Knowledge hubs can pursue excellence by adopting key operating principles.** For the new approach to work and become self-sustaining, the regional water knowledge hubs will need to demonstrate and maintain excellence in their products and services to meet client needs. Adopting a number of common key operating principles will help to ensure that this happens. Each regional water knowledge hub, working in its knowledge domain, should be able to demonstrate: vision and leadership; a focus on client needs; significant outcomes and impact in the region; an (international) team of experienced specialists; generation and identification of state-of-the art knowledge; a stimulating research environment including internships for younger researchers; relevant and feasible knowledge solutions to address water management challenges in the region; regular comparative analysis across the region; excellent products and services that meet client needs; an inclusive attitude to knowledge networking; dissemination of up-to-date information for the region; an entrepreneurial approach to developing a sustainable business model; and adequate human and financial resources to develop the knowledge hub's excellence.
4. **The water knowledge hubs will collaborate to improve performance.** PUB Singapore and UNESCO are co-leaders of the APWF's Key Result Area 1 on developing knowledge and lessons, and PUB Singapore has offered its *WaterHub* as a regional water knowledge hub for urban water management. The Asian Development Bank and UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education have agreed to facilitate the collaboration among regional water knowledge hubs and their networks. The participants of the meeting expressed interest in collaboration among the candidate water knowledge hubs and recommended to establish an APWF Network of Regional Water Knowledge Hubs.
5. **Regular review meetings will provide an efficient governance framework.** The proposed Network of Regional Water Knowledge Hubs will meet regularly to review progress and performance. The Governing Council of the APWF will be invited to the review meetings for providing guidance and to endorse recommendations for follow-up actions. APWF's Secretariat in Japan will be kept informed of meeting results.

Recommendations of the meeting are:

The participants in the meeting call on the Governing Council of the APWF to endorse the following actions in developing knowledge and lessons under the Key Result Area 1:

1. Introducing the new approach of knowledge partnerships and networking in the Asia Pacific region with the help of regional water knowledge hubs that focus on key water sector topics (knowledge domains), allowing for announcements of the candidate hubs and the proposed Network to be made at the 1st Asia Pacific Water Summit on 3-4 December in Beppu, Japan.
2. Recognizing regional water knowledge hubs for priority water sector topics (knowledge domains) based on a review of the development plan to be completed by each of the candidate hubs in the first quarter of 2008.
3. Supporting the establishment of the APWF Network of Regional Water Knowledge Hubs in the first quarter of 2008. Initial Network actions are to (i) develop a website and communications platform for the Network; (ii) develop guidelines for the Network's operation including objectives, principles, activities, results, and governance; and (iii) organize the first Network meeting in Singapore at the end of the 1st quarter of 2008 to review the development plans of candidate hubs and for the Network's operation. The start-up of the Network will be coordinated by a team of staff from PUB Singapore, UNESCO, UNESCO-IHE, and the Asian Development Bank.

Participants in the meeting represented the following organizations:
(Organizations listed in alphabetical order, with their current or proposed role)

Asian Development Bank (ADB), Manila

Facilitator for developing regional water knowledge hubs in the Asia Pacific Water Forum, leader of Asia Pacific Water Forum's Priority Theme 1 on Water Financing and Capacity Development, and of Key Result Area 3 on increasing public outreach, and supporter of several networks of water practitioner organizations in the Asia Pacific region

Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO), Canberra

Facilitator for identifying a candidate regional water knowledge hub in Australia (for a knowledge domain to be determined shortly)

International Centre for Water Hazard and Risk Management (ICHARM), Tsukuba

Candidate regional water knowledge hub for disaster risk reduction and flood management, and leader of Asia Pacific Water Forum's Priority Theme 2 on Water-related Disaster Management

International Research and Training Centre on Erosion and Sedimentation (IRTCES), Beijing

Candidate regional water knowledge hub for erosion and sedimentation in river basins

International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Colombo

Candidate regional water knowledge hub for irrigation service reform

Japan Water Agency (JWA), Saitama

Secretariat of the Network of Asian River Basin Organizations, and partner of the candidate regional water knowledge hub for river basin organizations and management (Ministry of Public Works, Indonesia)

National Hydraulic Research Institute of Malaysia (NAHRIM), Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), Kuala Lumpur

Candidate regional water knowledge hub for climate change

Ministry of Public Works (MPW), Jakarta

Candidate regional water knowledge hub for river basin organizations and management (in collaboration with Japan Water Agency as the Secretariat of the Network of Asian River Basin Organizations)

K-Water, Daejeon

Candidate regional water knowledge hub for water quality management in river basins

PUB Singapore

Candidate regional water knowledge hub for urban water management, and co-leader of Asia Pacific Water Forum's Key Result Area 1 on Developing Knowledge and Lessons

Scientific Information Center of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (SIC-ICWC), Tashkent

Candidate regional water knowledge hub for water resources management in central Asia

Pacific Islands Applied Geo-science Commission (SOPAC), Suva

Candidate regional water knowledge hub for water services and resource management in the Pacific (Note: SOPAC was unable to participate in the meeting but expressed their support)

UNESCO, Paris

Co-leader of Asia Pacific Water Forum's Key Result Area 1 on Developing Knowledge and Lessons (Note: UNESCO helped to prepare for the meeting but was unable to participate)

UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education, Delft

Facilitator for developing the Asia Pacific Water Forum Network of Water Knowledge Hubs

Yellow River Conservancy Commission (YRCC), Zhengzhou

Candidate regional water knowledge hub for decision support systems for river basin management (Hydroinformatics)

The participants also recommended establishing regional water knowledge hubs on other priority topics (knowledge domains), including: (i) water governance (being explored, including possible roles by the National University of Singapore and the National University of Malaysia); (ii) sanitation; (iii) water supply for rural areas and small towns; (iv) groundwater management; (v) environment, ecosystems and healthy rivers; and (vi) water and energy.

Participants in the meeting expressed their appreciation to:

PUB Singapore for hosting the regional consultation meeting, and to UNESCO-IHE and the Asian Development Bank for facilitating the meeting.



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