

Commissioner Jutta Urpilainen
International Partnership
European Commission
B-1049 Brussels – Belgium

Brussels, 9th June 2020

Subject: Main priorities for water under the Commission 2019-2024

Dear Commissioner,

For nine consecutive years, the World Economic Forum has ranked water crises as a top global societal risk in terms of impact on every aspect of our lives. The post COVID19 situation in Europe is a wake-up call to switch to a new paradigm in which consideration for water security and risk management are prerequisites.

The EU Water Alliance, composed of a wide range of water-related stakeholders, has therefore addressed key messages to Von der Leyen's Commission (see annex 1). As you are entrusted with the role of Commissioner for International Partnerships, water-related challenges have a direct impact regarding the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals and hence your mission.

Therefore, this broad coalition of water-related stakeholders kindly request a meeting with you to discuss the following points of interest related to your mission:

- Access to water and sanitation are human rights and have a direct impact on social and economic development, regional stability and security, and equality. This is especially so when one considers sanitation conditions, health and food. SDG 6 constitutes an important set of targets in order to guarantee such rights. This access is particularly fundamental in humanitarian aid strategies during disasters, in displaced people's camps and other extreme situations. The question as to how to establish efficient, but flexible long-term planning which answers the needs of the people affected and the nation states who must answer such needs is one that must be answered clearly and carefully.
- Water-related risks are some of the principal challenges of the decade. To assume the leading role in sustainable development, the European Commission must recognise water, sanitation and hygiene services and the restoration of biodiversity as priorities within the EU International Agenda, supporting investment and underlining the importance of water if one seeks to achieve the other UN SDGs.
- Access to WASH has a transformative effect particularly on the lives of women and girls. Removing the burden of fetching water contributes to their safety, dignity and permits them the increased opportunity of engaging in activities such as education and work, thus improving their lives. The access to WASH is key to the combating of

diseases such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, which may well last several years until vaccines are sufficiently disseminated. Europe cannot be in the vanguard of sustainable development and international cooperation if it does not attach the maximum importance to the issues of access to clean water and sanitation for all.

- The EU should support *fit-for-purpose* investment in technological and non-technological research and innovation to identify risks and enable more innovative and integrated solutions such as blue-green infrastructures and optimised initiatives regarding water governance. Research is also key to maintaining Europe at the forefront of the prevention and adaptation to Climate Change. The addressing of environmental threats implicitly demands the fostering of the design and implementation of the EU's development and cooperation instruments. What is required is the adoption of integrated risk reduction, climate change adaptation, mitigation and sustainable development programmes, with ecosystems such as wetlands/ peatlands at the heart, from the local level through to surrounding territories or watersheds.
- Support of capacity development actions including vocational training for water management constitutes a key measure to achieve EU objectives. In doing this, it is advisable that the EU cooperates with existing international platforms and initiatives such as the Global Water Operators Partnership (GWOPA) led by UN Habitat, other UN entities and overseas counterparts such as AMCOW.
- Prevent social exclusion for many young people, male and female, by ensuring universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation. The lack of basic services to support themselves and their families both for domestic and productive uses, often leads to internal displacement, potential delinquency or worse. The demography of developing countries is characterised by its youth, and young people must therefore constitute a priority target for the European Union's development policies. Access to water and to water-based employment can and indeed does make a significant difference.
- Supporting innovative ways and tools to foster community-led water solutions fit for purpose and to scale in order to ensure more democratic water governance in developing countries and as well as more transparency and political accountability. Fit-for-purpose funding mechanisms are crucial and require more creative solutions to reach actors on the ground like women and youth groups.
- Fully inclusive approaches that involve all stakeholders and lead to the joint ownership of solutions are important. A discussion concerning the re-instatement of a multi-stakeholder platform to jointly examine and enhance interventions regarding water-related issues (SDG6) and development cooperation would be highly desirable.

We are determined to form a proactive part of the solution.

Therefore, we look forward to scheduling a meeting to discuss these issues at your earliest convenience. The contact point for further communication is Durk Krol, Water Europe Executive director, durk.krol@watereurope.eu, tel: +32 2 7068292

EU Water Alliance

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Water Europe Director
Durk Krol



On behalf of:



Enclosed:

- Annex 1: EUWA Manifesto