



Concept Paper of the 6th ASEM Seminar on Urban Water Management

1. Seminar Background

Water is critical for sustainable development and the eradication of poverty and hunger, and is indispensable for human development, health and well-being. However, Over the past several decades, ever-growing demands for – and misuse of – water resources have increased the risks of pollution and severe water stress in many parts of the world. The frequency and intensity of local water crises have been increasing, with serious implications for public health, environmental sustainability, food and energy security, and economic development. Demographics continue changing and unsustainable economic practices are affecting the quantity and quality of the water at our disposal, making water an increasingly scarce and expensive resource — especially for the poor, the marginalized and the vulnerable. Now more than ever the world needs to transform the way it manages its water resources and delivers water and sanitation services for billions of people. Urgent action is needed to overcome this global crisis, as it is affecting all countries around the world, socially, economically and environmentally.

Water is at the heart of recent milestone agreements such as the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, and the 2015 Paris Agreement. The World Economic Forum ranks the water crisis in the top 3 of global risks for the third consecutive year. Failing to respond effectively to these challenges will have devastating global effects. To be successful, people need to respond in a coordinated and effective manner. In UN resolution 71/222, the General Assembly proclaims the period from 2018 to 2028 the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development” (the “Decade”), to further improve cooperation, partnership and capacity development in response to the ambitious 2030 Agenda.

To ensure water security, water conservation is the priority with spatial equilibrium; and both the government and the market shall make efforts to achieve systemic governance. —H.E. Xi Jinping, president of China

Related to this, in the scope of the 6th ASEM Seminar on Urban Water Management (further referred to as “Seminar”) here, there is the theme of promoting sustainable development of water resources for shared prosperity as the focus. The Seminar aims at sustainable water development policies, sustainable water utility services and water management, examining the value of water in the circular economy, the role of cross-sectoral cooperation (science, profession, industry) in creating a water-conscious society, how the system of financing water solutions can become sustainable, and how investors and financial institutions can become stakeholders in the operation of a new system that considers the interests of the future. The goal of the Seminar is to

show how water connects all of us, highlighting the water awareness that is essential for the actions of societal actors, and the potential to shift the scientific, industrial, business and individual responsibility at micro and macro levels towards sustainability.

In addition, the Seminar will develop recommendations and action plans designed to support collaborative efforts among the stakeholders who play a role in the path from sustainability concepts to the implementation of sustainable practices. Given its political, technical and institutional scope, one of the Seminar's main features is the open, democratic participation of actors drawn from different sectors, contributing to the dialogue of the decision-making process on water at the regional and global levels, seeking to achieve the rational and sustainable use of this resource.

2. Seminar Time and Theme

Time: October 22-24, 2024; Two days of seminar and one day of academic field trip

Theme: Promoting Sustainable Development of Water Resources for Shared Prosperity

Three plenary sessions will be held under the following themes:

First Plenary Session: Integrated Governance of Urban Water Environment

Second Plenary Session: Ecological and Environmental Governance of Rivers and Lakes

Third Plenary Session: Case Sharing of Technology Innovation Practice

3. Seminar Format and Location

Offline event: China·Changsha/Zhangjiajie

4. Working Language

English (with simultaneous interpretation in Chinese and English)

5. Seminar Organization

(1) Guiding Organizations

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC (TBC), Ministry of Science and Technology of the PRC (TBC), People's Government of Hunan Province

(2) Hosts

Department of Science and Technology of Hunan Province, Asia-Europe Foundation, Foreign Affairs Office of Hunan Provincial People's Government

(3) Co-hosts

ASEM Water Resources Research and Development Center, Municipal People's Government of Zhangjiajie, Hungarian Water Partnership

(4) Partners

European Water Association, Eco-Innovation Cluster for Sustainable Environment of Romania, Water4All, Water JPI, Wasser Hannover GmbH, Shiga Prefecture of Japan, Institute of Natural Resources and Environment of Lao PDR, Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat

6. Participants

Elites from government departments, international water organizations, international financial institutions, foundations, research institutions, and enterprises, as well as media representatives from the 53 ASEM member countries, are invited to attend the conference. The total

number of participants and representatives is expected to be around 100, including 30 foreign guests.

7. Publicity and Promotion

(1) Official website: Design the official website of the 6th ASEM Seminar on Urban Water Management (both in Chinese and English) and put it into use. The website includes a registration system, “cloud” conference, interactive communication, network conference manual and other sections.

(2) New Media: Use WeChat mini-programs or official accounts with the official website to offer more convenience for domestic users to register and learn about the Seminar.

(3) Traditional Media: Central media such as People's Daily and Xinhua News Agency, television (radio) media such as Hunan Satellite TV, and professional print media such as Science and Technology Daily and Hunan Daily.

(4) Portal Websites: Domestic and overseas portal websites such as Xinhuanet.com, People.cn, Rednet.cn, Voc.com.cn, and ASEF.org.

8. Expected Outcomes

A summary will be released at the end of the seminar, outlining conclusions, drawing a blueprint for future actions, and proposing measures. Efforts will be made to submit the relevant outcomes of this seminar to the next ASEM Summit for inclusion in the Chair's Statement.

An action plan will also be developed based on the seminar summary, identifying the necessary steps to achieve our goals within two years, the progress of which will be assessed and considered by the next (7th) ASEM Seminar on Urban Water Management.