



**Second Committee Special Event**

**Panel discussion on “Enhancing Governance on Water”**

**Friday, 06 November 2009, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.  
Conference Room 2**

**Summary Note**

The Special Event entitled Enhancing Governance on Water was organized by the Division for Sustainable Development, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). The event was chaired by Chairperson of the Second Committee, H.E. Mr. Park In-kook, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the UN, and discussion was framed by four distinguished panelists: Dr. Colin Chartres (Director General, International Water Management Institute), Prof. Aaron Wolf (Oregon State University), Dr. Nikhil Chandavarkar (Chief in the Division for Sustainable Development, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and Secretary to UN-Water) and Ertu rul Apakan, Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations.

Colin Chartres, Director of the International Water Management Institute, noted that, because of climate change and other challenges, such as population growth and little investment into agricultural water management, water had become scarcer over the last few decades, and emphasized that water issues must be addressed in a holistic manner. While water availability is impacted by climate change, population growth as well as more resource intensive consumption patterns highlight the need to act urgently and decisively. After the green revolution in agriculture, it was crucial to enable a "blue revolution". As the global population grew, the challenge became clear: the world would have to feed another 2.5 billion people with less water for agriculture than was now available.

He outlined the regions where water was most scarce, either because of physical or economic reasons, predominantly Africa, Asia and South America and said countries must focus on providing the poor with drinking water, sanitation services and water for agriculture. Solutions depended on investment and science to increase water productivity and reduce health and environmental risks from contaminated waters. Governance reform was vital as it could help bring

about a more equitable allocation. "Demand is going to outstrip supply of water over the next few years," he said, reiterating that climate change would compound the problem. In many zones where water was already scarce, temperatures were likely to rise with an immediate effect on the hydrological cycle. This would cause a shrinking of important freshwater reservoirs and make rainfall more variable, causing droughts and floods.

With regard to solutions, he said it was important to think broadly and laterally. Countries would have to look at conservation techniques such as water harvesting and various types of irrigation, among other things. The greatest return on investment could be expected from investing in rainfed agriculture.

cooperate. That is hugely important," said Prof. Wolf, Programme Director in Water Conflict Management and Transformation at Oregon State University. Politicians often threatened to take to the battlefield over water, but the last formal war over water had been fought in 2,500 B.C. between two Sumerian city-States contesting the Tigris Basin, he added. Since then, more than 3600 water-related treaties governing boundary demarcation and navigation had proven to

strategic use of the world's most precious resource. He stressed that water

western United States were looking at the possibility of building large dams because of increasingly volatile weather patterns. With snow caps melting globally, raising for example questions about supplies to the 1.3 billion people who relied upon water from the Himalayas as an effect of climate change, there was no question that the world would have to look again at increasing storage capacity to mitigate shortages. However, he cautioned that these infrastructure solutions must be carefully handled. They would have to be considered carefully along with soft approaches, such as demand side approaches and better water management, including the use of proven low-cost technology.

In answer to a question about international cooperation, Prof. Wolf said there

Asked whether UN-Water should remain a coordinating mechanism or become a United Nations agency, he said its member and partner institutions and the large majority of the UN member states have sent strong signals against creating another UN agency. The reason is that water management is really about agriculture, climate, health, environmental and even cultural aspects. The crosscutting nature of water, as a crucial sustainable development issue, is reflected in the UN-Water approach with the membership of almost all UN system organizations and strategic partnerships with governments and civil society organizations. As delegates raised funding concerns for UN-Water, Dr. Chandavarkar said that only three generous donors were providing money for its multi-donor trust fund. He encouraged new and emerging donors to contribute, in order to share the financial burden more evenly.

Ambassador Park, the chair, thanked the panelists for their presentations and emphasized the crucial importance of water issues for achieving sustainable development and peace and security, as well as the important role the United Nations plays in that regard.