



Business: Part of the solution

Water and climate change

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) believes it is critical to raise the political implications of water. There are enough local, regional and national water-related crises to justify the idea that we have now reached a global water-emergency situation. Climate change is already amplifying the existing pressures on water-related issues and will continue to manifest itself through rising sea levels, drought floods, melting ice cap etc.

Water resources are seriously threatened by population growth, urbanization, improving lifestyles and pollution. Indeed, these observable facts have associated demands such as water, food and energy supply which are magnified in a shifting global economic situation and with climate change.

Water is also a key priority issue for economic growth, employment, environmental sustainability and political stability. It is a vital resource for businesses in order to guarantee their survival as well as maintain their contribution to society's needs. Access to clean water is the foundation of any sustainable community and business as we cannot operate without it. Most importantly, water is a solvable challenge with existing technologies and solutions that require integrated and multi-stakeholder approaches to achieve real progress. We should also recall the significance of education regarding the good use of water resources and their protection.

Multiple roles of business

Businesses can substantially contribute to tackling the water challenge with their many resources and skills. They are driving forces in the creation of cost-effective technological solutions, in research and innovation and have tangible expertise in water treatment which can be put to good use. The private sector is willing to engage with governments as cooperation between different actors is essential in developing constructive and strategic global solutions.

Political leadership and enabling frameworks

Governments must have a more integrated approach to international water strategy by engaging in agriculture, energy, industrial usage and climate change policies simultaneously. Indeed, climate change for instance is increasingly responsible for water shortages in many regions of the world; therefore governments should promote water recycling and re-use with financial and educational tools.



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Interconnectivity of water issues

The combination of economic and population growth increases the demand of water resources. Water must therefore be used efficiently for there to be security of supply in terms of quantity and quality. The interconnectivity of water issues must be fully understood so as to guarantee a sustainable production and consumption of water.

Water, energy and food

Water, energy and food are intimately linked; indeed water treatment and transport requires a substantial amount of energy, of which the production in its turn requires a considerable amount of water. Hydropower is one of the cheapest and most sustainable forms of energy; therefore water-related issues and climate change can considerably impact the production of energy and biofuels which can consequently significantly affect economic viability and sustainability. Since crops require huge amounts of water to grow, the efficiency of water use should be considerably improved.

Water and bioenergy

Policy makers should be aware of the particular challenges bioenergy faces with regards to land and water use, agriculture and biodiversity. For example the growing demand for bioenergies has contributed to increasing the demand for certain agricultural commodities which combined with domestic policies has had a role to play in higher food prices. These considerations show how the allocation of water resources is directly impacted, as a rapidly rising demand for bioenergies can mean that less land and water are available for crop growing.

Climate change and variability

Climate change will affect our economic and social behavior. Along with the reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, it is a major issue for business in developed and developing countries. Our vulnerability is increasing due to the impacts therefore adaptation measures based on past experiences and scientific knowledge and previsions are in progress. Clearly, climate change is a double challenge as we must deal with it today and in the future. It is important that different global actors share their efforts in order to build a capacity to adapt.

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