Short feedback regarding “UN Multi-Stakeholder Taskforce meeting on Wastewater and Water Quality”, 10-11 June 2010, Geneva, Switzerland

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I work for seecon, an environmental consulting agency based in Switzerland, which is a partner of SuSanA. I was invited (by the SuSanA core group and by UN Water) to attend the “UN Multi-Stakeholder Taskforce meeting on Wastewater and Water Quality”, on June 10\textsuperscript{th} and 11\textsuperscript{th}, as being a representative of SuSanA. I had the opportunity to give a short presentation on SuSanA (10 minutes), for which I used the “standard ppt slides” about SuSanA. My presentation was well received.

The text further down below briefly presents the issues discussed during the meeting, as well as its goals.

My overall impression from the day was that SuSanA could play an important role in stressing the link between sanitation and sustainable wastewater management. Furthermore, SuSanA is an excellent network to link this multi-stakeholder platform, which will be active mainly on a policy level, to the implementation level.

Future steps could include that the SuSanA Core Group thinks of a strategy for bringing up its core points for the official strategy, best by contacting David Osborn (UNEP). The official strategy and way forward of the Task Force, which is open to any organization, will be launched during World Water Week 2010 in Stockholm.

The official minutes of the meeting will be available by about end of June and will also be made available on www.susana.org.

A Multi-Stakeholder Collaborative Agenda on Wastewater and Water Quality


“Continuing population growth and urbanisation, rapid industrialisation, and expanding and intensifying food production are all putting pressure on water resources and increasing the unregulated or illegal discharge of contaminated water within and beyond national borders. This presents a global threat to human health and wellbeing, with both immediate and long term consequences for efforts to reduce poverty whilst sustaining the integrity of some of our most productive ecosystems.

“There are many causes driving this crisis, but it is clear that freshwater and coastal ecosystems across the globe, upon which humanity has depended for millennia, are increasingly threatened. It is equally clear that future demands for water cannot be met unless wastewater management is revolutionized.”

The UN-Water Collaborative Agenda on Wastewater and Water Quality aims at being an important element to revolutionizing wastewater management over the coming decade. It will embody immediate communication and capacity building initiatives, as well as a multi-stakeholder agenda of ongoing and planned collaborative initiatives that directly address the policy recommendations outlined in the Sick Water report.
1. Wastewater management requires a multi-sectoral approach, incorporating principles of ecosystem-based management from the watersheds into the sea (IWRM principles).

2. The sustainable management of wastewater requires a combination of innovative approaches at different scales. Planning processes should provide an enabling environment for innovation, including at the community level but require government oversight and public management.

3. Financing should incorporate design, construction, operation, maintenance, upgrading and/or decommissioning. It should also take into account that there are important livelihood opportunities in improving wastewater treatment processes, whilst the private sector can have an important role in operational efficiency under appropriate public guidance.

4. In light of rapid global change, communities should plan wastewater management against future scenarios, not current situations.

5. Solutions for smart wastewater management must be socially and culturally appropriate, as well as economically and environmentally viable into the future.

6. Education must play a central role in wastewater management and in reducing overall volumes and harmful content of wastewater produced, so that solutions are sustainable.

A Collaborative Agenda

The UN-Water Collaborative Agenda on Wastewater and Water Quality (Collaborative Agenda) will be developed and coordinated under the leadership of the UN Water Taskforce on Wastewater. The Collaborative Agenda will be officially launched on World Water Day 2012, although interim activities will be initiated during the development process.

The Collaborative Agenda will elaborate and showcase how the UN System, in partnership with governments, industry, NGOs and International Financial Institutions, can:

1. Expand the knowledge base on wastewater management;
2. Accelerate the formulation and implementation of sustainable wastewater management policies;
3. Increase the construction and efficiency of appropriate wastewater infrastructure; and
4. Communicate the central role of wastewater management in public health initiatives, environmental protection and economic development.

Importantly, the Collaborative Agenda will, inter alia, identify synergies from the independent work on wastewater by the respective agencies, as well as the NGO and private sectors. The Collaborative Agenda will also link wastewater management with other contemporary issues, such as climate change, food security and the reduction of poverty.

Initiating the Collaborative Agenda

A meeting of the UN-Water Taskforce on Wastewater Management, coupled with a multi-stakeholder dialogue on wastewater management, took place at the World Health Organization, Geneva, 9-11 June 2010. Inputs to the six above recommendations were collected, and possible actions and strategies discussed.