

**WATER
ACADEMY
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SUSTAINABLE
AND RESPONSIBLE
DEVELOPMENT



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**The WATER ACADEMY SRD
cordially invites you to the High Level Round Table Symposium**

Wash away COVID and other Pandemics

***Live Streaming We-mposium on ClassCNBC, November 20th 2020
10:30 Bern time***

Tv Host Andrea Cabrini

All details and Scientific Program will follow soon
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SAVE the DATE

Abstract

Improved Sanitation habits, Access to Safe Drinking Water and adherence to Good Hygiene Practices must go together to obtain efficacious benefits in the struggle against pandemics of Viral origin. This became clear more than ever during the recent COVID 19 crises, when its side effects show wider socio-economic effects, particularly for women and girl. Goal nr. 6 of Sustainable Development Goals precisely focuses on “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”, and put in evidence the fundamental inner relation between water intended as the Source of Life and hygiene and sanitation to ensure improvement in life conditions, globally. Despite access to safe water and sanitation are Human Rights, as recognized by the 2010 UN General Assembly, the overall situation worldwide is still far from being under control. Accordingly to UN data, “Today, 2.2 billion people lack access to safely managed drinking water services and 4.2 billion people lack safely managed sanitation services, and in particular the impact on child mortality rates is devastating due to poor sanitation, poor hygiene, or unsafe drinking water”. Still too many persons without access to improved drinking water are forced to rely on dangerous and risky sources such as surface water, unprotected and possibly contaminated wells, or vendors selling water of unverifiable provenance and quality. Under the sewage point of view, without improved sanitation people is force to use inadequate communal latrines and practise open defecation: in so doing exposed polluted matter will be transferred back into people’s food and water resources, helping to spread diseases such as cholera. Beyond the community, the lack of effective waste disposal or sewerage systems can contaminate ecosystems and contribute to disease pandemics. For women and girls, finding a place to go to the toilet outside, often having to wait for protective darkness, can leave them vulnerable to abuse and sexual assault. For adolescent girls, the presence of a safe water supply, and of clean and functioning private toilet makes the difference between dropping out and getting an education, and then have proper facilities and knowledge to manage their menstrual cycles in safety and dignity. During pregnancy, childbirth, and post-natal care, medical staff and expectant mothers should be better equipped to ensure newborn children the safest and healthiest possible start in life. Many children in low-income communities with no access to WASH are unable to go to school because they are sick with a diarrheal disease or, particularly in the case of girls in rural areas, because they have to spend large parts of each day fetching water for their family. Furthermore, globally speaking around a third of schools have no safe water supply or adequate sanitation, leaving children dehydrated and forcing pupils to use inadequate latrines. Turn SDG’s nr.6 into reality will need the adoption of structural reforms territorially adopted on the basis of the specific features of each state and community, but contextually expression of a common and shared value’s mainframe, such as the 2017 Geneva Water Initiative . The impact of universal access to WASH on global health would be profound. There is the potential to save the lives of the 829,000 people who currently die every year from diseases directly caused by unsafe water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene practices. The provision of safe water, sanitation and hygienic conditions is essential to protecting human health during all infectious disease outbreaks, including the COVID-19 outbreak. Ensuring good and consistently applied WASH and waste management practices in communities, homes, schools, marketplaces, prisons and health care facilities will further help to prevent human-to-human transmission of the so called Corona Virus. “Handwashing with soap is one of the cheapest, most effective things you can do to protect yourself and others against coronavirus, as well as many other infectious diseases. Yet for billions, even this most basic of steps is simply out of reach.” (UNESCO, 2019). The situation is equally complex when dealing with agriculture that accounts for 70 percent of freshwater withdrawals worldwide: that is why sustainable water resource management to increase water productivity in food and agriculture and improve safe water conditions to reduce contamination, remains critical. There are different pathways of pollution that can reach water resources. FAO hosts AQUASTAT, the global information system on water resources including water quality and agricultural water management and facilitates monitoring water productivity and sanitation. Human health is strongly linked to ecosystem health. Then, the degradation of ecosystems, such as primary forests, rangelands and wetlands, often facilitate the spreading of zoonotic diseases. Recent outbreaks of West Nile virus, Ebola virus disease, SARS, Monkeypox, Mad Cow disease, Avian Influenza and COVID-19 remind us that human and animal health are intimately connected. These diseases can cross the Darwinian divide between animals and people and do not depend on humans for their survival. Therefore, a broader understanding of health and disease demands a unity of approach achievable only through a consilience of human, animal and environment health: UN proposed and launch the One Health initiative. And since Urban populations are particularly at risk of viral respiratory infections due to population density and more frequent public gatherings in crowded spaces, we observe that the overall situation is generally critical. We need to rethink our relationship with nature and view water and the use we make of it with new eyes, in resilient and appropriate ways. In this scenario Economy matter too, with a potential structural looming tragedy ahead. The aim of the 2020 HLRT Symposium is to investigate the possible contribution from Science and Research to make the difference in humans life standard conditions, taking in particular consideration the fundamental role of Science Diplomacy, especially the water related one, in sharing different experiences, policies and best practices between governments and Multilateral Institutions. **Key Words:** WASH – Sustainable, Responsible and Resilient Development - New Culture of Water - Safe Water for All - Water Safety and Water Security – Gender Equality – Science Diplomacy – Geneva Water Initiative

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