



Chair's Statement

International Symposium on Water and Culture

–Learning from Water Heritage to Innovate Regional Development –

Water has been closely associated with human being since the time of ancient civilization. It has interacted with the people in critical fields for their existence such as health, food, energy, disasters, and environment. It underpinned social and economic development of regions and enhanced welfare and happiness of the inhabitants when managed properly. Water has affected, in many ways, formulation of the culture and society.

Relations between the people and water are not only practical and physical but emotional, philosophical, and even spiritual. It affects the people's way of thinking and beliefs. Social structure and behavior are set at large by surrounding environmental conditions. Water is a decisive element of the settings. We can follow how our ancestors developed their thinking and beliefs by visiting water-related steles, inscriptions and archives.

Human activities have been intertwined with water under various settings, which led to distinctive cultures and civilization. We will be able to disentangle the relations by visiting remains, monuments and ancient manuscripts. The lessons gleamed from the exercise will give us a clue to create better paths towards holistic and sustainable development of regions with no one left behind.

Having this in mind, the International Symposium on Water and Culture was held on February 3rd, 2020 in GRIPS, Tokyo, Japan. The Symposium helped our deeper understanding of relations between the people and water by 'visiting' water heritage around the world. Leading experts and researchers on water and culture - invited from various parts of the world - introduced cases, shared their experiences and knowledge, and discussed findings and lessons from the heritage. The role water can and should play for regional development in the world was crystalized through discussions including interaction with the audience. The Symposium has initiated a process to create a new horizon of water discussion leading to the advancement of a water dialogue process of Asia Pacific Water Summit in 2020, the 9th World Water Forum, Global Platform on DRR, and the 4th UN Special Thematic Session on Water and Disasters, the 2020 UN Biodiversity Conference, the 2nd UN Oceans Summit, the Global Adaptation Summit, COP26 and UN High-Level Meeting on Water in 2021, and the UN Water Decade's Mid-Term Review in 2023, towards fully achieving SDGs.

Having all presentations, discussion, and conclusion of all sessions of the Symposium in mind, the Chair of the Symposium recommends the following actions:

Recommendations

1. Establish the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Water and Cultural Heritage. Develop the narrative on the significance of cultural heritage for the future through ICOMOS ISC on Water and Cultural Heritage and promote dialogue through cooperation with water professionals.
2. Promote the dialogue on water and cultural heritage at the various global summits by religious, professional, indigenous and political leaders such as Session on Water, Culture for Peace at Asia Pacific Water Summit in October, 2020.
3. Initiate multi-stakeholder dialogues jointly by water professionals and heritage experts at local, national, and global levels to raise awareness, deepen mutual understanding, inspire and strengthen the cultural values of water and commit tangible actions on significance of water-related heritages for the sustainable future.
4. Stimulate fun and inspirational events connecting water to people, and vice versa, particularly for, by and with youth.
5. Make use of power of ICT, AI, and Big Data to identify, assess, and visualize water cultural heritages for everybody.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Han Seung-soo', with a stylized, cursive script.

HAN Seung-soo

Chair of the Symposium

Chair of the High-level Experts and Leaders Panel on Water and Disasters

President of the 56th Session of UN General Assembly

Former Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea