Call for Sustainable Use of Water by Industry

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Introduction

Use of water by industry is a key factor in determining the amount and quality of water available to sustain human life and eco-systems on the planet, not only because of its magnitude (approximately 20% world-wide and as much as 50% in some countries), but also because its impact on water quality, communities, and the environment is often disproportionate to the amount of water consumed. We live in a moment when multiple voices and factors tell us that there is an urgent need for us to work together to support more sustainable use of water by industry:

- The international community has committed to the 2030 Sustainability Goals, in which Goal 6 is to ensure availability of water and sanitation for all, Goal 12 is to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, and Goal 17 calls for the development of multi-stakeholder partnerships.

- The United Nations High-Level Panel on Water has recommended that we understand water, value water, and manage water, and create incentives for water users to use water efficiently, reuse it, and avoid polluting it; their recommendations include strengthening collaboration among multiple sectors, and motivating industry to embrace water stewardship.

- Across sectors and geographical boundaries, there is growing awareness that fulfilling our commitments to healthy water, heathy communities, a healthy environment, and the protection of both humans and eco-systems from the adverse impacts of climate change will require rapid and significant changes in the way water is used by industry.

Proposed Actions

1. **Increase awareness of the impacts of unsustainable water use by industry on water supply, water quality, communities, the environment, and the climate**

   We will develop customized information products and processes that communicate the damage and risks associated with unsustainable water use by industry to all sectors that influence or are affected by industrial water use.

Information on risks at the local, watershed, regional, and global level will be conveyed through language, venues, and communication channels that are meaningful and accessible to each target audience.

We will record and report locally and transmit globally, making more effective use of technology (e.g., videos and social media) to transmit information and visuals relating to impacts of unsustainable water use.

We will analyze and distribute information on negative business impacts (e.g., financial penalties and loss in share price or unwillingness of organizations to buy shares) resulting from perceptions of unsustainable water use by industry

2. **Increase awareness of opportunities for industry to support healthy economies, healthy people, and a healthy planet through modified business strategies, technologies, and practices**

   We will move information on strategies, technologies, and practices more quickly into the hands of those who need it, communicating in terms that are intelligible to each audience.

   We will support watershed-level analysis of water supplies and vulnerabilities, highlighting areas where modified business strategies, technologies, and practices are most urgently needed.

   We will encourage industry to adopt watershed stewardship practices, communicate information on upgraded business strategies, technologies, and practices through established networks, and commit to standards of performance that set benchmarks for their suppliers and an example for their customers and peers.

3. **Create incentives and supports for sustainable use of water by industry and disincentives for unsustainable use.**

   We will encourage all whose behavior has an effect on water use to examine their options for creating and accessing incentives and rewards for sustainable water use and taxes and penalties for unsustainable water practices. Water rates, limits on water consumption and the quality of effluent from industrial processes, reporting requirements, creation and enforcement of water use regulations, and standards for the safety and reliability of water-related storage and transmission structures should reflect the true value of water within the watershed where it is consumed.

We will encourage not only governments but also shareholders, financing institutions, and communities to use their resources and influence to encourage sustainable water use by industry.

We will identify inequities and source limitations that result in unsustainable industrial water use by populations who lack economic options.

We will support appreciation of water as a source of life and not a commodity.

4. **Support communication and collaboration among the many groups that affect or are affected by industry's use of water**

We will evaluate conditions, risks and opportunities at aggregate (e.g. watershed) levels where resources are shared, through collaboration of multiple users and stakeholders.

We will encourage communication and collaboration (such as shared projects) among all sectors, including industry, producers in the supply chain, water utilities, educational and research institutions, professional associations, NGO's. government policy-makers and regulators, financing institutions, and the public, to develop new approaches and foster responsible water stewardship.

5. **Think long-term, engage with partners outside your organizational and sector boundaries, and act now**

We commit to a perspective that extends beyond our time and our day-to-day boundaries. We will work with all sectors to assess existing, potential, and long-term financial, social, and environmental impacts and develop long-term plans to improve industrial water use in all locations and processes.

We will work to accelerate the pace of improvement in industrial water use in order to protect our communities, the environment, and the resources required to support economic well-being.