

Water Science and Technology Association

The Twelve Gulf Water Conference Water in the GCC... Towards Integrated Strategies 28-30 March, 2017, Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain

The WSTA 12th Gulf Conference was held in Bahrain during the period 28-30 March under the patronage of Royal Highness Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain, represented by Khalid Bin Abdulla, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of Bahrain Water Resources Council, and the presence of the representative of the GCC Secretary General His Excellency Khalifa Al-Abri, Assistant Secretary General Economic and Development Affairs, and was attended by more than 250 GCC, Arab and international water professionals from the executive, academic, NGO and private sectors. The Conference was organized by the WSTA during the period 28-30 March, 2017, in Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain, in cooperation with the Water Resources Council of the Kingdom of Bahrain, and GCC General Secretariat, with the support of international regional, and local organizations and the private sector.

Objectives

Based on the directive decision of the GCC Supreme Council, the Secretariat General has prepared a long-term comprehensive GCC water strategy and implementation plan for the years 2016-2035. This developed GCC Unified Water Strategy and its implementation plan has been approved and endorsed by Their Majesties and Highnesses the leaders of the GCC countries in Bahrain 2016 Summit, which is looked at as a landmark towards achieving the water sector sustainability. The WSTA 12th Gulf Water Conference focuses on the formulation of integrated water strategies at the national level that is in line with the GCC unified water strategy. The main objectives of the conference are:

1. Raising awareness and influencing policy and decision making to the importance of the formulation and implementation of integrated water strategies to replace the current sectoral master plans and strategies.
2. Identifying challenges and opportunities in improving water sustainability under the prevailing socio-economic, environmental, cultural, and political conditions in the GCC countries.
3. Facilitating an open discussion platform to share knowledge, experiences, and best practices between researchers, executives, decision and policy makers, private sector, and other stakeholders, on integrated water strategies in the GCC countries.
4. Developing further the network of individuals, institutions, Civil Society, NGOs, and private sector in the GCC and other Arab countries and beyond that are interested in scientific research in the field of water strategies.
5. Exchanging knowledge on case studies from different countries on integrated water strategies and their effective implementation.

Recommendations

The conference calls the GCC countries to:

1. implementing the "GCC Unified Water Strategy and Implementation Plan 2016-2035" approved by the GCC Supreme Council through the development of national water strategies in each country in accordance with the unified strategy, and exchange of information and studies on the implementation of integrated water strategies.
2. Integrating water, energy and food policies in the management of these three sectors, and bridging the current knowledge gap on their inter-linkages by directing universities

- and research centers their academic programs and applied research towards understanding, management and planning of the water, energy and food nexus.
3. Increasing investments and joint GCC action in the field of localization and ownership of desalination technologies as well as manufacturing desalination spare parts in cooperation and incentivizing national private sector.
 4. Implementing economic tools as one of the most effective management tools in the management of water resource, and setting proper pricing policies in the various consuming sector with the objectives of enhancing water use efficiency and resources sustainability as well as to achieve cost recovery of operation and maintenance of the water utilities, and changing the current general subsidies to targeted subsidies aiming at enhancing water efficiency, while taking into account the limited income strata in the society.
 5. Adopting an integrated policy that balances local agriculture, agricultural imports, and abroad agricultural investments to achieve food security in strategic food items in the GCC, and setting reasonable agricultural policies and plans that takes into account the limited water resources in the region.
 6. Enhancing energy efficiency in the water sector and increasing the reliance on renewable energy, particularly solar, in various water operations and especially in the field of desalination.
 7. Establishing effective systems to achieve the sustainability of groundwater through different demand management tools and increase the supply by artificial recharge of groundwater by excess desalination water, rainwater, and treated wastewater.
 8. Increasing wastewater collection, treatment, and reuse rates as it represents an important renewable and increasing source in the region.
 9. Addressing water losses in an integrated manner and focusing on the administrative and economic aspects of losses and the use of smart solutions to detect and treat networks losses.
 10. Intensifying and supporting studies on assessing the impact of climate change on water resources and the development of adaptation strategies and integrating these into national water strategies.
 11. Providing accurate and long-term data on water resources enhance water resources monitoring, systems, and capacity building and training of national cadres working in all water fields.

The conference authorizes the WSTA Board of Directors to submit these recommendations to the GCC Secretariat General for presentation at the Water Ministerial Committee Meetings and to follow up the progress of its implementation. Moreover, the Board is requested to circulate these recommendations to relevant regional organizations and countries.

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