

**GLOBAL WATER PARTNERSHIP STATEMENT TO THE  
GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

Geneva, Switzerland, 17 May 2019

**Water is Our Common Denominator**

In March, Tropical Cyclone Idai unleashed its destruction on lives and economies in eastern Africa. The effects will last decades. The victims of this destruction are people, their prosperity and the planet. The people, by and large, are the poor and most vulnerable. Piece-meal and reactive responses are inadequate. Rather, proactive, urgent, and lasting change is required.

While it is true that cyclones, in some parts of the world, are regularly expected, we recognize a global pattern of increasing extremes when it comes to storms, floods, droughts, and fires. Water is the medium through which the impacts of climate change translate to devastating destruction. And the risks of such water-related disasters are growing.

However, the negative economic impacts need not grow at the same pace. Water-related disasters account for 90% of major natural disasters since 1990. Where water is part of the equation, investing in integrated water resources management can avoid some of the worst economic consequences.

Many countries recognise this, and they invest in water-related measures to adapt to climatic change. The Global Water Partnership's analysis of countries' Nationally Determined Contributions of 80 countries shows that 9 out of 10 countries prioritize investing in water infrastructure and institutions. But there is a mismatch between the appetite for water infrastructure and the action needed to put integrated governance in place to manage our water well. Also, more work needs to be done in designing actual projects. Without good governance and management structures, infrastructure assets will be left stranded, vulnerable communities will be marginalised, and our environment will be left without the water it needs to sustain our livelihoods. Our analysis is clear: investments in green and grey infrastructure as well as in institutions are inseparable – and urgent – for building resilience. To make this connection, the climate, development, and disaster risk reduction communities must come together. Water connects all three.

Investments in water help safeguard socioeconomic growth in the face of increasing vulnerabilities to droughts and floods. Over the years, our observation has been that the most beneficial water investments have been connected to integrated planning that combines and sequences investments in infrastructure, in institutions, and in information systems and use over the long-term. These are investments in prevention, reducing potential damage before disasters occur. Taking such approaches can inspire action on disaster risk reduction in other fields.

The water community has many solutions to offer. Many water organizations already work with you; we see this here in Geneva. As a globally operating action network, also the Global Water Partnership has taken on the disaster risk reduction agenda specifically. We bring together over 3,000 partner organizations from

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around the world, we operate through more than 65 Country Water Partnerships, and we support them through 13 regional teams and a global team. Our affiliates are civil society organizations who convene stakeholders across organizations, sectors and often also across boundaries - so that all can contribute to finding solutions and have a say in the decisions that affect their water resources. Our work is rooted in existing political processes and connected through long-standing relationships with mandated institutions. Our knowledge base draws from local implementation experience and links to global insight and learning. We are deeply committed to our role as a *neutral* convener between government and non-government actors. For more than 20 years, we and many others have supported countries as they write the laws and build the institutions needed for managing water for sustainable development. And in helping improve water management, we have also been able to help in mobilizing financing, including, more recently, climate financing for water-relevant investments that would strengthen resilience and reduce risk.

Together with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) we bring together global expertise to support countries managing the extremes of water – floods and drought – through HelpDesks supported by over 60 institutional partners. These two HelpDesks on flood and drought management are delivering results. For example, the Adaptation Fund recently approved a USD 7.9M project on integrated flood and drought management in the Volta river basin in West Africa, which developed out of a request of the six riparian countries to the integrated flood management Helpdesk. We responded to these requests by convening an in-depth stakeholder consultation led by GWP's Regional and Country Water partnerships, with capacity building by WMO, GWP, and our HelpDesk partners.

Disaster may not differentiate where it hits – but when it hits, the poor and the vulnerable are hit most. To protect the vulnerable, we will need an all-of-society engagement – with political leadership, solid science informing policy, an emphasis on the gender dimension, and finance coming together. Multi-stakeholder platforms have an important role to play here, ensuring that inequality does not get exacerbated and that political will can be turned into effective actions.

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