

2023-03-24

## China-Europe Water Platform - how cooperation between regions can improve global SDG6 implementation and contribute to the UN Water Decade?

Director General Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management contribution following the Swedish Vice Minister Climate and Environment (Ministry for Climate and Enterprise)

8 minutes

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Thank you Vice Minister Daniel Westlén.

Co-chairs, Ministers, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to build on the speech by the Vice Minister and highlight some of the different policy recommendations from different focus areas under the China-Europe Water Platform and how they resonate in a Swedish management context and where they can contribute to improve SDG6 implementation in Sweden and beyond.

The three interactive dialogues that have been explored during the UN Conference also provide input to this intervention. We have in particular looked into:

- Interactive Dialogue 2 - Water for Sustainable Development: Valuing Water, Water-Energy-Food Nexus and Sustainable Economic and Urban Development
- Interactive Dialogue 3. Water for Climate, Resilience, and Environment: Source to Sea, Biodiversity, Climate, Resilience, and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR);
- Interactive Dialogue 5. Water Action Decade: Accelerating the Implementation of the Objectives of the Decade, including through the UN Secretary-General's Action Plan

Let me first explore **CEWP focus area on river basin management that our French and Chinese partners have been leading and how it connects to the ocean i.e the source to sea approach**

- **Accelerate the elaboration of laws and regulations in important river basins.**
  - Sweden is an EU member state and we implement our common EU policy and EU legislation in the area of water resources management and marine management for jobs and prosperity and to restore ecosystem services.

- There are multiple regulatory frameworks to consider at the regional and national scales. Some of those are sector specific and others are of a more holistic character. This can lead to overlaps and fragmentation in the implementation of the regulatory frameworks that also concern multiple public sector and private sector actors.
  - To overcome this challenge the Swedish government has taken an ecosystem-based approach to management. This means that implementing agencies, such as the agency that I represent, the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, is obliged to consult with stakeholders, agree on common objectives and work in partnership with many other agencies utilizing different rules and regulations to achieve the objectives agreed.
  - From an environment perspective goals were agreed by parliament in 1999 and in different national green growth agendas such as the food and fossil free energy strategies.
  - A key finding is that water resources management, to be able to contribute in a nexus context, need political engagement and agreement to consider difficult management and development tradeoffs.
  - This can for example relate to how to limited freshwater resources can be utilized for energy, agriculture, urban and industry use and water for the ecology.
  - Spatial management approaches on land and at sea are useful tools to integrate fresh and marine water resources management conservation and sustainable use to work towards a source to sea approach.
- **Accelerate river basin water resources information sharing**
    - The governments digitalization strategy guides the public sector in terms of utilizing the power of data and information and AI for collecting, safely storing and using data for management decisions and for private sector innovation.
    - In the water and marine sectors there is much cooperation by many Swedish agencies to ensure we have modern and efficient systems for environmental monitoring and the use of data. Inter-agency protocols are being developed for a shared architecture and to be able to securely use this data.
- **Strengthen and promote public participation in water resources management at the river basin level**
    - This recommendation is important for Sweden. As a highly industrialized society there are many expectations from water users in the private and public sectors as well as citizens that the water resources should be managed efficiently and safely.
    - To that end river basin management plans are developed but expectations are high that results towards a clean environment and access to water should come quickly.
    - However, water management is complex and to ensure stakeholder participation at many levels can be a challenge. Results in the environment also takes time to mature.

- The water resources advisory boards established by voluntary forces in Sweden provide a good entry point for participation.
- Investments into catchment managers or “chiefs” that work with stakeholders in the basin to identify measures for action also seems to be very effective.

**Secondly, the focus area on Energy and water and sustainable hydropower that Sweden has been co-leading with Nanjing Hydraulic Institute**

- This work in the water and energy security focus area in the project “Sustainable Hydropower Integration and Use in China and EU”, has been particularly important for Sweden.
- 10 years ago a process to consult with stakeholders to find a way forward to provide modern environmental permits to our 2000 hydropower dams while ensuring electricity production and the role of hydropower as a regulator or battery of the electricity system was started.
- This was a complex process that at the end resulted in an agreed 20 year plan with private sector financing to support this process. A law was enacted in 2019. This process has clearly stressed the policy recommendation by the CEWP on the fact that
  - **stakeholder engagement and inter- cross-sectoral policy dialogue is essential**
- With the energy crises emerging in Europe last year and the ongoing transition to fossil free energy supplies this plan is evaluated by the government to ensure that energy targets and environmental objectives are met.
- Some important policy recommendations that the government currently are addressing are:
  - **a compilation of examples where hydropower is further upgraded but also more environmentally friendly**
    - This is currently a part of the ongoing follow up of the 20 year plan to provide modern environmental permits to hydropower plants.
    - Ongoing government assignments exists on:
  - **How hydro-energy can be part of the renewable energy mix and be a tool for stabilizing the energy grid**
- Together these initiatives illustrate the government goal of being climate neutral by 2045 thereby contributing to global climate targets.

### **Thirdly, lot on Business development**

In the Swedish economy the role of the private sector is critical in terms of accelerating implementation from source to sea. Many private companies have their own targets to become climate neutral. The recommendations from this lot on:

- **Partnering with private sector**

And how to

- **Reduce the carbon footprint of the water sector**

is therefore relevant in Sweden and globally to achieve SDG 6.

The Minister from South Africa, e.g. stressed this in his panel introduction in the interactive dialogue 3.

### **And finally, ways for a future cooperation.**

As I noted earlier, in Sweden, the government has decided a 20 years plan to ensure that all hydropower plants have modern environmental permits, while preserving their function to produce renewable electricity.

This is fundamental to meeting national renewable energy targets and thereby providing for more intermittent electricity supply from wind and solar power. We look forward to explore continued learning in the CEWP specifically on making existing hydropower sustainable and increasing its efficiency.

Thank you