

## EDITORIAL

According to James M. Lindsay, Council of Foreign Relations, the top 10 most significant world events for 2014 included gains, losses and events with which the world has to live. These included, for example, state annexations, the Ebola outbreak, the crash of oil prices and negotiations on the Iranian nuclear programme stalling again. On the positive side are new leaderships like that of Narendra Modi in India, which has created significant expectations for progress globally and nationally, including the average Indians who are hoping to see their economic, social and human environments improved over the medium to long-terms.

The future is always uncertain but it will undoubtedly bring outstanding progress in sciences, arts and technological developments. In 2015, directly relevant for water is the end of the Millennium Development Goals and, with it, the need for an objective assessment of what went right, what went wrong, what was missing, what could have been done better and what ought to have been done before the world agrees to the new global development agenda beyond 2015.

There are high global expectations in spite of the repeated failures of implementation of earlier development targets, on what the focus of this new global agenda should be. A synthesis of the full range of alternatives discussed during the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda has been presented by the United Nations Secretary General in *The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet* (UNGA, 2014). This document calls for actions to transform the world beyond 2015. It also discusses the lessons learnt from two decades of development experience and concludes that progress has been remarkable, although it is still insufficient and uneven. This is, of course, a good beginning. However, framing the new agenda for the post-2015 goals should include a bold and candid analysis of the facts, including successes and failures and the reasons thereof. Masking reality will not help if real progress is to be achieved within a stipulated timeframe. This includes the continuous misleading statements that the Millennium Development Goals in terms of access to clean water were achieved well ahead of their time, when this has, by far, not been the case.

Pre- or post-2015, the goals of the national governments and the international community should be those of development, improvements in the quality of life of every person and poverty reduction. Access to clean drinking water is still work in progress all over the developing world, which includes at least 3.5 billion people. The extent and complexity of the problems should be recognized in order that they are addressed effectively this time.

According to the UN Population Division, the world's population reached 7.2 billion in 2014 and is expected to increase by more than 2 billion by 2050, with most of the future population growth occurring in the less developed regions (UN, 2014). This indicates the enormous task ahead for better services to provide access to clean water as well as proper wastewater treatment and disposal. Pretending that the problem of clean water access has been solved only results in the loss of credibility of international organizations as people in developing countries realize that their problems are being discussed in abstract form. Arguments and decisions have many times very little relation to the real situations on the

ground and quality of life and standards of living are not improving as they are many times claimed by national and international organizations. It is thus time to develop an agenda with clear and doable goals that guide the countries and their institutions into what should be, hopefully, an achievable road map for a development process that is sustainable and that will improve the living conditions of billions of people.

The March 2015 issue of the journal is an excellent combination of papers on transboundary water cooperation considering potential climate change impacts; social impacts of construction of infrastructure and expansion of irrigation systems; distribution and utilization of water in up- and downstream river basins and the related economic, social and environmental impacts; the need to regulate informal water markets in large cities; and comparative assessments of national policies and their implementations, or lack of them, due to the discretionary power given to bureaucracies in interpreting national policies. An assessment of the effects of Africa's water management crisis on food security and the impacts on development are also included.

On transboundary waters, Salman (2015) examines the main provisions of the United Nations Watercourses Convention and the main areas of controversies between the different riparians over the convention's substantive and procedural rules that led to the long delay for its entry into force. It also analyses the reasons why it is important that the convention has come into force. Sánchez and Cortez-Lara (2015) discuss the provision established by the commissioners of Mexico and the United States to establish measures for bi-national water management until 2017. The objective is to address cooperative mechanisms to address water shortages in the Colorado River basin in view of predicted climate change impacts like extreme and prolonged droughts. Furat, Al-Faraj, and Scholz (2015) discuss governance of water resources in transboundary river basins in complex and challenges environments such as the Diyala (Sirvan) River basin shared between Iraq and Iran.

The paper by Wegerich (2015) on irrigation bureaucracies analyses very comprehensively the status of implementation of national policy on shifting from administrative to hydrological and/or hydrographic principles of water management in the Zerafshan and Ferghana valleys in Uzbekistan. The implementation of national policies is resisted by lower-level bureaucrats, leading to diverse, even contradictory, outcomes of the same policy. The vested interests and agendas of a multiplicity of bureaucracies, the power of individual bureaucrats and their discretionary power in interpreting national policy are responsible for unexpected outcomes than the ones planned for.

This year we welcome two new members to our Editorial Board: Dr Arwin van Buuren, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands; and Dr Kai Wegerich, International Water Management Institute, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. We are looking forward to working with them and also with the rest of our outstanding group of Editorial Board members. We are thankful to them for their strong support throughout the past year.

Like last year, our publisher, Taylor & Francis, is providing a complimentary year-long online subscription to authors of the paper with the most citations in 2014. This is for 'Economics of Agricultural Water Conservation: Empirical Analysis and Policy Implications' by Macarena Dagnino and Frank A. Ward, published in Volume 28, Issue 4 (2012). This award is based upon 2014 citations in Web of Science to articles published in 2012–13. We congratulate the authors for this award.

For 2015, in addition to a hopefully more achievable agenda for development, a first fully sustainable, zero carbon, zero waste city, a personal biometric scanner for online banking and a first solar aircraft circumnavigating the Earth, we at the journal will

continue to strive for excellence with the support of our readers, authors and reviewers. We are indebted to them all.

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