

Foreword

It was Leonardo da Vinci who said “water is the driver of nature”. The prophetic nature of Leonardo’s statement is becoming increasingly clear at the beginning of the 21st century. In spite of the economic and technological developments of recent decades, at the beginning of 2000, nearly one-sixth (1.1 billion) of the global population was still without access to improved water supply, and some two-fifths (2.4 billion) lacked access to improved sanitation. Less than 10 per cent of industrial and domestic wastewater produced is properly treated in the developing world. The Huang He (Yellow River) did not run to the sea for more than 220 days in 1998. Severe droughts have played havoc with hydropower generation in Brazil in 2001, as a result of which individuals and industrial concerns had to reduce their electricity consumption by 20 per cent compared with the year before. In the majority of 261 river basins that are shared by two or more countries, agreements on water sharing and/or water quality management still do not exist, thus creating the potential for future conflicts.

In addition, as the population of developing countries continues to increase in the coming decades, water requirements are likely to increase as well, unless current management practices change dramatically. Based on all the available development indicators, it is now evident that business-as-usual is simply not a viable option for water management in the future.

The world is changing rapidly, and with it the existing water management practices must change as well. The potential prospects and problems of future water issues must be objectively analysed in the light of the expected changes. Yesterday’s solutions and forecasts are often unlikely to be relevant in the coming, new, turbulent environment of the future, which is likely to include diversified interests, differing assessments, rapid technological changes, globalization and relentless economic competition. Technology, globalization and the information revolution are now collapsing borders and barriers, between countries, disciplines and various development sectors. A main challenge before the water profession during the coming decade will be how best to take advantage of these rapid advances to improve existing planning and management practices.

The Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership (CGP) believes that water is likely to be one of the critical resource issues of the 21st century. Thus, when we received a proposal for founding the Club of Tokyo from Professor Asit K. Biswas and Dr Kazuo Takahashi, with 16 of the most influential water professionals in the world, CGP endorsed the idea promptly and enthusiastically. The members of the club plan to meet in one place each year for 3–4 days in their personal capacities to review, assess, reflect upon and synergize global, regional and national water issues and problems. The club provides a forum where the members can discuss whatever issues they consider important, relevant, timely and appropriate and raise any questions and concerns that they may have. The

club itself is independent, informal and has no specific agenda or interest of its own. It has no bureaucracy or secretariat.

The first meeting of the club was held at the Japan Foundation Forum, Tokyo, 25–27 September, 2000. The second meeting will be convened in Aswan, Egypt, 5–8 November, 2001.

The Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership (CGP) was established in 1991 to enhance collaboration between Japan and the USA on global issues, through intellectual exchange, and grassroots and educational programmes. Our intellectual exchange programmes aim to address global issues of pressing concern for today and in the future and thus focus on five important fields: sustainable development; international economics; international security; civil society; and health care and ageing. We regard this Club of Tokyo to be one of the few most innovative and prominent initiatives among the many projects we are supporting.

We are delighted that the background papers prepared for the first meeting of the Club of Tokyo have now been edited for publication as a special issue of the *International Journal of Water Resources Development*. Publication of the papers in this renowned international journal will be an important step to disseminate the knowledge generated during the first meetings of the Club of Tokyo. I am confident that the water profession will find these issues interesting and stimulating.

Yoshihiko Wakumoto
Executive Director
Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership