



International Conference on Freshwater: Bonn 3 – 7 December, 2001
Water – Key to Sustainable Development
The Bonn Keys

(A synopsis document from the Facilitator)

We are convinced that we can manage water better, and that this will be a major step toward achieving sustainable development.

1. **The first key is to meet the water security needs of the poor** – for livelihoods, health and welfare, production and food security and reducing vulnerability to disasters. Pro poor water policies focus on listening to the poor about their priority water security needs. It is time now to build on the national and international commitment on drinking water with the determination also to halve the number of those who do not have access to sanitation.
2. **Decentralization is key. The local level is where national policy meets community needs.** Local authorities – if delegated the power and the means, and if supported to build their capacities - can provide for increased responsiveness and transparency in water management, and increase the participation of women and men, farmer and fisher, young and old, town and country dweller.
3. **The key to better water outreach is new partnerships.** From creating water wisdom, to cleaning up our watersheds, to reaching into communities – we need new coalitions. Energized, organized communities will find innovative solutions. An informed citizenry is the frontline against corruption. New technologies can help; so can traditional techniques and indigenous knowledge. This Bonn stakeholder dialogue is part of the process.
4. **The key to long-term harmony with nature and neighbour is cooperative arrangements at the water basin level, including across waters that touch many shores.** We need integrated water resource management to bring all water users to the information sharing and decision making tables. Although we have great difficulty

with the legal framework and the form agreements might take, there is substantial accord that we must increase cooperation within river basins, and make existing agreements more vital and valid.

5. **The essential key is stronger, better performing governance arrangements.** National water management strategies are needed now to address the fundamental responsibilities of Governments: laws, rules and standard setting; the movement from service delivery to the creator and manager of an effective legal and regulatory framework. Effective regulatory arrangements that are transparent and can be monitored are the way to effective, responsive, financially sustainable services. Within these we will welcome both improved public sector and private sector delivery arrangements.

Water is essential to our health, our spiritual needs, our comfort, our livelihoods, and our ecosystems. Yet everywhere water quality is declining, and the water stress on humanity and our ecosystems increases. More and more people live in very fragile environments. The reality of floods and droughts touches increasing numbers and many live with scarcity. We are convinced that we can act, and we must. We have the keys.