

Briefing Note

Declarations, Proclamations, and Statements on Water

Purpose

The purpose of this note is to analyze declarations, proclamations, and statements about water. Topical linkages, the evolution of thought and scope over the past 25 years are examined and critiqued. This will provide a detailed look how declarations, proclamations, and statements vary from one another and how they are similar.

Situation

In 1972 at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, the United Nations Environment Program was created to “promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development” ^[11]. The Stockholm Conference was the first to establish an international set of principles that would be the foundation of thought for water was to be perceived, managed, and the role it will play in the future. The following is a report on the main findings of eleven declarations, proclamations, and statements on the evolution of these principles since the Stockholm Conference.

1. Stockholm Conference 1972 ^[4]

- Man is both creature and molder of his environment, which gives him physical sustenance and affords him the opportunity for intellectual, moral, social, and spiritual growth. Man’s environment, the natural and man-made are essential to his well-being, enjoyment of basic human rights, and life itself.
- Support for developing governments from the UN, World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) establishing river based commissions
- Cooperative research on collection, transfer of information, enacting treaties among States to enable countries to develop their own resources
- Adoption of integrated and coordinated approach to development planning with need to protect and improve the environment for benefit of population

2. Rio Declaration on the Environment and Development 1992 ^[1]

- Adopted and building upon the 1972 Stockholm Conference
- Indigenous peoples and women have a role to play in water management
- Eliminate unsustainable patterns and cooperation among States in the spirit of global partnership
- The right to development is equitable to the needs of present and future generations
- Develop and enforce law and justice for effective water management and cooperate. Ensure liability of States for adverse effects or damages within or beyond scope of their jurisdiction

3. Dublin Statement 1992 ^[5]

- Water is a finite resource, participation based approaches, recognizing the central role of women, and water has an economic value
- Alleviate poverty and disease through adequate sanitation measures, ensure protection from natural disasters
- Water conservation, reuse, and sustainable urban development based on appropriate charges and controls
- Agricultural production and rural water for food security is vital, enabling action plans for the environment, integrated management for protecting aquatic ecosystems
- Establishing a knowledge base for measuring components of the water cycle, ensuring a capacity for building by assessing awareness and participation in water management

4. Beijing Declaration 1995 ^[7]

- Investment in programs for safe and sanitation
- Promote and sponsor women's role in water management
- Ensure access to clean water to all in China by 2000
- Restore polluted systems and rebuild damaged watersheds
- Development of information, monitoring systems, and analysis of linkages between other sectors of for sustainable development

5. Ministerial Declaration of The Hague on Water Security in the 21st Century 2000 ^[9]

- Meet basic needs access to safe and sufficient water essential to the empowerment of people, especially women, through a participatory process of water management
- Sharing water resources to promote cooperation and develop synergies between different uses of water at all levels within the case of boundary and transboundary aquifers through sustainable water management
- Managing risks by promoting security from floods, droughts, pollution and other related hazards
- Managing the value of water in a way that reflects the economic, social, environmental, and cultural uses. Pricing services to reflect the cost of provision and accounting for equity and the basic needs for the poor and vulnerable
- Ensure good governance, involving the public and interests of all the stakeholders are included in the management of water resources

6. Joint Declaration between The Department of the Interior of the United States of America and the Secretariat of Environment, Natural Resource and Fisheries of the United Mexican State to enhance cooperation if the Colorado River Delta 2000 ^[6]

- Coordinate their respective policy related to conservation of natural resources in the watershed
- Develop and exchange compatible information systems to assist policy makers, local land managers, and the general public in making informed stewardship decisions

- Coordinate with other organizations, including Federal and state agencies, water users, and non-governmental organizations
- Improve and conserve natural and cultural resources of the Colorado River Delta, including the river and associated wetlands
- Formulate programs of public participation and environmental and natural resources management training

7. Berlin Conference 2004 ^[8]

- States shall use their best efforts to integrate appropriately the management of waters with the management of other resources
- Basin States shall manage waters of an international drainage basin in an equitable and reasonable manner without causing significant harm to other basin States. Attain optimal and sustainable use between basin States with adequate protection of the waters
- Rules apply to all aquifers including isolated aquifers, those not receiving surface water. States are subject and held accountable these rules on groundwater
- Treaties for international watercourses are not to be terminated should conflict or war arise between the parties. Suspension of these treaties is valid only when it does not violate the listed provision
- Establishment of joint commissions, joint agencies, or mechanisms where appropriate to undertake integrated water resource management without prejudice

8. Bonn Declaration on Global Water Security 2004 ^[2]

- Mismanagement, overuse, and climate change pose long term threats to human well-being
- Humans achieve water security through short term and costly solutions creating long term impacts
- Struggle to secure basic environmental and social observations necessary to obtain an accurate picture of the resource
- Sustainable development requires both technological and institutional innovation. Formulating effective management lags behind technology in many regions
- Expand monitoring, train the next generation of water scientists, and stimulating innovation will be key for science based approaches to water management

9. Alicante Declaration 2006 ^[3]

- When managed properly groundwater is renewable, and its development requires smaller capital investment than surface water development with a shorter timeframe for implementation
- Poor management has adverse effects such as inadequate land use and degradation in water quality
- Develop more comprehensive water management, and understanding of groundwater rights and regulations
- Develop long term maintenance and restoration water management strategies with improved technological and scientific expertise

- Develop ongoing coordinated surface water and groundwater monitoring programs, local institutions to ensure citizens recognize groundwater's essential role in their community and the importance of its responsible use

10. Muscat Declaration of Water 2009 ^[10]

- Establish comprehensive water data, transfers of technology between States to strengthen networks and partnerships for sharing information
- Recognize and stress waters vital role for the people and the economy
- Host annual meetings to assess progress and development and promote the exchange of new ideas to improve these management endeavors
- Listen to public response and ethical concerns about regulations and policy while rising awareness
- Adopt international conventions on transboundary water sharing and adopt measures for conflict resolution

11. President Obama's Proclamation on Environmental Justice 2014 ^[12]

- Establish effective implementation of policy and regulations
- Expand economic opportunity in overburdened communities
- Recognize that communities suffer disproportionality due to climate change and localism
- Open forms of discourse among different areas associated with the environment to facilitate better management
- Include all parties in the process such as, tribes, states, activists, federal agencies, stakeholders and local leaders

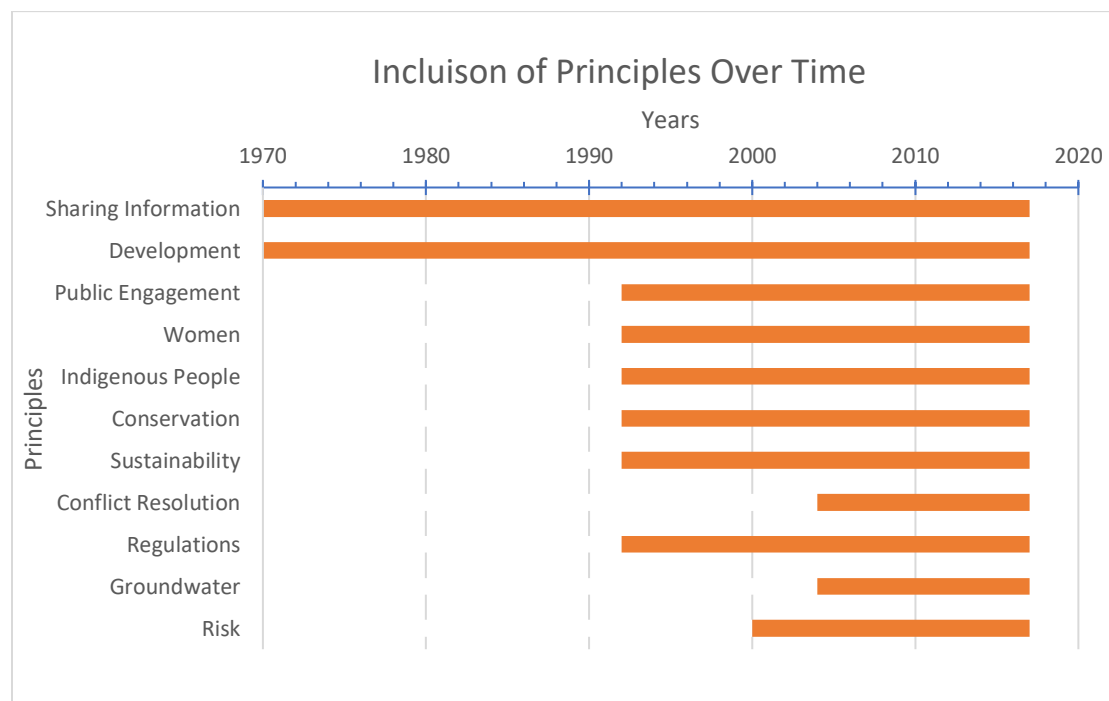
Synthesis:

The Stockholm Conference in 1972 set the foundation for what future declarations should look like and include. The conference recognized the human capacity to control nature and the role humans are likely to have in the future. It was not only essential for humans to ensure development for everyone but also that humans had the responsibility to protect the environment as well. To do this the sharing of information and cooperation were to be key components of future declarations. Since the Stockholm Conference these principles have appeared in nearly every declaration, proclamation, and statement about water and the environment. As new technology and knowledge has been developed, declarations on water have needed to adapt as well.

The Rio Conference was the twenty year follow up to the Stockholm Conference that saw influential changes to the principles of water declarations. Within in the Dublin Statement the first notion of conservation, sustainability, and public engagement appear in the principles. Climate change was beginning to be recognized on a global scale and human were influencing the Earth. As water sources around the world suffered from depletion and climate change the conference recognized that people needed to be included and educated about what is happening and what can be done. The conference recognized that indigenous peoples and women were going to play pivotal roles moving forward. Furthermore, establishing regulations and policies were necessary to hold States accountable and guarantee that the environment is protected.

Declarations that were made after the Rio Conference all made significant attempts to mimic and expand on the principles that were established. The Dublin Statement promoted food security as a sector to include with water security. The Beijing Declaration aimed to restore polluted and damaged watershed. The Joint Declaration between the United States of America and Mexico promoted preserving cultural resources along with the natural resources. Nevertheless, the next round of major changes came from The Hague Declaration in 2000 and Berlin Conference in 2004. The Hague Declaration is the first-time hazards and risk management are considered as components of sustainability. Mitigating risk was to help safeguard the infrastructure and systems that were built to maintain sustainability. It was at the Berlin Conference that groundwater was first recognized in the core principles as separate entity from surface water. While the rules regarding, groundwater were the same as surface water, States were nonetheless to be held liable if provisions were not upheld about groundwater. Additionally, war and armed conflict were also firsts to be mentioned. Depletion on grand scales was sure to impact basin States, this warranted that treaties between states were binding and not to be terminated should the involved parties come to conflict.

Despite all the changes to the initial declaration from the Stockholm Conference, principles have evolved to cover more of the geography water and its role in the environment.



Next Steps:

The next step in the evolution of declarations about water and the environment is to include resilience in the discourse and principle that govern these important statements. Additionally, resilience should be placed in more prioritized role within these documents. “Resilience is the ability of a system to absorb disturbances and still retain its basic function and structure” ^[13]. The goal of resilience thinking is similar to thinking sustainably but with some differences. Rather than just focusing on the management of the resource, “resilience thinking embraces

human and natural systems as complex systems continually adapting through cycles of change”^{13]}. To further develop this idea of resiliency in the principle, it is important to understanding that systems can change while maintaining their functionality.

Resilient systems have important values that mirror how water management already works, while expanding on existing knowledge. With resilient thinking, diversity, ecological variability, modularity, and ecosystem services are some key aspects that expand the current thinking. Diversity in resilient thinking means encouraging different forms of land use and resources with the water management systems. Ecological variability works to embrace and work with the socio-ecological system rather than attempting to control or reduce the system. Looking at the complete system as a series of modular components that do not necessarily need to be connected to everything. This can create systems that are highly susceptible to shocks as they rapidly transmit throughout the system hitting all connected components. Finally, recognizing that the ecosystem already provides a variety of services for free. This helps mitigate the need to lavishly spend on management systems and brings to light often unrecognized systems that are only appreciated when they are lost.

By adopting resilience into the nomenclature of declarations on water ideas such as sustainability and conservation connect better with the water management process. This will help guarantee the strides that human have already taken will not be lost, but rather last through the present and future generations.

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