Politics and practice connect around water as a key to action on climate and the SDG

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The International Water Association's World Water Congress & Exhibition, underway in Copenhagen, Denmark, hosted a High-Level Summit, connecting leading figures from the water sector with government and city politicians from Copenhagen (Denmark), Freetown (Sierra Leone) and Tshwane (South Africa) around the theme of water as a key to action on climate and the Sustainable Development Goals. The Summit was organised by the International Water Association, the Danish Water and Wastewater Association (DANVA), the Municipality of Copenhagen, P4G and the Confederation of Danish Industry, in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment of Denmark and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.Â

As the leading global water sector membership organisation, IWA's Congresses bring together water sector representatives and showcase excellence in research and practice. The 2022 edition is the largest IWA Congress to date. This year it also featured a High-Level Summit for the first time, adding a political dimension that covered three topics: finance, governance, and partnerships. These are crucial elements in addressing water challenges and delivering change on the ground to improve lives and protect the environment. The Summit, whose delivery was led by DANVA, was held in the context of the overall theme of the Congress: "Water for Smart Liveable Cities".Â "Cities are ideally placed to contribute much-needed action both on the climate change agenda beyond COP26 and on implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The IWA Summit has provided an ideal opportunity to focus on water in advance of COP27, and of the March 2023 UN review of the Water Action Decade,"Â said Tom Mollenkopf, IWA President. The Summit included Ministerial contributions from India and South Africa, and contributions from cities. Joakim Harlin, Director of the Freshwater Ecosystems Unit, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), set the tone for the Summit with a call to action.Â "We cannot afford to wait. The time to act is now. Policymakers must put water at the heart of action plans, and everyone has a role to play. Business as usual is not an option if we are to achieve the SDGs and climate targets. We have an opportunity to start here and now, today!" "The water sector has a lot to offer to meet the global climate and sustainability goals. We have learned today that we need to work together not only in partnerships, but in transformative partnerships based on trust and transparency. This must be supported by governments and municipalities. The presence of the policy and decision-makers today contributed to building a common sense of urgency for action, which applies to both politicians and water specialists,"Â commented Carl-Emil Larsen, CEO of DANVA, which led delivery of the Summit.Â "We need to approach water as a key action point for addressing climate challenges and as a key enabler for a sustainable future. The IWA High-Level Summit today is an important setting to get the conversation going. However, it is vitally important these conversations lead to practical partnerships where our collective knowledge leads to tangible actions,"Â added Poul Due Jensen, CEO, Grundfos, a solutions provider.

With the COP27 and 2023 UN review of the Water Action Decade meetings taking place next year, the messages of the Summit will be gathered together and released to provide a reference point on the opportunities to connect practical options. Key messages and calls to action from the High Level Summit: Water solutions are of fundamental importance for our future: resilient solutions are urgently needed; Freshwater ecosystems are a critical part of the puzzle - these need to be factored in as part of the solution; Joint efforts and partnership are required to accelerate action and make a difference.

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