



Bled  
Strategic  
Forum  
2016

5 – 6 Sep 2016  
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## **Panel Discussion** **WATER RISKS IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES**

Impairments to availability and access to a water supply can pose the most serious threats to peace, security and sustainable development. Water scarcity directly affects the lives of millions. It is also closely linked with many other challenges, such as food and energy security, climate change adaptation and mitigation, health, population growth, as well as migration. Indeed, in 2016, the World Economic Forum recognised that water crises will be the principal global risk of the greatest concern in the next decade.

Many trends highlight the importance of a comprehensive awareness of water-related risks. The sheer volume of people affected is a case in point. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation, by 2025, 1.8 billion people will be living in countries or regions with absolute water scarcity, and two-thirds of the world's population could be in stress conditions. UN Water estimates suggest that with current practices, the world will face a 40% shortfall between forecast demand and supply by 2030. Climate change will continue to affect such trends, while also increasing the volatility and unpredictability of water stress.

The future water security outlook will depend on our ability to successfully tackle many key global challenges that affect it, such as climate change and the sustainability of development. In a large part, it will also be determined by our capacity to effectively manage and protect shared and transboundary water resources.

Not addressing these issues could further increase our vulnerability to water shortages, low water quality or floods, while also increasing the potentially damaging impact of water scarcity. In the growing complexity of global security, water could also be seen as an instrument for furthering extremists' objectives. At present in Iraq, due to the Daesh occupation of Mosul, the collapse of Mosul dam could kill half a million people within a few hours.

The importance of adequate preparedness and long-term sustainable solutions for such water related challenges cannot be understated. Many positive examples already exist, particularly of transboundary water cooperation. Designing resilient policies and structures that reflect the cross cutting role of water could enable sustainable development and ensure security if fuelled by political will at all levels. Finding ways to shift the view of water as a global threat to an instrument of peace and sustainable development would be a vital factor in this regard.

## QUESTIONS

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- How are current trends in water security linked to other key global challenges, such as climate change and migration, as well as to achieving sustainable development? What implications will such trends have for this dynamic in the future?
- How should the global governance architecture be designed to effectively address these trends? What measures at national, regional and global level could be taken to increase water security in the long run?
- Can water be turned from a source of potential conflict into an instrument of cooperation and peace? How can this be achieved?