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## **New Push to Integrate Global Water Policies Would Divert Energy and Agriculture from Collision Course**

*Current and future solutions to the conflicts over the use of water resources discussed by public and private sector experts*

**MARSEILLES, FRANCE** (12 MARCH)—As food and energy production intensify around the world, their demands on dwindling water resources have prompted the search for an innovative and collaborative solution. On Friday, March 16, a High Level Panel convened by the [EDF Group](#) and the [CGIAR Challenge Program on Water and Food \(CPWF\)](#) will gather in Marseilles at the Sixth World Water Forum (WWF6) to share experiences and results.

The panel will discuss how to embrace a “nexus” approach to water management, in which projects that tap water resources are planned and executed with input from stakeholders in the food, water and energy sectors. A key goal of the panel is to insert this approach into the agenda of the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development that will be held in June 2012.

“We live in a world today where all too often development policies seem almost perfectly designed to produce conflict between multiple sectors, particularly energy and agriculture, over water resources,” said Alain Vidal, Director of CPWF, which is part of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

Uschi Eid, Vice Chair of the United Nations Secretary General’s Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation, will open the panel. Other participants include:

- Alain Vidal, Director of CPWF;
- Gérard Wolf, Senior Executive Vice President, International Development, EDF Group, one of the world’s largest electricity companies with 640 dams worldwide;
- Yasar Yakis, Turkey’s former Minister of Foreign Affairs;
- Ogunlade Davidson, Sierra Leone’s Foreign Minister of Energy and Water Resources;
- Jane Madgwick, CEO of Wetlands International;
- Gustavo Francisco Petro Urrego, Mayor of Bogota, Colombia; and
- Anil B .Jain, Managing Director (CEO) of Jain Irrigation Systems, based in India.

The EDF – CPWF High Level Panel’s work is driven by the problems and tensions that emerge when officials in both the public and private sectors fail to consider how water management decisions simultaneously affect energy, drinking water and food production.

These complementary, but often clashing areas of interest were the subject of last year’s Bonn2011 Nexus Conference and are expected to be prominent at the 2012 World Water Week in Stockholm this fall. The concern among many water experts is that the nexus approach to water management is rarely applied today, and that increases the likelihood of water-related conflicts, particularly as economic development accelerates in rapidly changing areas of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Vidal noted that with 1.1 billion poor people lacking access to safe water, 1 billion undernourished and 1.5 billion lacking electricity, demand for water resources for multiple uses will rise dramatically over the next decades.

“The world is now a very different place because addressing insecurities related to food, energy and water –particularly in the world’s least developed countries—is now at the forefront of development strategies around the globe,” Vidal said. “We know that in the next decade hundreds of dams are going to be built and the question is, how can we ensure that before the projects begin all of the potential beneficiaries sit down together and discuss the purpose of the dam and the pros and cons of various approaches?”

Laos, for example, is facing criticism that without a nexus perspective, efforts by the energy sector to build dams in the Mekong basin to become the “battery of Asia” could damage fish-dependent communities in the region and exacerbate the existing problem of saltwater intruding into farmlands in Vietnam.

The severity of last year’s floods in Thailand and elsewhere in Southeast Asia has raised fresh concern about the way water flows are controlled in the region. There are questions about whether water management decisions in the region’s network of dams intensified the flooding of agriculture lands—though there are also policies in Thailand for compensating farmers who lose their crops to flooding that could inform the broader nexus discussion.

The Panel will also examine India’s effort to expand drip irrigation projects as it confronts the daunting disparity between available water resources and future food, energy, clean water and economic development needs. A 2005 World Bank report warned that by 2050, absent a more focused and coordinated water management strategy, India’s various water demands will exceed “all sources of supply.”

Vidal said there is evidence that recognizing the multiple demands on water resources can lead to innovative efforts aimed at cooperation. For example, at the World Water Forum, the High Level Panel will examine a case study of the Andean region where numerous clashes between various sectors vying for the water resources in the Machángara River Basin prompted the creation of the Machángara River Basin Council, (the *Consejo de la Cuenca del río Machángara* or CCRM).

The council’s membership includes the regional water and sewerage authority, the irrigation management agency, the main electric power utility, the national water secretariat, the Ministry of Environment (which protects the forests that cover much of the basin) and small-scale farmers from the area. They are working together to facilitate cooperation among all of the water

users in the basin for sustainable development that increases the water, food and energy productivity while also protecting the ecosystem's services.

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**The CGIAR Challenge Program on Water and Food (CPWF)** was launched in 2002 as a reform initiative of the CGIAR. The CPWF aims to increase the resilience of social and ecological systems through better water management for food production (crops, fisheries and livestock). The CPWF does this through an innovative research and development approach that brings together a broad range of scientists, development specialists, policymakers and communities to address the challenges of food security, poverty and water scarcity. The CPWF is currently working in six river basins globally: Andes, Ganges, Limpopo, Mekong, Nile and Volta ([www.waterandfood.org](http://www.waterandfood.org)).

CPWF is part of the CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems. The Water, Land and Ecosystems Research Program of the CGIAR is a ten year commitment to bring about a radical transformation in the way land, water and natural systems are managed. The Water, Land and Ecosystems Research Program is led by the International Water Management Institute (<http://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/CRP5/index.aspx>)