WaterAid Bangladesh and Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh unite at Regional Climate Summit 2023

Discussions on urban resilience and sustainability underline 5 key areas

[Dhaka, 9 September 2023] WaterAid Bangladesh, in collaboration with the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh, took the stage at the esteemed ‘Regional Climate Summit 2023’ to address crucial concerns centering on water and waste management in the country. Under the theme – ‘Water and Waste: Strengthening Local Governance for Urban Resilience and Sustainability,’ the session served as a pivotal platform for insightful discussions and meaningful dialogue among industry experts and key stakeholders.

The session which is a part of the Regional Climate Summit 2023, hosted at the Sheraton Dhaka held in the Sheraton Dhaka and organised by Climate Parliament Bangladesh on 8 September 2023, witnessed the graceful presence of Mr. Md Tazul Islam, MP, Honourable Minister, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives. The Minister shared profound insights into the prevailing state of water and waste management in Bangladesh and emphasised the necessity for collaborative endeavours to combat these challenges. Other notable speakers included – Ms. Agatha Sangma, MP, Member of Climate Parliament India; Mr. Madhav Sapkota, MP, Member of Climate Parliament Nepal; Ms. Corinne Henchoz Pignani, Deputy Head of Cooperation, Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh; and Ms. Hasin Jahan, Country Director, WaterAid Bangladesh. The session was moderated by Mr Tanvir Shakil Joy MP.

The summit provided an ideal stage for the experts to delve into critical steps aimed at reinforcing local governance in the pursuit of climate-resilient sustainable development. The key measures underlined during the session include – empowering local governance; enhancing community engagement; adoption of innovation and technology; fostering collaboration and partnerships; and formulation and implementation of netter policies and regulations.

Md. Tazul Islam, MP, Hon’ble Minister, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (MoLGRD&C) said “…Water supply is the mandate of this ministry [MoLGRD&C]. Waste management also belongs to this ministry [MoLGRD&C]. After taking charge in 2019, I traveled internationally to observe how developed nations mitigate the problems of water and waste management. I reached a consensus to deploy waste incinerators to produce electricity. Because Bangladesh is a densely populated country, it is easy to deploy. We have developed a proposal which has been approved by the hon’able Prime Minister. To make this work, we will invite foreign investors to make incinerator plants using their own funds. Once they setup and start to produce electricity, the government will buy that electricity. Select city corporations will supply 3,000 to 4,000 tons of waste every day which would increase in the future; and soon, we will can decide to expand these incinerator plants across the country…If we want to mitigate problems of the common people, we have to double-up the capacity and potential of the people, the local government. This includes the local leaders, union parishad, city corporation, upazilla parishad, and zilla parishad. We can solve any challenges once we can make local leaders accountable, transparent, build up their capacity and drive collective actions…”
Corinne Henchoz Pignani, Deputy Head of Cooperation, Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh, reflected the same idea, saying “We believe that the most efficient way of addressing issues is where the people are concerned. We engage in Bangladesh by working at local level. We engage with local government institution, citizens, civil societies, and grassroots organisations. What is very important from the Swiss perspective on water and waste management model is the engagement of the private sector. Switzerland at the global level had been vocal about the role of the private sector in agenda 2030. In regards to waste management, there is also a business case to make. That is the way we are going to tackle climate change through impact investing and community sensitisation – working with all stakeholder concerned.”

WaterAid Bangladesh’s Country Director Hasin Jahan said, “The most critical impact of climate change is water and sanitation. Earlier, disaster used to come every 10 years, 15 years, 50 years. After suffering from a disaster, people used to have time to rebuild and recover. However, due to climate change, the cyclones, the droughts, the floods, come in every alternative year, or even, every year. The poor people suffering from these natural disasters do not have adequate time to recover. This is why resilience is required. If an infrastructure can be made resilient in the early stage by investing a bit more funding, it will make the infrastructure withstand climatic disasters. We have already done that for WASH infrastructures and we estimated through a global study, we found that $1 investment gives a return of $5. People resilience is also required such as building resilience in women group so that they can operate innovative and climate-adaptive water infrastructures like reverse osmosis plants. This helps them to earn a livelihood as they sell water from the plants – becoming self-sustaining water entrepreneurs.”

It is notable that with support of the Embassy of Switzerland, and in partnership with Swisscontact, WaterAid Bangladesh is working to strengthen local democracy and improve equitable climate-resilient basic public service provision in the water and solid waste management sectors – duly under the flagship GO4IMPact project. Apart from optimising water and waste governance, the project aims to empower citizens at the local level - in particular women, poor, youth and socially excluded groups - and the private sector actors engage more effectively with local government institutions and local public service providers for more accountable, equitable, and impartial climate resilient basic public service provision related to water and solid waste management.

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About WaterAid

WaterAid is working to make clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene normal for everyone, everywhere. The international not-for-profit organisation works in 28 countries to change the lives of the poorest and most marginalised people.

For more information, please reach out to:
Fayazuddin Ahmad
Advocacy & Campaign Lead, WaterAid Bangladesh
Email: fayazuddinahmad@wateraid.org