

CUTS WEBINAR- World Water Day 2022

Theme: Groundwater – Making the Invisible Visible

Speaking Note for Pradeep S. Mehta, SG, CUTS International

- World Water Day falls on 22nd March every year and this year the theme is "Groundwater, Making the Invisible Visible". World Water Day raises awareness of the 2.2 billion people living without access to safe water. It is about taking action to tackle the global water crisis. A core focus of World Water Day is to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6: water and sanitation for all by 2030.
- According to the UN World Water Development Report (WWDR) 2022, Groundwater accounts for 99% of liquid freshwater on Earth, it has the potential to provide societies with tremendous social, economic and environmental benefits and opportunities.
- Indeed, nearly 50% of the world's urban population depends on underground water sources. Yet more and more aquifers are being polluted, overexploited, and dried up by humans, sometimes with irreversible consequences. Moreover, many decisionmakers in the water field lack a clear notion of groundwater, despite its essential role in the water cycle.
- Asia-Pacific region is the largest groundwater abstractor in the world, containing seven out of the ten countries that extract most groundwater (Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey). These countries alone account for roughly 60% of the world's total groundwater

withdrawal. India uses 89% of total annual ground water extraction for irrigation use.

- In June 2018, NITI Aayog report titled “Composite Water Management Index” mentioned that India is undergoing the worst water crisis in its history and nearly 600 million people are facing high to extreme water stress. The report further mentions that India is placed at 120th amongst 122 countries in the water quality index, with nearly 70% of water being contaminated.
- Recently (In November 2021), an analysis of water level data done by the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB), Government of India indicates that about 33% of the wells monitored have registered decline in ground water levels in the range of 0 to 2 metres. Moreover, a decline of more than 4.0 m has also been observed in a few pockets of metro cities like New Delhi, Chennai, Indore, Madurai, Vijayawada, Ghaziabad, Kanpur, and Lucknow, etc.
- Since, groundwater is an essential component of water supply and sanitation to groundwater protection and aquifer recharge. Improving the way, we use and manage groundwater is an urgent priority if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.
- It is essential that all the stakeholders commit themselves to developing an adequate and effective framework for groundwater governance. There is need to focus on water conservation and adopt appropriate measures to make ground water conservation a mass movement.
- Thank you.