

Foreword

Few issues matter more to public health, economic opportunity, and environmental integrity than the availability of clean water and sanitation. With the 4th World Water Forum scheduled for Mexico City in March 2006, the Aspen Institute and the Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions at Duke University conducted a multi-stakeholder dialogue to help highlight the importance of global water issues, suggest steps to provide services more rapidly and effectively, and to identify and draw attention to constructive ways the US government and other US participants can take part in the Forum.

In April 2005 a distinguished group of leaders from business, government, and environmental and other non-governmental organizations met for two and a half days at the Aspen Institute's Wye River Conference Center to learn from each other, to explore the sometimes competing values underlying policy disagreements, and to consider appropriate responses to the challenges identified. Their expertise was matched by their commitment to discover and implement solutions to the world's water challenge. This report is a summary of their conclusions.

We were honored to have as our distinguished co-chairs Ambassador Harriet C. Babbitt, Senior Vice President of Hunt Alternatives Fund and former Deputy Administrator of the Agency for International Development, and William K. Reilly, Founding Partner of Aqua International Partners and former Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. Their varied and complementary

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experiences – in development and the environment, in the public and private sectors, in Administrations of both political parties – and their ability to explore details while framing the issues broadly allowed them to extract and focus the wisdom of an extremely knowledgeable group.

The co-chairs' overview and conclusions constitute the body of this report. While the richness of the dialogue cannot be recreated, their essay summarizes their sense of the group's principal conclusions and insights. The findings and recommendations are based on the group's agreement in the concluding session of the meeting, but participants were not asked to agree with their final wording, and no person's participation should be assumed to imply his or her organization's endorsement of any specific finding or recommendation.

We appreciate the encouragement of the Mexican organizers of the 2006 World Water Forum in the conception and organizing of the meeting and their receptivity to our findings. We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Mark Van Putten of *ConservationStrategy*[™] and Gordon Binder of Aqua International Partners in planning and preparing for the meeting, and the grace and efficiency with which Katrin Thomas handled advance arrangements and managed the details of the meeting.

We are also grateful to the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Wallace Genetic Foundation, Procter & Gamble, Coca Cola, American Water, Dow Chemical, and CH2M-Hill for their financial assistance. Without their generosity and confidence in our work, the meeting could not have taken place.

The mission of the Aspen Institute is to foster enlightened leadership and open-minded dialogue. Through seminars, policy programs, conferences and leadership development initiatives, the Institute and its international partners seek to promote nonpartisan inquiry and an appreciation for timeless values. Its Program on Energy, the Environment and the Economy brings together in a neutral forum individuals from government, industry, environmental and other public interest groups, and the academic world to improve policy making through dialogue on current and future energy and environmental issues.

The Nicholas Institute is a new and innovative environmental science and policy institute designed to fill the need of policymakers, businesses, and organizations for unbiased data and dialogue about the important environmental questions facing the world. The Institute will marshal the broad resources of the Duke University community – including the Nicholas School of the Environment and Earth Sciences, the nationally ranked Fuqua School of Business, and the Duke Law School – and the expertise of university partners in industry, government, and environmental organizations to craft innovative and practical solutions to critical and inevitable environmental challenges.

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