Meeting Notes

- We held our April meeting at 1 PM GMT on April 5th, 2022.

- There were 25 contributors in attendance.

- We began the meeting with some **administrative updates**.

    o Asana invites have been issued. Among the first tasks in the Asana list, you will find the Contributor Agreement, the Contributor Survey, and the Chapter Survey.

    o **Contributor Agreement**: We have sent out contributor agreements via SignRequest. The contributor agreement outlines the terms of copyright, word count, etc. Each author/co-author signs one per chapter. *Please let us know if you did not receive one.*

    o **Contributor Survey**: This is an online form where you will be asked to provide details such as a 1-sentence biography, an address, an ORCID, etc. This survey only needs to be filled out once per author, no matter how many chapters you are co-authoring.

        ▪ The survey is available here: https://forms.gle/3jw2LKCEYDeVXUSF9

    o **Chapter Survey**: This is an online form where you will be asked to provide details on your chapter, such as an abstract, a final title, and the desired number of figures. This only needs to be completed once per chapter, so the lead author of the chapter should fill it out.

        ▪ The survey is available here: https://forms.gle/Gd4tZ99JfeXhWeQp8

- After the administrative updates, Martina Klimes moderated a **panel conversation** about the process of water diplomacy with three Handbook contributors: Antje Herrberg (author of the chapter on *The Process of Water Diplomacy)*, Paolo Lembo (co-author of the chapter on *Why Diplomacy?)*, and Saule Ospanova (co-author of the chapter on *Institutionalizing Progress)*.

Panel Summary

What types of actors contribute to the Water Diplomacy process?

o Managing the process of water diplomacy is complicated by the diverse backgrounds and interests of the actors involved. Technical and policy experts from numerous sectors must be brought into dialogue with diverse stakeholder groups and political entities with specific interests of their own. Technical expertise and political interests often collide.

o The proper composition of stakeholder groups requires a profoundly local consideration. However, there will often be a mix of public, private, and non-governmental entities. For example, in the case of agriculture, there may be state-sponsored entities with a mandate to increase yields, private entities representing the corporate interests of industrial agriculture, and NGOs representing the interests of smallholder farming. There are often academic and research groups who may be engaged for their technical expertise or conduct third-party studies or analyses.

o Stakeholder selection is a necessary but difficult process that requires historical analysis and a deep understanding of the problem context, including regular conflict analysis. It is crucial to recognize those with the power to spoil the process and pay particular attention to whether and how to include (or exclude) them. However, one must be aware that excluding potentially disruptive groups may pose a greater threat to the process and the stability of the outcome. Process design, therefore, is key.

o Given the number of stakeholder groups involved, the importance of time -sequencing is critical to the process of bringing in different groups of water diplomacy. Careful consideration must be given to the most appropriate time to bring different actors (for example, when to bring in technical experts to resolve a factual dispute is different than when to use a facilitation process to address a value dispute) into the process.

o Initiating an informal process around the main political negotiation table may be more effective for highly contested water disputes. Informal processes can transform into formal processes over time or feed into a formal process. Informal processes have the potential to create a 'safe space' to discuss sensitive topics and build shared understanding prior to the initiation of formal dialogue.

What do we need to think about when creating an enabling environment for Water Diplomacy?

o An enabling environment often requires (1) a true mandate for the parties to negotiate; (2) a willingness to provide a safe space for open dialogue and information sharing (3) as well as a mechanism for institutionalizing the process to ensure its safety and continuity.

o Again, sequencing the process is important. Once you have the mandate to negotiate, you need to think about when and how to introduce things like technical expertise and monetary mechanisms into the conversation. You may decide to start by creating working groups on specific technical or monetary issues rather than bringing all actors into the main dialogue process directly.

o Throughout the process, it is critical to find ways to (re-)engage reluctant governments, re-build political will, and make sure that there is adequate technical expertise to answer the questions being raised. Building and maintaining the process also requires financing the process and securing the commitments from decision-makers and sponsors.

o As for any mediation process, ignorance and arrogance are major hurdles in establishing enabling environments for water diplomacy. Negotiators and diplomats often rely too much on the general lessons from their previous experience and fail to pay enough attention to the unique context before them. Thus listening to those experts and stakeholders who have been immersed in the situation is key prior to sitting at the table. In this regard, diplomats will be best positioned when they are supported by a team that can supply them with the requisite information on the technical, political, and social context and, very importantly, a team with access to the right networks. Negotiators and diplomats should adopt an attitude that demonstrates respect and patience for the process – water diplomacy processes often develop over long time horizons, unlike typical peace negotiations that regard ceasefire, truce, or power-sharing arrangements.

   o Finally, every water diplomacy initiative needs to be understood as an adaptive process in a changing environment. The process can be strengthened through the early design of institutional mechanisms for reconvening and revisiting agreements in the face of change.