



# **United Nations System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation**

Advance version

May 2024

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# Summary

The United Nations System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation (SWS) unites the United Nations system's work towards a world with accessible, available and sustainably managed water and sanitation for all people and the planet. It provides a system-wide approach for United Nations entities to work collaboratively on water and sanitation – not as a sector in a “silo”, but holistically to address the interrelated cross-sectoral aspects of water and sanitation.

The goal of this SWS is to enhance United Nations system-wide coordination and delivery of water and sanitation priorities in support of countries to accelerate progress on national plans and priorities, internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, realization of human rights, and transformative solutions to current and future challenges for the benefit of all people and the planet. Its aim is to fully operationalize inter-agency coordination, capitalize on reforms of the United Nations development system, and leverage upscaled water and sanitation action of United Nations entities to provide more strategic, effective, coherent and efficient support to Member States.

Through five entry points for collaborative action, this SWS adds value to the United Nations system's work on water and sanitation by: strengthening collective leadership, enhancing demand-driven support to countries, improving policy coherence, accelerating progress and transformative change through five Sustainable Development Goal 6 global accelerators (financing, data and information, capacity development, innovation and governance) and strengthening accountability for progress through joint review and learning.

In September 2023, Member States adopted General Assembly resolution [77/334](#), which requested the Secretary-General to present a United Nations System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation in consultation with Member States before the end of the seventy-eighth session. The SWS has been developed by UN-Water, the United Nations' inter-agency coordination mechanism for water and sanitation, under the leadership of the UN-Water Chair, as requested by the Secretary-General. The SWS was approved by the High-Level Committee on Programmes during its forty-seventh session and endorsed by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination during its first regular session of 2024.



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# I. Context

- 1 At the midpoint of the United Nations Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda),<sup>1</sup> the world is not on track to achieve water-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets at the global level by 2030.<sup>2</sup> Progress on SDG 6, to “ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”, continues to be well below the pace needed to meet the targets by 2030, for all eight targets.<sup>3</sup> In some regions and countries, for some indicators, progress on SDG 6 is stagnant or even relapsing.<sup>4</sup> Billions of people still lack access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene, despite improvements in the provision of those basic services. Water scarcity is a growing problem in many parts of the world, and conflicts and climate change are exacerbating the issue.<sup>5</sup> In addition, water pollution is a significant challenge that affects human health and the environment in many countries.<sup>6</sup> Achieving universal coverage by 2030 will require a sixfold increase in current global rates of progress on drinking water, a fivefold increase for sanitation and a threefold increase for hygiene.<sup>7</sup>
- 2 Water and sanitation challenges are amplifying.<sup>8</sup> Many impacts of climate change are felt through water, for example: more intense and frequent droughts, more extreme flooding, more erratic seasonal rainfall and accelerated melting of glaciers. Current levels of groundwater use are unprecedented.<sup>9</sup> Aquifer degradation from overexploitation, pollution, salination and subsidence hinders safe water access and economic development in many regions.<sup>10</sup> Coastal and inland wetlands are experiencing ongoing loss, with more than 80 per cent of wetlands estimated to have been lost since the pre-industrial era.<sup>11</sup> In addition, scientific evidence indicates the Earth’s water cycle is changing.<sup>12</sup> Human activities such as unsustainable land management and ecosystem degradation further aggravate the “global water crisis”.<sup>13</sup> These global trends have cascading effects on economies, ecosystems, biodiversity and societies. With the growing complexity and intensity of risks on the horizon, lack of progress on water and sanitation threatens hard-won development gains, human rights and peace. It also disproportionately negatively affects women and girls, and forcibly displaced, disaster displaced or stateless migrants and other populations in vulnerable situations.
- 3 Consequently, there is not only a need to accelerate progress, but it is also necessary to make transformative changes in the way water and sanitation are perceived, valued, understood, used and managed. These changes cannot be brought about by the water and sanitation sectors alone, or through “siloes” approaches. Instead, collective, cross-sectoral leadership will be needed to provide integrated, innovative solutions that leverage synergies and manage trade-offs across sectors. The availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation are an essential solution to: tackling pressing global challenges such as extreme poverty, food insecurity, gender inequality, disease and disaster; contributing to sustaining peace; and

1 Resolution [70/1](#).

2 Resolution [77/334](#).

3 UN-Water, *Blueprint for Acceleration: Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023* (Geneva, United Nations, 2023); United Nations, *Sustainable Development Goals Progress Chart 2023* (2023).

4 UN-Water, *Blueprint for Acceleration: Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023* (Geneva, United Nations, 2023). For latest global-, regional- and country-level data, see the [UN-Water SDG 6 Data Portal](#).

5 [A/78/80-E/2023/64](#), para. 34.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Annex II summarizes the global situation on water and sanitation and SDG 6.

9 United Nations, *The United Nations World Water Development Report 2022: Groundwater: Making the Invisible Visible* (Paris, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2022); UN-Water, *UN-Water Joint Message and Call for Action Groundwater: The Invisible Resource for Sustainable Development* (Geneva, United Nations, 2022).

10 Ibid.

11 United Nations Environment Programme, *Progress on Integrated Water Resources Management: Global Indicator 6.5.1 Updates and Acceleration Needs* (Nairobi, 2021).

12 Richard P. Allan and others, “Advances in understanding large-scale responses of the water cycle to climate change”, *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, vol. 1472, 49–75; Albert Van Dijk and others, *Global Water Monitor: 2022 Summary Report* (Global Water Monitor Consortium, 2022).

13 Resolution [78/1](#), para. 38(f).

building resilient services and societies. Water and sanitation interlink the three dimensions of sustainable development – social, economic and environmental<sup>14</sup> – and are human rights.<sup>15</sup> Also, water and sanitation underpin the six key “transitions” that can have catalytic and multiplier effects across the SDGs including for food systems, energy access and affordability, digital connectivity, education, jobs and social protection, and climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.<sup>16</sup>

- 4 UN-Water is the United Nations system’s inter-agency coordination mechanism for water and sanitation issues.<sup>17</sup> As a response to the slow pace of progress on SDG 6, UN-Water developed the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework<sup>18</sup> as a unifying initiative to deliver fast results at an increased scale, contributing to the United Nations Secretary-General’s Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs by 2030. It was noted by the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) in May 2020 and launched by the Secretary-General during the 2020 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). The SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework focuses on five “accelerators” of progress: financing, data and information, capacity development, innovation and governance.
- 5 Several key milestones in 2023 shaped the context for the United Nations System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation (SWS) such as the UN 2023 Water Conference<sup>19</sup> and the over 830 voluntary commitments in the Water Action Agenda,<sup>20</sup> the in-depth review of SDG 6 at the 2023 HLPF,<sup>21</sup> the latest UN-Water SDG 6 Synthesis Report,<sup>22</sup> and the subsequent

recognition of water in the HLPF political declaration convened under the auspices of the General Assembly,<sup>23</sup> in which Member States committed to “address water scarcity and stress and drive transformation from a global water crisis to a world where water is a sustainable resource, ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”. In addition, Member States adopted resolution [77/334](#) that requests the Secretary-General to present a United Nations System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation in consultation with Member States before the end of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly (see the box).

14 UN-Water, *Water and Sanitation Interlinkages Across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Analytical Brief (Geneva, United Nations, 2016).

15 Resolution [64/292](#), which gave explicit recognition of these rights. Since then, some subsequent resolutions adopted by the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly gave further affirmation and clarified the human rights to water and sanitation, most recently resolution [78/206](#).

16 United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), *Six Transitions: Investment Pathways to Deliver the SDGs* (2023).

17 UN-Water, *UN-Water – United Nations’ Inter-agency Coordination Mechanism for Water and Sanitation* (2019).

18 UN-Water, *SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework* (2020).

19 United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028; 22–24 March 2023, New York.

20 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), *Water Action Agenda* (2023).

21 [E/HLPF/2023/7](#).

22 UN-Water, *Blueprint for Acceleration: Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023* (Geneva, United Nations, 2023).

23 Resolution [78/1](#).



## Mandate for the United Nations System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation

The General Assembly requests the Secretary-General to present a United Nations System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation in consultation with Member States before the end of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, in order to enhance the coordination and delivery of water priorities across the United Nations system, and in this context to place particular emphasis on the water-related needs of the developing countries, including those related to finance, technology transfer and capacity-building, and also requests the Secretary-General to provide adequate support, within existing resources, to the United Nations System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation.

*Source:* Resolution [77/334](#), para. 5.



## **II. Purpose and scope**

- 6 This SWS therefore responds to the mandate provided in resolution [77/334](#) (see the box). UN-Water developed it,<sup>24</sup> under the leadership of the UN-Water Chair, as requested by the Secretary-General. The process for the development of the strategy included technical briefings and meetings and consultations with: United Nations entities at global, regional and country levels; Member States; and UN-Water Partners (intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and stakeholders). Annex III provides further information on the strategy development process.
- 7 The goal of this SWS is to enhance United Nations system-wide coordination and delivery of water and sanitation priorities in support of countries to accelerate progress on national plans and priorities, internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, realization of human rights, and transformative solutions to current and future water and sanitation challenges for the benefit of all people and the planet. Its aim is to fully operationalize inter-agency coordination, capitalize on reforms of the United Nations Development System (UNDS), and leverage upscaled water and sanitation action of United Nations entities to provide more strategic, effective, coherent and efficient support to Member States.
- 8 The SWS expresses the common United Nations system’s vision for a world with accessible, available and sustainably managed water and sanitation for all people and the planet. Through the strategy, United Nations entities individually and collectively have committed to raise the level of ambition and step up efforts to collaborate effectively on water and sanitation, drawing on all the assets, expertise, skills and capacities of the United Nations system.
- The intention is to work on water and sanitation not as another sector in a silo, but as one United Nations system, acting holistically to address the interrelated cross-sectoral aspects of water and sanitation as a driver for sustainable development, human rights and peace.
- 9 The scope of this SWS encompasses all freshwater-related matters, including sanitation. It includes surface water and groundwater resources, the interface between freshwater and seawater, and freshwater resources in terms of quality and quantity, development, assessment, sustainable management, monitoring and use (including, for example, domestic uses, agriculture and the interface with soil, and ecosystem requirements). It also includes the sanitation cycle (access to and use of sanitation by populations, the interactions between sanitation and freshwater, and the safe treatment of waste for reuse, including circular economy aspects), disaster risk, emergencies, and climate-related water and sanitation challenges.
- 10 The focus of this SWS is on sustainable development, notably on SDG 6 and the interlinkages of water and sanitation across the 2030 Agenda. The strategy places emphasis on the water and sanitation needs of developing countries, notably least developed countries (LDCs), small island developing States (SIDS), landlocked LDCs (LLDCs) and countries with other special circumstances in accordance with resolution [77/334](#). It follows orientations from Member States in resolution [75/233](#), the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, recognizing “the positive role that sustainable development can play in mitigating drivers of conflicts, disaster

24 UN-Water comprises Members representing United Nations entities and Partners representing non-United Nations system actors. The 36 United Nations entities are UN-Water Members, as of 12 March 2024: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; International Atomic Energy Agency; International Fund for Agricultural Development; International Labour Organization; International Organization for Migration; International Telecommunication Union; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity; Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; United Nations Capital Development Fund; United Nations Children’s Fund; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs; United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Economic Commission for Africa; United Nations Economic Commission for Europe; United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; United Nations Environment Programme; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; United Nations Human Settlements Programme; United Nations Industrial Development Organization; United Nations Institute for Training and Research; United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction; United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs; United Nations University; World Bank Group, World Food Programme; World Health Organization; World Meteorological Organization; and World Tourism Organization.

risks, humanitarian crises and complex emergencies, and also recognizes that a comprehensive whole-of-system response, including greater cooperation, coherence, coordination and complementarity among development, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian action and sustaining peace, is fundamental to most efficiently and effectively addressing needs and attaining the Sustainable Development Goals”<sup>25</sup> and “the United Nations contribution to the promotion of all human rights for sustainable development”.<sup>26</sup>

- 11 As a United Nations system-wide strategy, this SWS is designed to be implemented by United Nations entities working on water and sanitation within their mandated areas at global, regional and country levels, in collaboration with Member States and diverse partners and stakeholders, particularly the people who are most marginalized.<sup>27</sup>
- 12 The United Nations system’s global network of expertise and capacity at global, regional, country and subnational levels can make a unique and valuable contribution to advancing progress on water and sanitation. This SWS will add value to the United Nations system’s work on water and sanitation through the achievement of the following expected outcomes:
  - (a) Strengthened United Nations system-wide leadership on water and sanitation;
  - (b) Enhanced demand-driven support to countries on water and sanitation through mobilization of available capacities and resources of the United Nations system and its partners at all levels to leave no one behind, with emphasis on the needs of developing countries;

- (c) Improved policy coherence on water and sanitation through United Nations system support for integration across sectors and mainstreaming into intergovernmental processes led by Member States;
- (d) More impactful United Nations system support to countries to accelerate progress and transformational change, including through the five SDG 6 global accelerators: financing, data and information, capacity development, innovation and governance;
- (e) Strengthened accountability for progress on water and sanitation through joint review and learning.

- 13 The impact will be a more holistic, integrated approach to the sustainable management of water and sanitation that accelerates progress on internationally agreed water-related goals and targets and leaves no one behind. The SWS will contribute to progress on the 2030 Agenda, especially SDG 6 and its eight targets.<sup>28</sup> It will further support achievement of other goals and targets related to water and sanitation across United Nations conventions, treaties, agreements, frameworks and decades, as well as human rights frameworks with reference to the human rights to water and sanitation, and a clean, healthy and sustainable environment (see Annex II).
- 14 The SWS has been prepared within the present context of the 2030 Agenda. It is envisaged that the strategy will be reviewed and updated based on the post-2030 global sustainable development agenda.
- 15 The SWS supports implementation of the Secretary-General’s action plan<sup>29</sup> for the Water Action Decade.<sup>30</sup> It is aligned with other United Nations system-wide

<sup>25</sup> Resolution 75/233, para. 16.

<sup>26</sup> Resolution 75/233, para. 28.

<sup>27</sup> According to the CEB common principles to guide the UN system’s support to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, stakeholders include governments, parliaments, the scientific and academic community, civil society, the private sector, the international community and the United Nations system. Additionally, supporting actions at all levels can promote multi-stakeholder involvement, including civil society, concerned populations, local communities, private sector, women and youth (para. 148). This includes recognizing and supporting Indigenous knowledge holders, women and youth in national, local and international water and sanitation policies and decision-making processes (para. 83). United Nations, *Report of the United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028* (New York, 2023). A/CONF.240/2023/10.

<sup>28</sup> SDG 6 comprises eight targets on: drinking water (target 6.1), sanitation and hygiene (6.2), wastewater treatment and ambient water quality (6.3), water-use efficiency and level of water stress (6.4), integrated water resources management, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate (6.5) and water-related ecosystems (6.6), including international water cooperation (6.a) and community participation (6.b).

<sup>29</sup> United Nations, *United Nations Secretary-General’s Plan: Water Action Decade 2018-2028* (2018).

<sup>30</sup> International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028.

strategies, common approaches, frameworks and action plans that address water and sanitation issues.<sup>31</sup> It incorporates the latest findings on global progress on water and sanitation at the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda<sup>32</sup> and the latest data, information and scientific evidence. It draws on the vast breadth and depth of experience of United Nations entities that have been leading and implementing water and sanitation programmes for decades.

- 16 The SWS is designed to be complementary to existing water and sanitation strategies and plans of United Nations entities and contribute towards achievement of high-level organizational targets for water and sanitation. It also builds upon the learning from UN-Water's more than 20 years of experience as the United Nations inter-agency coordination mechanism on water and sanitation.<sup>33</sup>

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31 Annex II, section B, on the global policy landscape for water and sanitation, includes references to the related United Nations system-wide strategies, plans and approaches (for example, biodiversity and nature-based solutions, disaster risk reduction for resilience, climate change action, the environment, pollution and urban development, as well as those that address inclusion including gender, disability, Indigenous Peoples and youth).

32 UN-Water, *Blueprint for Acceleration: Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023* (Geneva, United Nations, 2023); [A/78/80-E/2023/64](#), para. 34.

33 UN-Water, *UN-Water 2030 Strategy* (Geneva, United Nations, 2020); UN-Water, *External Review of UN-Water: Final Report* (Geneva, 2018).



### **III. Entry points for United Nations system-wide collaboration on water and sanitation**

- 17** The SWS will be delivered through five entry points for collaboration on water and sanitation:
- (1) Lead and inspire collective action on water and sanitation;
  - (2) Engage better for countries by leveraging whole-of-United Nations system support and by mobilizing stakeholders and partnerships for water and sanitation;
  - (3) Align United Nations system support for the integration of water and sanitation issues across sectors and mainstreaming into intergovernmental processes;
  - (4) Accelerate progress and transformational change by unifying United Nations system support through the five SDG 6 global accelerators:<sup>34</sup> financing, data and information, capacity development, innovation and governance;
  - (5) Account for progress through joint review and learning.
- 18** The implementation of the SWS will strive to achieve 14 planned outputs, which contribute towards five expected outcomes. The outputs represent specific areas where the United Nations system will enhance its support for countries, help unify the international community's support, and maximize the impact of local and international cooperation to accelerate progress and foster transformative change for water and sanitation. The figure on page 33 presents a summary of the SWS results chain.
- 19** A Collaborative Implementation Plan (CIP) will be developed with time-bound activities and progress indicators to guide SWS operationalization, localization and monitoring. This will help United Nations entities to be more effective and efficient in delivering water and sanitation programming through improved coordination, enhanced complementarity and identification of joint areas for accelerated action, thus addressing gaps and avoiding duplication of efforts. Annex I provides the CIP terms of reference. Annex I also includes a summary table of illustrative supporting actions that provide concrete, practical examples of how this SWS can be

implemented by the Resident Coordinator (RC) system including United Nations country teams (UNCTs), regional commissions and other United Nations regional offices, and United Nations entities working on water and sanitation within their mandated area, as well as through inter-agency partnerships and coordination.

- 20** The issue, solutions and outputs for each entry point are set out below.

## Entry Point 1. Lead and inspire collective action on water and sanitation

### Outcome 1. Strengthened United Nations system-wide leadership on water and sanitation

- 21** *Issue:* The need for increased leadership and political will to act was cited on numerous occasions as a critical success factor to accelerate progress and transformative change on water and sanitation during the UN 2023 Water Conference.<sup>35</sup> Within the United Nations system, there is no single agency, fund, programme or office dedicated exclusively to water issues. Over 36 United Nations entities carry out water- and sanitation-related programmes through different mandates. Responding to the increased level of ambition with a more holistic system-wide approach will require increased collaborative leadership across United Nations entities and collectively, within the United Nations system. The UN 2023 Water Conference, future United Nations water conferences in 2026 and 2028, and other high-level summits, conferences and meetings offer unique and timely opportunities to galvanize political will and societal attention for action.
- 22** *Solutions – what the United Nations system can do:* In response, the United Nations system aims to increase system-wide leadership at all levels and boost communication and advocacy on water and sanitation issues interlinked with major global topics through its extensive, worldwide networks.

<sup>34</sup> UN-Water, *SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework* (2020).

<sup>35</sup> United Nations, *Report of the United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018–2028* (New York, 2023). A/CONF.240/2023/10.

## OUTPUT 1.1. WATER AND SANITATION ISSUES ARE A STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP PRIORITY FOR THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

- 23** Engagement with leadership across the whole United Nations system is paramount to elevating and sustaining water and sanitation as a central priority across the work of the United Nations.<sup>36</sup> United Nations entities working on water and sanitation within their mandated areas will elevate water and sanitation issues to be included among the top organizational priorities and promote stronger interlinkages between water and sanitation with their respective mandated areas. This can be done, for example, through strengthening water and sanitation programmes in strategic plans, results frameworks, resource allocations, staffing structures and partnerships. Strengthening United Nations entity mandates and results frameworks, as well as ensuring adequate resources, will need to be supported through the respective governance bodies.<sup>37</sup>
- 24** The UN-Water Chair represents UN-Water at the CEB<sup>38</sup> and convenes an annual United Nations Principals-level meeting of UN-Water on water and sanitation to discuss actions entities are taking to strengthen water and sanitation programmes, set United Nations system priorities, identify opportunities and interlinkages, and address emerging issues, gaps and resourcing requirements. The appointment of a United Nations Special Envoy for Water will help raise the visibility of the importance, urgency and interconnectedness of water and sanitation for sustainable development, and will help catalyse engagement of the United Nations system, financial institutions, Member States and stakeholders.

## OUTPUT 1.2. ACTION IS INSPIRED BY COMPELLING AND UNIFIED UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM COMMUNICATIONS AND MESSAGING ON WATER AND SANITATION

- 25** The United Nations system aims to be a compelling voice on global water and sanitation issues so that the public, Member States, civil society and the private sector will be better informed and inspired to act.<sup>39</sup> The United Nations system will increase its capacity to provide global, up-to-date information and latest evidence on the status of the world's water resources and progress on water and sanitation goals and targets, with an increased focus on the interrelations between water and sanitation and priority global issues. Communication efforts will use a range of tactics to reach different audiences, with an emphasis on youth engagement, that will be tailored to regional and local communication contexts. Advocacy by the United Nations Special Envoy for Water can also help elevate and amplify the United Nations system's voice and visibility on water and sanitation issues. The United Nations Communications Group at the global, regional and country levels will help ensure communications on water and sanitation are cross promoted.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> UN-Water, *Blueprint for Acceleration: Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023* (Geneva, United Nations, 2023).

<sup>37</sup> UN-Water, *UN-Water Inventory: An Overview of the UN-Water Family's Work on Water and Sanitation* (Geneva, 2019).

<sup>38</sup> UN-Water, *Terms of Reference Annex: UN-Water Governance* (Geneva, 2019).

<sup>39</sup> UN-Water, *UN-Water 2030 Strategy* (Geneva, United Nations, 2020).

<sup>40</sup> United Nations Department of Communications, *Global Communications Strategy 2020: A World Where Everyone Thrives in Peace, Dignity and Equality on a Healthy Planet*.



## Entry Point 2. Engage better for countries by leveraging whole-of-United Nations system support and by mobilizing stakeholders and partnerships for water and sanitation

### Outcome 2. Enhanced demand-driven support to countries on water and sanitation through mobilization of available capacities and resources of the United Nations system and its partners at all levels to leave no one behind, with emphasis on the needs of developing countries

- 26** *Issue:* Expertise related to water and sanitation is significant across the United Nations system and its partners.<sup>41</sup> This technical knowledge and implementation capacities are based within a wide range of United Nations entities that include specialized agencies, funds and programmes, Secretariat offices and departments, other entities and bodies, and related organizations<sup>42</sup> physically located in nearly 4,000 locations in 162 countries and territories.<sup>43</sup> Fragmentation across sectors and institutions means that the potential benefits of United Nations system support and international cooperation to address country-level water- and sanitation-related needs and priorities are often not fully realized. The engagement of these stakeholders and partners, with their expertise, experience and capabilities, technology and financial resources, is critical to achieve integrated, impactful and sustainable improvements in water and sanitation.
- 27** *Solutions – what the United Nations system can do:* Establishing a United Nations SWS that is built on a

strong foundation of inter-agency coordination and partnership, and implemented in close collaboration with the RC system, is a crucial pathway for the United Nations system to scale up water and sanitation action and results, particularly at country level through UNCTs under the leadership of RCs. This approach also aligns with the Secretary-General's Our Common Agenda initiative "UN 2.0", which envisages "more agile, diverse, responsive and impactful United Nations entities".<sup>44</sup>

- 28** The two output areas below aim to demonstrate, through practice, new and more effective and efficient ways of partnership and collaboration among the United Nations system entities and partners. This approach will lead to strengthened engagement with countries by unifying multi-sectoral expertise and support from the United Nations system. The United Nations system will act together with the local and international community around government-led plans and priorities, and with local authorities and civil society, particularly local communities and those affected by lack of access to drinking water, sanitation, pollution and other water and sanitation issues through a people-centred approach to leave no one behind and focus on those furthest behind first.<sup>45</sup>

#### OUTPUT 2.1. EXPERTISE AND RESOURCES ARE FULLY LEVERAGED BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM TO SUPPORT COUNTRIES, WITH EMPHASIS ON THE WATER AND SANITATION NEEDS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

- 29** Each part of the United Nations system – whether it be normative and operational, resident and entities not physically present in the country,<sup>46</sup> programmatic and support – will contribute its specialized expertise, skills and assets on water and sanitation in a coherent and complementary manner.<sup>47</sup> RCs/UNCTs are on the front line delivering coordinated, country-led

41 UN-Water, *UN-Water Inventory: An Overview of the UN-Water Family's Work on Water and Sanitation* (Geneva, 2019).

42 United Nations, *UN System Chart* (2023).

43 United Nations, *UN 2.0: Forward-thinking Culture and Cutting-edge Skills for Better United Nations System Impact*. Our Common Agenda, Policy Brief 11 (2023).

44 Ibid.

45 UN-Water, *SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework* (2020).

46 UNSDG, *Management and Accountability Framework of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System* (2021).

47 CEB, *CEB common principles to guide the UN system's support to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2016).

support on water and sanitation to governments based on national plans, priorities and needs, and in accordance with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). United Nations Regional Collaborative Platforms (RCPs), United Nations Regional Coordination Mechanisms (RCMs), Issue-based Coalitions (IBCs) and United Nations entity regional offices will provide coordinated support to countries via RCs and UNCTs, including relevant inter-agency results and thematic groups, based on available regional capacities and structures, which vary from region to region. Support can include issues related to transboundary cooperation for river basins, lakes and aquifers upon request from the concerned countries, as well as assistance to countries that express interest in acceding to the United Nations Water Conventions.<sup>48</sup>

- 30** Requests for support on water and sanitation issues from RCs/UNCTs, regional economic commissions and other United Nations offices can be channelled to UN-Water.<sup>49</sup> UN-Water will connect requests for support to the diverse water and sanitation expertise, technical assistance, and initiatives of UN-Water Members and Partners and the international community. UN-Water will expand its support to respond to requests for water and sanitation data, policy and technical advice for the common country analysis (CCA), UNSDCF design, and water- and sanitation-related results groups, in addition to maintaining an updated UN-Water Inventory to provide mapping of the expertise and resources available across the United Nations system (see Annex IV). This output contributes directly to operationalizing reforms of UNDS through enhanced demand-driven country-level support effectively channelled through RCs/UNCTs.

## **OUTPUT 2.2. DIVERSE STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERSHIPS ARE MOBILIZED BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM TO SUPPORT COUNTRIES' PROGRESS ON WATER AND SANITATION**

- 31** The United Nations system will engage in partnerships at global, regional, national, and river basin, lake and aquifer levels to mobilize public and private entities across different sectors for greater cooperation, to foster innovation, and to promote effective, sustainable and peaceful management of water resources.<sup>50</sup>
- 32** The United Nations system will champion the need for robust civil society participation in all related processes. United Nations entities at all levels will promote and facilitate the participation of diverse stakeholders in water and sanitation policies and decision-making processes. This will be in line with the human right to participate in public affairs and follow the principles of the human rights-based approach, to facilitate that all voices are heard and no one is left behind, with particular attention to the inclusion of civil society, local communities, concerned populations, women, youth, persons with disabilities,<sup>51</sup> and forcibly displaced, disaster displaced and stateless migrants, as well as Indigenous Peoples,<sup>52</sup> and any other people in vulnerable situations.
- 33** UN-Water Partners diversify the expertise of the UN-Water network and help increase outreach across levels, including at subnational level, and increase engagement with a broad range of stakeholders. UN-Water Partners will be involved in the identification and sharing of best practices and lessons learned, leading to identification of integrated solutions spanning thematic areas. Additionally, United Nations entities and partners will strengthen international cooperation by facilitating South–South, North–South and triangular cooperation, and private sector engagement on water and sanitation, to exchange knowledge and transfer technological solutions,<sup>53</sup> and support capacity enhancement of national technical

<sup>48</sup> United Nations, [Convention on the Law of Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses](#) (1997), and United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, [Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes](#) (1992).

<sup>49</sup> UN-Water, [Country Engagement](#).

<sup>50</sup> UN-Water, [SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework](#) (2020).

<sup>51</sup> UN-Water, [Roadmap for the Integration of Human Rights to Water and Sanitation](#) (Geneva, United Nations, 2022).

<sup>52</sup> Resolution [61/295](#).

<sup>53</sup> United Nations, [United Nations Secretary-General's Plan: Water Action Decade 2018-2028](#) (2018).

and academic institutions. Governments, the United Nations system and a broad range of stakeholders have registered water and sanitation voluntary commitments on the Water Action Agenda<sup>54</sup> platform and the SDG Action Space, strengthening the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.<sup>55</sup>

### **Entry Point 3. Align United Nations system support for the integration of water and sanitation issues across sectors and mainstreaming into intergovernmental processes**

#### **Outcome 3. Improved policy coherence on water and sanitation through United Nations system support for integration across sectors and mainstreaming into intergovernmental processes led by Member States**

**34** *Issue:* Water and sanitation are highly interlinked with all dimensions of sustainable development.<sup>56</sup> The *Global Sustainable Development Report 2023* identified SDG 6 as one of seven particularly synergistic goals repeatedly associated with co-benefits or identified as drivers of progress.<sup>57</sup> However, the management of water and sanitation issues across different sectors can also become a source of conflict, lead to negative externalities and involve trade-offs.<sup>58</sup> Policy and institutional fragmentation between levels of governance, actors and sectors is a major bottleneck.<sup>59</sup> It means that decisions taken in other sectors (for example, agriculture, energy, health, environment and finance) often do not consider the associated impacts on water availability and water quality,<sup>60</sup>

which disproportionately affect women and girls and other people facing vulnerable situations. This fragmentation cascades through government structures, internationally agreed conventions, treaties, frameworks and their respective intergovernmental processes, and the United Nations system.

**35** *Solutions – what the United Nations system can do:* A far more aligned and integrated United Nations system approach is needed. This will require the United Nations system to work together more collaboratively and effectively across mandated areas. This SWS proposes a three-pronged approach: (a) align United Nations system operational and financial strategies, policies and approaches to harness complementarity; (b) support integrated policy frameworks across sectors; and (c) under the guidance of Member States, support the mainstreaming of water and sanitation issues across intergovernmental processes for greater coherence.

#### **OUTPUT 3.1. OPERATIONAL AND FINANCIAL STRATEGIES, POLICIES AND APPROACHES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM ARE ALIGNED TO HARNESS COMPLEMENTARITY**

**36** The SWS and accompanying CIP will provide a system-wide basis for United Nations entities to update and align the water and sanitation components of their respective strategic plans, work programmes and results, and resources frameworks. This will help to maximize effectiveness and complementarity of interventions across levels, entities, pillars and other system-wide strategies. It will also help to ensure synergies, address gaps and avoid duplication of efforts.

**37** UNDS country programmes are an important convergence point for the coordination of United Nations

<sup>54</sup> UN DESA, *Water Action Agenda* (2023).

<sup>55</sup> UN DESA, *Sustainable Development Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development*.

<sup>56</sup> UN-Water, *Water and Sanitation Interlinkages Across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Analytical Brief (Geneva, United Nations, 2016).

<sup>57</sup> Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, *Times of Crisis, Times of Change: Science for Accelerating Transformations to Sustainable Development*, *Global Sustainable Development Report 2023* (New York, United Nations, 2023).

<sup>58</sup> UN-Water, *Water and Sanitation Interlinkages Across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Analytical Brief (Geneva, United Nations, 2016).

<sup>59</sup> UN-Water, *SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework* (2020).

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

system support to countries.<sup>61</sup> During the design of new country programmes, the development of CCA and the UNSDCF will be an opportunity to jointly analyse water and sanitation risks and opportunities, determine strategic priorities, select results and indicators, and prepare plans. When water and/or sanitation are identified as a priority area, RCs/UNCTs can consider establishing a thematic results group or a subgroup to coordinate cross-sectoral aspects of water and sanitation issues.

- 38** Throughout the programming cycle, UNCT members can align and collaborate to work on water and sanitation areas together to implement through joint programming, including joint workplans and more formalized joint programmes, while making interlinkages and ensuing complementarity and coherence with other United Nations country-level plans and processes (for example, in countries with humanitarian emergencies, these include United Nations humanitarian needs overviews, humanitarian response plans and related funding appeals).
- 39** This output contributes directly to the repositioning of UNDS as outlined in resolution [72/279](#). It also includes alignment of water- and sanitation-related programming and operations with the strategy for sustainability management in the United Nations system, 2020–2030, Phase I on environmental sustainability in the area of management.<sup>62</sup>

### OUTPUT 3.2. INTEGRATED POLICY FRAMEWORKS TO MANAGE WATER AND SANITATION ACROSS SECTORS ARE SUPPORTED BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM USING LATEST DATA AND EVIDENCE

- 40** The United Nations system provides integrated policy advice and implements multi-sectoral programming approaches to managing water and sanitation across sectors that draw on their respective mandates and expertise. The United Nations system and its partners will continue to develop and operationalize multi-sectoral approaches that address water and sanitation issues across sectors (for example, the water–energy–food–ecosystem nexus,<sup>63</sup> the triple planetary crisis of climate change–pollution–biodiversity loss,<sup>64</sup> gender,<sup>65</sup> resilient infrastructure,<sup>66</sup> nature-based solutions<sup>67</sup> and One Health<sup>68</sup>), across geographies (for example, the source-to-sea approach) and in different contexts (for example, desertification, urban development, humanitarian emergencies and protracted crises).
- 41** In response to national needs and priorities, RCs/UNCTs will provide holistic cross-government advice on policies, strategies and regulatory frameworks with clear roles and responsibilities for addressing water and sanitation challenges, managing trade-offs, and promoting cooperation and social cohesion.
- 42** Integration of water into regional forums on sustainable development, led by regional economic commissions, will be an opportunity for regional dialogue and experience-sharing on integrated approaches to sustainable management of water and sanitation. United Nations regional commissions have cross-disciplinary expertise that provide a basis for the promotion of integrated approaches to water and sanitation issues.

61 In humanitarian and mission settings, United Nations teams at country level can work together to contribute to all United Nations country plans strengthening coherence and complementarity among development, humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts.

62 [CEB/2019/1/Add.1](#).

63 [A/CONF.240/2023/5](#).

64 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, [What is the triple planetary crisis?](#) (13 April 2022).

65 United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, [From Commodity to Common Good: A Feminist Agenda to Tackle the World's Water Crisis](#) (United Nations, 2023).

66 United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, [Principles for Resilient Infrastructure](#) (Geneva, 2022).

67 United Nations, [The United Nations World Water Development Report 2018: Nature-based Solutions for Water](#) (Paris, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2018).

68 World Health Organization, [One Health](#).

43 UN-Water will provide thought leadership and integrated policy guidance based on latest scientific, technical and policy developments in water and sanitation, led by United Nations entities with mandates for the respective areas and its partners.<sup>69</sup> Implementing integrated approaches through joint strategies, programmes and projects will add value through sharing of capacity and expertise across United Nations entities, as well as through building skills, knowledge and experience to break down the silos between key areas such as safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene and integrated water resources management.

### **OUTPUT 3.3. MAINSTREAMING OF WATER- AND SANITATION-RELATED ISSUES INTO INTERGOVERNMENTAL PROCESSES LED BY MEMBER STATES IS SUPPORTED BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM**

44 Water- and sanitation-related issues are relevant to many internationally agreed conventions, treaties, frameworks and their respective intergovernmental processes. There is increasing recognition across these intergovernmental processes of the centrality of water and sanitation issues to achieving the goals and targets, and an increasing number of Member State decisions on water and sanitation that require follow-up and support by the United Nations system. Examples include the United Nations General Assembly, World Health Assembly, United Nations Environmental Assembly and United Nations human rights mechanisms, including the treaties and the Human Rights Council, in addition to Conferences of the Parties for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biodiversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

45 In support of these Member State decisions, the United Nations system will assist the mainstreaming of water- and sanitation-related issues into relevant intergovernmental processes such as climate

change, disaster risk reduction, desertification, food and agriculture, health, biodiversity, pollution, oceans, environment, education, urban development, women's empowerment, finance, international cooperation<sup>70</sup> and human rights mechanisms.<sup>71</sup>

46 This output will require specific engagement with the secretariats of relevant United Nations conventions, multilateral environmental agreements, frameworks and other intergovernmental bodies, including the HLPF (see Annex II), to coordinate approaches for the respective water- and sanitation-related elements. UN-Water will highlight and raise awareness of water and sanitation issues that are relevant to these global policy discussions and will strengthen support to the respective UN-Water Members affiliated with these processes. Relevant UN-Water Expert Groups will share timely information across the United Nations system, develop coherent policy advice, advocate with a "common United Nations system voice", and coordinate inputs from the United Nations system for United Nations convened summits, conferences and meetings, as well as for relevant United Nations system global reports and initiatives.

47 At country level, RCs/UNCTs can support linkages between intergovernmental processes and country-level development plans including through support for voluntary national reviews (VNRs) and voluntary local reviews (VLRs) at city level<sup>72</sup> of water and sanitation goals and targets. RCs/UNCTs can support Member States to involve partners, ensure strong civil society participation and include diverse stakeholders in providing inputs and feedback through these processes. United Nations regional commissions and other United Nations regional offices will facilitate and promote interlinkages with regional sustainable development forums and regional and subregional intergovernmental bodies and processes. Given the SWS emphasis on developing countries, support will also be provided to connect water and sanitation issues with intergovernmental processes and conferences related to LDCs, SIDS,

69 UN-Water, *Blueprint for Acceleration: Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023* (Geneva, United Nations, 2023).

70 Ibid.

71 UN-Water, *Roadmap for the Integration of Human Rights to Water and Sanitation* (Geneva, United Nations, 2022).

72 UN DESA, *SDG localization and the voluntary local reviews*.

LLDCs and countries with other special circumstances, including middle-income countries.

## **Entry Point 4. Accelerate progress and transformational change by unifying United Nations system support through the five SDG 6 global accelerators: financing, data and information, capacity development, innovation and governance**

### **Outcome 4. More impactful United Nations system support to countries to accelerate progress and transformational change, including through the five SDG 6 global accelerators: financing, data and information, capacity development, innovation and governance**

**48** *Issue:* At the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, progress towards internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, including SDG 6, is off track.<sup>73</sup> For all SDG 6 targets, the current rate of progress is not fast enough to close the gap before 2030.<sup>74</sup> In some regions and countries, for some indicators, progress has stagnated or is regressing.<sup>75</sup> Swift and purposeful action is needed to change course and accelerate progress on SDG 6.

**49** *Solutions – what the United Nations system can do:* In support of the Secretary-General’s Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs by 2030, UN-Water launched the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework, which identified five accelerators to unify support from the international community to speed up the pace of progress on water and sanitation: financing, data and information, capacity development, innovation and governance.<sup>76</sup> The SWS includes a dedicated output for each SDG 6 global accelerator.

**50** These accelerators reflect the building blocks of the means of implementation for sustainable development,<sup>77</sup> which include mobilization of the financial and non-financial resources necessary to create a favourable enabling environment for progress towards the achievement of water-related goals and targets and a comprehensive approach to the realization of rights.<sup>78</sup>

**51** Accelerated progress on water and sanitation also underpins the six key SDG transitions identified by United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) to deliver interconnected investment pathways to accelerate SDG progress within and across countries.<sup>79</sup> The SDG 6 global accelerators are also closely aligned with the four “engine room” actions through which UNCTs can propel SDG progress: policy and regulatory shifts, identification and development of pipelines of bankable and market-ready national projects, attract the needed financing from all sources and capacity-building.<sup>80</sup>

**52** This entry point responds to the call from Member States in resolution [75/233](#) to UNDS, to “improve their support, including, where appropriate, in

73 UN-Water, *Blueprint for Acceleration: Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023* (Geneva, United Nations, 2023).

74 United Nations, *Sustainable Development Goals Progress Chart 2023* (2023).

75 UN-Water, *Blueprint for Acceleration: Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023* (Geneva, United Nations, 2023); UN-Water, [UN-Water SDG 6 Data Portal](#).

76 UN-Water, *SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework* (2020).

77 UN DESA, *Sustainable Development Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development*; United Nations, *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda)* (New York, 2015).

78 [A/HRC/45/10](#).

79 UNSDG, *Six Transitions: Investment Pathways to Deliver the SDGs* (2023). The six key transitions comprise: (1) food systems; (2) energy access and affordability; (3) digital connectivity; (4) education; (5) jobs and social protection; and (6) climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

80 *Ibid.* The four “engine rooms” comprise: (1) drive shifts across policy and regulatory frameworks, (2) pipelines of bankable and market-ready national projects, (3) attract the needed financing from all sources and (4) enhanced national public sector capabilities to deliver and implement policy action.

partnership with relevant stakeholders, with regard to strengthening the mobilization of the means of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals from all sources, in line with 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, including through capacity-building, integrated policy advice and programmatic support, technical assistance, high-quality, timely, reliable and disaggregated data, normative support, support to national institutions, leverage partnerships and the leveraging of science, technology and innovation, in accordance with national development policies, plans, priorities and needs”.

#### **OUTPUT 4.1. FINANCING STRATEGIES, FRAMEWORKS AND PLANS FOR INVESTING IN WATER AND SANITATION ACROSS SECTORS ARE PREPARED AND IMPLEMENTED WITH UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM SUPPORT, WITH EMPHASIS ON THE FINANCING NEEDS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

- 53** The United Nations system will work closely with governments, domestic and international finance institutions, and other public and private financing partners to close the financing gap for water and sanitation. The water and sanitation financing needs of developing countries will be prioritized, in accordance with resolution [77/334](#). Key areas where the United Nations system will support the acceleration of financing are convening partnerships, knowledge- and data-sharing, and supporting countries to strengthen the investment enabling environment, including preparation and implementation of financing strategies, frameworks and plans, and reform of legal and regulatory frameworks.<sup>81</sup>
- 54** Support from the United Nations system and its partners will help speed up project preparation time and support participatory, inclusive processes. RCs/ UNCTs can work with line ministries and parliaments to include the financing requirements for water and sanitation in national and subnational budgets and

financing frameworks, including Integrated National Financing Frameworks.<sup>82</sup> United Nations entities will increase collaboration on climate finance proposals for water and sanitation areas to help unlock new resources from climate funds, particularly for developing countries and fragile contexts affected by climate crises.

- 55** This output will support the implementation of recommendations and decisions relevant for water and sanitation from the Financing for Development<sup>83</sup> meetings and conferences, global financing initiatives, the Secretary-General’s SDG Stimulus to Deliver Agenda 2030<sup>84</sup> and the UNSDG six transitions “engine room” actions related to financing (for example, “pipelines” of bankable and market-ready national projects and “deal rooms” to attract financing from all sources),<sup>85</sup> among others.

#### **OUTPUT 4.2. HIGH-QUALITY, DISAGGREGATED WATER AND SANITATION DATA AND INFORMATION ARE AVAILABLE AND SHARED TRANSPARENTLY THROUGH STRENGTHENED NATIONAL AND SUBNATIONAL MONITORING SYSTEMS, AND REGIONAL AND GLOBAL PLATFORMS, WITH SUPPORT FROM THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM**

- 56** The United Nations system will champion the value of data and information for decision-making on policy, investment, planning and management, as well as other benefits like harmonization of information, standardization, transparency, accountability and sharing lessons.
- 57** United Nations entities will support countries to strengthen national monitoring systems to collect, analyse and report water- and sanitation-related data, with a particular focus on demographic data disaggregated by “income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, displacement and migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in

<sup>81</sup> UN Consultation on the World Bank’s Fast Track Water Security and Climate Adaptation Global Challenge Program, UNICEF Headquarters, New York, 13 December 2023.

<sup>82</sup> Integrated National Financing Frameworks, [Welcome to the Integrated National Financing Framework Knowledge Platform](#).

<sup>83</sup> United Nations, [Financing for Development](#).

<sup>84</sup> United Nations, *United Nations Secretary-General’s SDG Stimulus to Deliver Agenda 2030* (2023).

<sup>85</sup> UNSDG, *Six Transitions: Investment Pathways to Deliver the SDGs* (2023).

national contexts” to leave no one behind.<sup>86</sup> A focus will also be placed on spatial disaggregation of data by basin (for example, river, lake and aquifer), biotype and administrative unit, to further support analysis for policymaking and decision-making. Improved data interoperability across water and sanitation areas will provide countries and their UNCTs with comparable and comprehensive data on which to derive indicators and monitor progress effectively. In addition to fostering high-quality data collection and dissemination, international standards play a crucial role in setting benchmarks and facilitating the gathering of valuable data and information for decision-making, planning and management in the water and sanitation sector. By providing a common framework for data collection, these standards ensure consistency, accuracy and reliability across different regions and stakeholders.

**58** United Nations entities will assist policymakers and decision makers at all levels to use data and information in a holistic manner to inform policies for water and sanitation, and also for water-dependent sectors. In addition, the United Nations system will support improved data availability and sharing for use by other sectors that rely on water and sanitation data, such as climate national adaptation plans, disaster risk reduction strategies and plans, sustainable food system strategies and sustainable tourism. Specialized agencies and other United Nations entities will provide scientific support to countries to improve understanding of surface water and ground-water resources and ensure data and information, including forecasting and Earth observations, are available on accessible platforms for use by Member States and stakeholders. United Nations entities will contribute to global water and sanitation information systems and science validation processes for their respective mandated areas.<sup>87</sup>

**59** The UN-Water Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG 6<sup>88</sup> coordinates global monitoring and reporting for water and sanitation. The main areas of work include coordinating “data drives” to collect information from custodian agencies for SDG 6 indicators, supplying and advising on data components of global progress reports, providing capacity-building support to countries, promoting data use at all levels, and hosting the SDG 6 Data Portal.<sup>89</sup> Support for data-sharing as part of transboundary water cooperation is also a key aspect of the United Nations system’s support for the two United Nations Water Conventions.

**60** The United Nations system will support capacity-development programmes on data and information measurement, monitoring, analysis, and management and support for strengthening national monitoring systems as part of strategies, plans and work programmes. United Nations entities will promote inclusive approaches to knowledge generation, integration and collaboration (such as citizen science), and will make efforts to bridge knowledge systems to include Indigenous and traditional knowledge,<sup>90</sup> women and girls, and youth expertise,<sup>91</sup> and other relevant knowledge sources.

#### **OUTPUT 4.3. INSTITUTIONAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES CAPACITY-DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT THAT RESPONDS TO NATIONAL NEEDS AND PRIORITIES IS PROVIDED BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM, CONTRIBUTING TO A SKILLED WATER AND SANITATION WORKFORCE**

**61** United Nations entities will support capacity-development programmes within organizational strategies, plans and programmes, including programmes and opportunities for young professionals and other under-represented groups to participate in national, regional and global capacity-development activities.

<sup>86</sup> Resolution 70/1, para. 17.18.

<sup>87</sup> United Nations, *Report of the United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028* (New York, 2023). A/CONF.240/2023/10.

<sup>88</sup> UN-Water, *Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG 6*.

<sup>89</sup> UN-Water, *UN-Water SDG 6 Data Portal*.

<sup>90</sup> United Nations, *System-wide Action Plan for Ensuring a Coherent Approach to Achieving the Ends of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2015).

<sup>91</sup> United Nations, *Water for health and cooperation: Youth priorities, challenges, and success stories (SDG 6) - 2023 ECOSOC youth forum, Thematic breakout session 1A* (2023).



United Nations entities will develop new and updated capacity-development programmes related to their respective mandated areas, including interdisciplinary approaches for sustainable water and sanitation systems. United Nations entities will deliver these programmes through partnerships with academic and other expert partners, and will promote decent working conditions, in terms of professionalization, safety and remuneration, and safe, dignified, equal opportunity and non-discriminatory employment opportunities in water- and sanitation-related fields. The water and sanitation capacity-development needs of developing countries should be prioritized, in accordance with resolution [77/334](#).

- 62** The UN-Water SDG 6 Capacity Development Initiative<sup>92</sup> will continue to provide a coordinated entry point for countries requesting UN-Water's support. The initiative supports countries in undertaking a capacity gap assessment through intersectoral, interministerial and multi-stakeholder approaches, and facilitates access to capacity-development support from UN-Water Members and Partners, tailoring them as needed and ensuring follow-up of capacity-development activities. Within the United Nations system programmes and operations, United Nations entities will work together to increase opportunities and support for staff to increase knowledge and develop skills across water and sanitation domains, to better facilitate interdisciplinary and multi-sectoral approaches that consider technical, social, economic, environmental and political domains. Human resources strategies are needed to address gender gaps in the United Nations system water and sanitation workforce,<sup>93</sup> support mobility within and across entities, and attract and retain young water and sanitation professionals.<sup>94</sup>

#### **OUTPUT 4.4. ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS FOR WATER AND SANITATION INNOVATION ARE SUPPORTED BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM, INCLUDING POLICIES, PARTNERSHIPS AND TRANSFER OF TECHNOLOGY TO REMOVE BARRIERS, WITH EMPHASIS ON THE NEEDS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

- 63** The United Nations system will use its convening power at all levels to help bridge the gap between innovators and those in need of innovative solutions and approaches. The United Nations system will support the development of the innovation-enabling environment to support the local contextualization and operationalization of innovations at scale through partnerships. United Nations entities at all levels, including RCs/UNCTs, can use their convening power to bring together diverse stakeholders and form partnerships to harness innovation from the private sector. United Nations entities will help scale up innovations through programming to leverage the global reach of the United Nations system. For instance, United Nations entities will continue to scale up partnerships to develop and use Earth observations to increase predictability of water and sanitation disaster events for early warning systems and support digital transformation, including the use of smart technologies and information and communications technologies to advance solutions to current and future water and sanitation challenges.
- 64** United Nations entities and partners will facilitate North–South, South–South and triangular cooperation on science, technology and innovation to promote knowledge and technology transfer and upgrading,<sup>95</sup> and advocate for inclusive approaches to innovation that involve Indigenous Peoples, women, youth<sup>96</sup> and other under-represented groups. International standards play a crucial role in enabling environments that facilitate the transfer of technology,

<sup>92</sup> UN-Water, [SDG 6 Capacity Development Initiative](#).

<sup>93</sup> CEB, [UN system-wide action plan on gender equality and the empowerment of women \(SWAP\)](#) (2012).

<sup>94</sup> United Nations, [Water for health and cooperation: Youth priorities, challenges, and success stories \(SDG 6\) - 2023 ECOSOC youth forum, Thematic breakout session 1A](#) (2023); United Nations, [Youth 2030: Working with and for Young People](#) (United Nations Youth Strategy, 2018).

<sup>95</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, [Ensuring Safe Water and Sanitation for All: A Solution through Science, Technology and Innovation](#) (United Nations, 2023).

<sup>96</sup> United Nations, [Water for health and cooperation: Youth priorities, challenges, and success stories \(SDG 6\) - 2023 ECOSOC youth forum, Thematic breakout session 1A](#) (2023).

particularly to developing countries. Support to developing countries to facilitate the transfer of technology should be prioritized, in accordance with resolution [77/334](#).

#### **OUTPUT 4.5. GOVERNANCE OF WATER AND SANITATION IS IMPROVED THROUGH UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM SUPPORT, WITH EMPHASIS ON THE NEEDS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

- 65** The United Nations system will support governments based on national needs and priorities to build the capacity of institutions at national, regional and local levels, with clear roles and responsibilities to deliver and implement policy action across not only water- and sanitation-related sectors, but also across sectors dependent on water and sanitation services and resources.<sup>97</sup> United Nations entities working on water and sanitation within different mandates will support governments and regional bodies to establish dedicated mechanisms or platforms that facilitate systematic cross-sectoral dialogue, coordination and collaborations.<sup>98</sup> Cross-sectoral coordination can enhance consistency across interlinked decision-making processes and help manage trade-offs.<sup>99</sup>
- 66** The United Nations system will advise and offer support to governments on how to ensure water and sanitation policies, regulatory arrangements, strategies and implementation models are inclusive and gender sensitive. RCs/UNCTs can provide support to governments at national and subnational levels to establish and operationalize policies and procedures for participation of local communities in water and sanitation management.<sup>100</sup>
- 67** Operational arrangements for transboundary basins are pivotal for managing water, protecting

ecosystems and promoting peace.<sup>101</sup> To support progress on transboundary water cooperation at river basin, lake and aquifer level, the United Nations system will assist Member States expressing interest in acceding to, implementing and complying with the United Nations Water Conventions.<sup>102</sup> Upon request from Member States, regional commissions and regional offices can support coordination at the regional, subregional and transboundary river basin, lake and aquifer levels, as well as supporting them to develop agreements, set up and strengthen river-, lake- and aquifer-based organizations, and facilitate operational arrangements for cooperation. When interest is expressed by a government, RCs/UNCTs can include support for transboundary water cooperation in their UNSDCF.

### **Entry Point 5. Account for progress through joint review and learning**

#### **Outcome 5. Strengthened accountability for progress on water and sanitation through joint review and learning**

- 68** *Issue:* Member States have called for a UNDS that is “more strategic, accountable, transparent, coherent, collaborative, efficient, effective and results-oriented”.<sup>103</sup> Additionally, the United Nations system supports follow-up and review processes for many intergovernmental agreements, frameworks and voluntary commitment platforms globally, regionally and nationally, as well as country-level processes related to national plans and policies.
- 69** *Solutions – what the United Nations system can do:* The United Nations system will take a dual approach.

97 UNSDG, *Six Transitions: Investment Pathways to Deliver the SDGs* (2023); UN-Water, *Blueprint for Acceleration: Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023* (Geneva, United Nations, 2023).

98 UN-Water, *Blueprint for Acceleration: Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023* (Geneva, United Nations, 2023).

99 Ibid.

100 United Nations Environment Programme, *Progress on Integrated Water Resources Management: Global Indicator 6.5.1 Updates and Acceleration Needs* (Nairobi, 2021).

101 UN-Water, *Blueprint for Acceleration: Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023* (Geneva, United Nations, 2023).

102 United Nations, *Convention on the Law of Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses* (1997), and United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, *Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes* (1992).

103 Resolution [75/233](#).

First, internally, it will increase the accountability and transparency of its work on water and sanitation through joint United Nations system reviews and learning at technical and leadership levels. Second, progress on water and sanitation goals and targets can be reviewed through joint learning and exchange among all actors, with support from the United Nations system.

### **OUTPUT 5.1. PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM-WIDE STRATEGY FOR WATER AND SANITATION IS REVIEWED JOINTLY BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM AT TECHNICAL AND LEADERSHIP LEVELS**

- 70** UN-Water biannual meetings will be the technical-level platform to review progress on implementation of the strategy, based on the agreed CIP. The outcomes of reviews will be reported in the UN-Water annual report and annual UN-Water progress report to the High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP). The annual United Nations Principal-level meeting of UN-Water on water and sanitation will be the leadership platform for United Nations system-wide joint review.
- 71** Additionally, United Nations entities will review progress on their water- and sanitation-related activities through their respective governing bodies and with partners. RCs/UNCTs will follow the joint review and learning processes established for the UNSDCF together with the respective governments and partners, and report through existing UNDS mechanisms. Chapter IV includes more details on the modalities and operational arrangements for joint review, monitoring and reporting for the SWS.

### **OUTPUT 5.2. PROGRESS ON WATER-RELATED GOALS AND TARGETS IS REVIEWED THROUGH JOINT LEARNING AND EXCHANGE AMONG ALL ACTORS, WITH SUPPORT FROM THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM**

- 72** The United Nations system is uniquely positioned to provide support to Member States and partners to

review progress on internationally agreed water-related goals and targets globally through existing platforms led by Member States such as United Nations HLPF special events and HLPF in-depth reviews of SDG 6, as well as at national and subnational levels through VNRs, VLRs and other stocktaking exercises. At the HLPF annual SDG 6 and Water Action Agenda Special Event, UN-Water and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, as secretariat of the HLPF, will continue to support the preparation of documentation such as on the monitoring and analysis of progress, facilitate self-reporting on commitments, document success stories and lessons learned, and support the registration of new commitments.<sup>104</sup> This annual HLPF special event will be a key moment to follow up and review progress on SDG 6 and the Water Action Agenda commitments jointly between the United Nations system, Member States and stakeholders.

- 73** This output contributes to the implementation of the Secretary-General's plan for the Water Action Decade, particularly workstream 1 on "Facilitating access to knowledge and the exchange of good practices".<sup>105</sup> The United Nations system can support dialogue and exchange between countries to enhance international cooperation contributing to the means of implementation for water and sanitation.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>104</sup> United Nations, *Water Action Agenda: Concept Note Outlining its Operations* (2022).

<sup>105</sup> United Nations, *United Nations Secretary-General's Plan: Water Action Decade 2018-2028* (2018).

<sup>106</sup> UN DESA, *Sustainable Development Goal 6, Target 6.a.*



## **IV. Implementation, coordination, monitoring and accountability**

74 Implementation of this SWS will be supported through the CIP, which will be developed by UN-Water, under the leadership of its Chair, after HLCP approval of the strategy. The responsibility for implementing, coordinating and monitoring the United Nations SWS rests with different parts of the United Nations system.

## A. Implementation mechanisms

75 Supporting actions will be undertaken by United Nations entities individually and together, building on existing mandates and strategies through various implementation mechanisms. These include:

- (a) *United Nations entity strategies and workplans:* United Nations entities working on water and sanitation through their mandated areas are encouraged to incorporate the United Nations SWS and CIP into their respective frameworks, strategies and work programmes, maximizing implementation, in line with their established mandates, procedures and processes. Where feasible, individual United Nations entities may consider issuing, at the global level, some standard guidelines or examples for incorporating the SWS into their regional/national frameworks, strategies and work programmes.
- (b) *United Nations country programmes:* Based on national priorities and needs, RCs/UNCTs are encouraged to use the SWS and its CIP to develop and guide United Nations joint country programming, starting at the CCA stage and throughout the development and implementation of the UNSDCF. The SWS can also inform water and sanitation elements in other United Nations inter-agency assistance planning and support mechanisms at country level, including for humanitarian, human rights and mediation support, depending on the local context and needs.
- (c) *Regional action plans:* Regional commissions are encouraged to mainstream the SWS into the work of their regional platforms, subsidiary bodies and intergovernmental meetings as deemed

appropriate and feasible. United Nations RCMs can support the implementation and mainstreaming of the SWS at the regional and country levels, including through the work of United Nations RCPs, IBCs and regional sustainable development forums.

- (d) *Joint initiatives, inter-agency partnerships and joint programmes:* The SWS will catalyse and enable collaboration among United Nations system entities to develop joint initiatives, joint programming and joint programmes, and reinforce existing inter-agency collaboration and partnerships.
- (e) *Inter-agency mechanisms:* UN-Water will mobilize the United Nations system through inter-agency coordination to develop and implement the CIP, support inter-agency initiatives and activities, and facilitate on-demand support for regions and countries, drawing on the vast expertise and capacities of UN-Water Members and Partners.
- (f) *Partnerships:* Diverse and multi-stakeholder partnerships will be essential to the implementation and success of the strategy. UN-Water Partners bring unique contributions to UN-Water's activities, in terms of diversifying the expertise of the UN-Water network, and by enabling increased outreach across levels. Continuously optimizing Partners' engagements by increasing the opportunities for constructive contributions will remain a focus, to enable Partners' networks to have a multiplier effect for UN-Water. Partners' extensive and diverse networks and their expertise are key to the scaling of UN-Water's impact to regional and country levels through their support for implementation of the SWS.
- (g) *Voluntary commitments:* United Nations entities can support the implementation of voluntary commitments made by Member States, multi-stakeholder partners and United Nations entities, including those registered in the Water Action Agenda<sup>107</sup> and SDG Actions Platform, to support the acceleration of SDG 6 and other water-related goals and targets.<sup>108</sup>

107 UN DESA, [Water Action Agenda](#) (2023).

108 UN DESA, [SDG Actions Platform](#).

76 Annex I provides a summary table of illustrative supporting actions that can be taken up by different levels of the system, based on needs and priorities.

## B. Coordination and operational arrangements

77 The following coordination and operational arrangements will ensure the timely and effective implementation of the SWS:

- (a) The Secretary-General designates the UN-Water Chair to provide high-level leadership, guidance and coordination support for the implementation of the strategy, including development of the CIP.
- (b) The UN-Water Chair will convene, at least once a year, a UN-Water Principals meeting on water and sanitation. The Principals will: (i) oversee strategic and policy aspects on the operationalization of the SWS; (ii) review progress, agree on priorities, and address gaps and issues related to implementation of the strategy; and (iii) ensure linkages and coherence with processes related to water and sanitation goals and targets, intergovernmental meetings and conferences, and UNDS policy and processes.
- (c) The HLCP is invited to consider and approve the SWS, towards its finalization and onward transmission to CEB for endorsement.
- (d) UN-Water will coordinate the technical-level implementation of the strategy. UN-Water Expert Groups, Task Forces and initiatives<sup>109</sup> will provide technical guidance and support to operationalize and implement the strategy.
- (e) The UN-Water Management Team<sup>110</sup> will support the high-level leadership for the SWS and inter-agency coordination, and will be the technical-level interface for engagement with United Nations entities that are not UN-Water Members, as well as other inter-agency coordination mechanisms including UN-Energy, UN-Oceans and others as appropriate. Coordination with the Environmental Management Group can help take forward the strategy through linkages to United Nations system-wide strategies related to the environment, pollution and other areas of intersection with water and sanitation issues, such as the United Nations Common Approach to Biodiversity.
- (f) United Nations RCs and UNCTs will support country-level inter-agency coordination, joint implementation and monitoring of SWS-related activities with governments, partners and stakeholders according to the context-specific priorities and needs.
- (g) Regional coordination will build on existing RCMs, RCPs and IBCs convened by United Nations regional economic commissions, together with regional offices of United Nations entities and partners.
- (h) The United Nations Development Coordination Office (UNDCO), in collaboration with United Nations regional offices, can help support implementation of the SWS at the regional and UNCT levels through UNSDCF and CCA guidance and accompanying documents and monitoring frameworks. UN-Water and UNDCO can develop user-friendly resources, for example, sharing UNCT case studies of good practices that can be adapted and replicated.
- (i) In contexts with humanitarian emergencies, including complex emergencies, and in conflict and post-conflict situations, complementarity and coherence of the United Nations system's support for water and sanitation will be coordinated with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Inter-Agency Standing Committee clusters and sectors (including the Global WASH Cluster) and United Nations integrated missions, depending on the context.
- (j) Communication and knowledge management will be enhanced to raise awareness and support operationalization of the strategy and included as part of the CIP:
  - (i) UN-Water will communicate about the launch of the SWS and support outreach to ensure

<sup>109</sup> UN-Water, [Expert Groups and Task Forces](#).

<sup>110</sup> Comprising the UN-Water Vice Chair (rotating senior programme manager), the Secretary (UN DESA) and the UN-Water Technical Advisory Unit.

its operationalization at global, regional and country levels. UN-Water will coordinate and support production and dissemination of joint knowledge products, advocacy, messages and communications about the SWS through its existing communications network. These plans and activities will be coordinated with the United Nations Communications Group and reinforce and contribute to the achievement of the Secretary-General's plan for the Water Action Decade.<sup>111</sup>

- (ii) A knowledge management plan will be developed and coordinated by UN-Water to document learning and good practices of United Nations system-wide collaboration on water and sanitation.
- (iii) The UN-Water website<sup>112</sup> will be updated regularly to support dissemination and act as the main entry point to the United Nations system's work on water- and sanitation-related issues and as a repository of UN-Water publications, policy and analytical briefs, SDG 6 global progress reports, the SDG 6 Data Portal,<sup>113</sup> and flagship reports by UN-Water Members and Partners. It will also highlight country acceleration case studies and other success stories, and latest news about the United Nations system's activities related to water and sanitation.
- (iv) Communications plans will be developed to engage with other sectors that interlink with water and sanitation domains to raise awareness and highlight the cross-sectoral approach of the SWS. The websites for the water- and sanitation-related United Nations international observances – World Water Day and World Toilet Day – will be developed jointly by the UN-Water Task Forces and the United Nations Department of Global Communications, and updated every year with new content developed by UN-Water.

- (k) The SWS aims to optimize the efficient use of financial and other resources across the United Nations system by aligning current resources and mobilizing additional joint financing. Resources are needed for United Nations entities to bolster coordination and implementation capacity at all levels to fully operationalize the strategy. Funding and capacity requirements and gaps will be assessed during the review processes at technical and leadership levels. Opportunities will be explored to allocate resources for joint water and sanitation programmes through thematic and inter-agency pooled funds, including the Joint SDG Fund,<sup>114</sup> the Peacebuilding Fund<sup>115</sup> and others.

## C. Monitoring, review and accountability measures

- 78** Ownership of the SWS is equally shared by all members of the United Nations system at the global, regional and country levels. The SWS and its accompanying CIP will serve as the basis for joint progress review, monitoring and accountability as follows:
- (a) Within the United Nations system, progress will be reviewed at the technical level through the UN-Water inter-agency coordination mechanism during its biannual meetings. Progress will be reviewed annually at the leadership level during the annual UN-Water Principals meeting.
  - (b) In-depth United Nations system-wide “stocktaking” exercises will be undertaken periodically to review progress and update the SWS to be aligned with the latest global United Nations system policies and international frameworks. The strategy will be reviewed and updated based on the post-2030 global sustainable development agenda.
  - (c) The United Nations system will have the opportunity to jointly review progress and learning with Member States and relevant stakeholders during the HLPF SDG 6 and Water Action Agenda

111 United Nations, *United Nations Secretary-General's Plan: Water Action Decade 2018-2028* (2018).

112 UN-Water, [UN-Water website](#).

113 UN-Water, [UN-Water SDG 6 Data Portal](#).

114 United Nations, [Joint SDG Fund](#).

115 United Nations, [Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund](#).

Special Event, forthcoming United Nations water conferences, as outlined in resolution [77/334](#), and future in-depth reviews of SDG 6 at the HLPF.

- (d) The reporting will build on existing United Nations system monitoring mechanisms including United Nations entities' own results-based management systems, UNCT reporting (UN INFO<sup>116</sup>) and the UNSDG Output Indicator Framework.<sup>117</sup>
- (e) UN-Water will summarize the main achievements, highlights and challenges in its annual report and include an update on SWS implementation progress in the annual UN-Water progress report to the HLCP. The UN-Water Chair will circulate the report of the annual UN-Water Principals meeting to all relevant United Nations entities.
- (f) Monitoring and reporting analysis from the SWS can also inform recommendations and actions to improve United Nations entity cohesion and effectiveness in delivering more integrated policy advice and support to countries on water and sanitation development priorities. This information could also inform the Secretary-General's reporting on implementation of the General Assembly's QCPR of operational activities for development. Reporting on results and impacts from the SWS presents an opportunity for the United Nations to showcase increased operational effectiveness and system-wide delivery of water and sanitation support through a collaborative plan for operational implementation with a country-level focus.
- (g) Resolution [77/334](#) invites the Secretary-General to submit "a report taking into account actions, initiatives, best practices and lessons learned, as well as obstacles and constraints encountered, to assess progress on the implementation of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018–2028, for the consideration of the General Assembly at its eighty-first session", which can include an update on progress and main achievements from the SWS.

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116 UNSDG, [Welcome to UN INFO](#).

117 UNSDG, [Output Indicator Framework](#).



ENTRY POINTS	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	GOAL
<p>1. Lead and inspire collective action on water and sanitation.</p>	<p><b>Output 1.1.</b> Water and sanitation issues are a strategic leadership priority for the United Nations system.  <b>Output 1.2.</b> Action is inspired by compelling and unified United Nations system communications and messaging on water and sanitation.</p>	<p><b>Outcome 1.</b> Strengthened United Nations system-wide leadership on water and sanitation.</p>	<p><b>VISION</b>                      A world with accessible, available and sustainably managed water and sanitation for all people and the planet.</p>
<p>2. Engage better for countries by leveraging whole-of-United Nations system support and by mobilizing stakeholders and partnerships for water and sanitation.</p>	<p><b>Output 2.1.</b> Expertise and resources are fully leveraged by the United Nations system to support countries, with emphasis on the water and sanitation needs of developing countries.  <b>Output 2.2.</b> Diverse stakeholders and partnerships are mobilized by the United Nations system to support countries' progress on water and sanitation.</p>	<p><b>Outcome 2.</b> Enhanced demand-driven support to countries on water and sanitation through mobilization of available capacities and resources of the United Nations system and its partners at all levels to leave no one behind, with emphasis on the needs of developing countries.</p>	<p><b>IMPACT</b>                      A more holistic, integrated approach to the sustainable management of water and sanitation that accelerates progress on internationally agreed water-related goals and targets and leaves no one behind.</p>
<p>3. Align United Nations system support for the integration of water and sanitation issues across sectors and mainstreaming into intergovernmental processes.</p>	<p><b>Output 3.1.</b> Operational and financial strategies, policies and approaches of the United Nations system are aligned to harness complementarity.  <b>Output 3.2.</b> Integrated policy frameworks to manage water and sanitation across sectors are supported by the United Nations system using latest data and evidence.  <b>Output 3.3.</b> Mainstreaming of water- and sanitation-related issues into intergovernmental processes led by Member States is supported by the United Nations system.</p>	<p><b>Outcome 3.</b> Improved policy coherence on water and sanitation through United Nations system support for integration across sectors and mainstreaming into intergovernmental processes led by Member States.</p>	<p><b>GOAL</b>                      To enhance United Nations system-wide coordination and delivery of water and sanitation priorities in support of countries to accelerate progress on national plans and priorities, internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, realization of human rights, and transformative solutions to current and future water and sanitation challenges for the benefit of all people and the planet.</p>
<p>4. Accelerate progress and transformational change by unifying United Nations system support through the five SDG 6 global accelerators: financing, data and information, capacity development, innovation and governance.</p>	<p><b>Output 4.1.</b> Financing strategies, frameworks and plans for investing in water and sanitation across sectors are prepared and implemented with United Nations system support, with emphasis on the financing needs of developing countries.  <b>Output 4.2.</b> High-quality, disaggregated water and sanitation data and information are available and shared transparently through strengthened national and subnational monitoring systems, and regional and global platforms, with support from the United Nations system.  <b>Output 4.3.</b> Institutional and human resources capacity-development support that responds to national needs and priorities is provided by the United Nations system, contributing to a skilled water and sanitation workforce.  <b>Output 4.4.</b> Enabling environments for water and sanitation innovation are supported by the United Nations system, including policies, partnerships and transfer of technology to remove barriers, with emphasis on the needs of developing countries.  <b>Output 4.5.</b> Governance of water and sanitation is improved through United Nations system support, with emphasis on the needs of developing countries.</p>	<p><b>Outcome 4.</b> More impactful United Nations system support to countries to accelerate progress and transformational change, including through the five SDG 6 global accelerators: financing, data and information, capacity development, innovation and governance.</p>	<p><b>GOAL</b>                      To enhance United Nations system-wide coordination and delivery of water and sanitation priorities in support of countries to accelerate progress on national plans and priorities, internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, realization of human rights, and transformative solutions to current and future water and sanitation challenges for the benefit of all people and the planet.</p>
<p>5. Account for progress through joint review and learning.</p>	<p><b>Output 5.1.</b> Progress on the implementation of the United Nations System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation is reviewed jointly by the United Nations system at technical and leadership levels.  <b>Output 5.2.</b> Progress on water-related goals and targets is reviewed through joint learning and exchange among all actors, with support from the United Nations system.</p>	<p><b>Outcome 5.</b> Strengthened accountability for progress on water and sanitation through joint review and learning.</p>	<p><b>GOAL</b>                      To enhance United Nations system-wide coordination and delivery of water and sanitation priorities in support of countries to accelerate progress on national plans and priorities, internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, realization of human rights, and transformative solutions to current and future water and sanitation challenges for the benefit of all people and the planet.</p>



# **Annex I. Approach to the Collaborative Implementation Plan**

## A. Terms of reference

- 1 *Context:* United Nations General Assembly resolution [77/334](#) requests the United Nations Secretary-General to present a United Nations System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation in consultation with Member States before the end of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly. The Secretary-General delegated development of the strategy to UN-Water under leadership of the UN-Water Chair. The implementation of the strategy is guided by an action plan – the Collaborative Implementation Plan (CIP).
- 2 *Purpose and objectives:* The CIP will be an action-oriented, periodically reviewed and evolving part of the United Nations System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation (SWS). Its aim is to support United Nations system-wide action and prioritization for water and sanitation, including common areas of work, joint programming and programmes, and agreed progress indicators for SWS implementation. The CIP will support implementation of the strategy in the following ways:
  - (a) Identify time-bound actions towards the achievement of SWS outputs and outcomes;
  - (b) Show the contributions by United Nations entities and partners and collectively by the United Nations system to facilitate synergies, address gaps and avoid duplication of efforts;
  - (c) Provide a basis for alignment of water and sanitation components of United Nations entity respective strategic plans, work programmes, and results and resources frameworks;
  - (d) Serve as a common agreed framework to jointly review and monitor progress on the SWS.
- 3 *Structure and format:* The CIP will follow the SWS results chain structure. It will be organized into sections based on the five entry points for United Nations system collaborative action on water and sanitation.<sup>1</sup> Each section will include the expected outcome, outputs, and United Nations system-wide and entities' supporting actions and activities, as well as progress indicators and targets for outcomes and at output level, and their means of verification.
- 4 *Roles and responsibilities:* The development of the CIP is delegated to the UN-Water inter-agency coordination mechanism under leadership of the UN-Water Chair.
- 5 *Time frame:* The CIP cycle will ideally align with the cycle of the QCPR of operational activities for development of the United Nations system to facilitate incorporation of orientations and decisions from Member States into the plan. As such, the first CIP cycle is proposed to cover 4 years from 2025 to 2028. This period will additionally provide an opportunity for consideration of any key messages, recommendations and decisions resulting from the United Nations water conference in 2026 mandated by resolution [77/334](#). After the first CIP cycle, the next CIP time frame will help orient the development framework for water and sanitation post-2030.
- 6 *Process:* The development of the CIP (a) and progress review (b) will take place as follows:
  - (a) CIP development process: After approval of the SWS by the High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP), UN-Water, under leadership of the UN-Water Chair, will prepare the first CIP:
    - (i) The draft CIP will be developed as an agenda item during the 39th UN-Water Meeting. The UN-Water Technical Advisory Unit will coordinate with United Nations system actors, including the United Nations Development Coordination Office and the resident coordinator (RC) system, that are not participating in the UN-Water Meeting to provide their timely contributions to the CIP for their respective areas.

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1 The five entry points are: (1) lead and inspire collective action on water and sanitation; (2) engage better for countries by leveraging whole-of-United Nations system support and by mobilizing stakeholders and partnerships for water and sanitation; (3) align United Nations system support for the integration of water and sanitation issues across sectors and mainstreaming into intergovernmental processes; (4) accelerate progress and transformational change by unifying United Nations system support through the five Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 global accelerators: financing, data and information, capacity development, innovation and governance; and (5) account for progress through joint review and learning.

- (ii) The draft CIP annotated outline will be endorsed during the UN-Water Principals meeting, convened under leadership of the UN-Water Chair. The draft CIP will be approved at the 40th UN-Water Meeting.
  - (iii) Following endorsement, United Nations entities will incorporate CIP activities into their respective workplans and inter-agency elements into the UN-Water biennial work programme.
  - (iv) Contributions by United Nations entities to the CIP can be further supported, endorsed and resourced through their respective governing bodies (for example, executive boards) and corporate planning processes.
- (b) CIP progress review and reporting: The CIP is intended to be an agile 'living document' that can be reviewed, amended and updated regularly, to adapt to changing needs and new opportunities:
- (i) Within the United Nations system, progress will be reviewed at the technical level through the UN-Water inter-agency coordination mechanism during the UN-Water biannual meetings. The outcomes of these reviews will be reported in the UN-Water annual report and UN-Water's annual report to the HLCP. Maximum efforts will be made to keep reporting light touch and to use existing monitoring and reporting systems.
  - (ii) Progress will be reviewed annually at the leadership level during the annual United Nations executive-level meeting. The UN-Water Chair will circulate the report of this meeting to United Nations entities.
  - (iii) The United Nations system will have the opportunity to jointly review progress and learning with Member States and relevant stakeholders during the High-Level Political Forum Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 and Water Action Agenda Special Event, forthcoming United Nations conferences on water (as outlined in resolution [77/334](#)) and in-depth reviews of SDG 6 at the HLPF.

## B. Summary of illustrative supporting actions

- 7 To support operationalization and implementation of the SWS at all levels, some illustrative supporting actions have been identified for each output. These provide examples of areas where the United Nations system can use its comparative advantage to support countries and help unify support from the international community to enhance the impact of local and international cooperation. These actions (shown in the table) are indicative; they are not meant to be prescriptive or exhaustive, and are offered as suggestions that can be adapted based on context, needs and mandates.

# United Nations system illustrative supportive actions for SWS operationalization and implementation

## Entry Point 1. Lead and inspire collective action on water and sanitation

### OUTCOME 1. STRENGTHENED UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM-WIDE LEADERSHIP ON WATER AND SANITATION

#### Output 1.1. Water and sanitation issues are a strategic leadership priority for the United Nations system

- *Country level:* RCs/United Nations country teams (UNCTs) can facilitate joint, strategic United Nations system-wide leadership on water- and sanitation-related issues in countries. In response to national needs and priorities, RCs/UNCTs can advocate with governments for greater prioritization of water and sanitation in national development plans and budgets.
- *Regional level:* Executive secretaries of regional commissions and Principals of other United Nations regional offices (for example, regional directors) can support integration of water- and sanitation-related issues into regional sustainable development forums, commission sessions and regional collaborative platforms. They can support contextualization and localization of the global water dialogue to address regional and local water- and sanitation-related issues and use their coordination and convening role to promote water cooperation as an opportunity for regional integration.
- *Global level:* The Principals of United Nations entities can provide global leadership for their respective mandated areas on linkages between water with major global topics ranging from climate change, biodiversity, desertification and pollution to sustainable cities, finance for development and food systems to health, renewable energy, resilience and humanitarian response. All entities are mandated to do this with due consideration for human rights,<sup>a</sup> gender equality and disability inclusion.

#### Output 1.2. Action is inspired by compelling and unified United Nations system communications and messaging on water and sanitation

- *Country level:* RCs/UNCTs/United Nations information centres can amplify and adapt water- and sanitation-related communications materials and campaigns to engage and mobilize key stakeholders and the public to share knowledge, demand ambition and find solutions.
- *Global and regional levels:* United Nations entities, individually and collectively through the UN-Water inter-agency coordination mechanism, can play an active role in raising visibility through communications and advocating for the prioritization of water and sanitation issues, particularly where these can serve to strengthen interlinkages between water and sanitation with major global topics and build bridges between the various components of the global and regional policy landscape (Annex II).
- *Inter-agency level:* Through the extensive networks of its Members (United Nations entities) and Partners, UN-Water can coordinate and disseminate unified, clear and coherent United Nations messaging on water and sanitation issues to Member States.
- Communications plans can be made for major international conferences and other events, with emphasis on opportunities in other sectors that use and impact water and sanitation to raise greater awareness on the important interlinkages with sustainable management of water and sanitation. Targeted communication efforts can be organized around major high-level United Nations conferences and events, in close collaboration with the main affiliated United Nations entities, to highlight water and sanitation aspects.
- The UN-Water Task Forces on World Water Day and World Toilet Day will continue to coordinate these United Nations international observances.

## Entry Point 2. Engage better for countries by leveraging whole-of-United Nations system support and by mobilizing stakeholders and partnerships for water and sanitation

### OUTCOME 2. ENHANCED DEMAND-DRIVEN SUPPORT TO COUNTRIES ON WATER AND SANITATION THROUGH MOBILIZATION OF AVAILABLE CAPACITIES AND RESOURCES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM AND ITS PARTNERS AT ALL LEVELS TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND, WITH EMPHASIS ON THE NEEDS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

#### Output 2.1. Expertise and resources are fully leveraged by the United Nations system to support countries, with emphasis on the water and sanitation needs of developing countries

- *Country level:* RCs/UNCTs can actively seek and utilize expertise and data available from United Nations resident and non-resident entities, regional commissions and UN-Water Task Force on country engagement to inform country programme planning processes including common country analysis (CCA) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), and other United Nations plans. In contexts with specific water-related risks, RCs can involve specific, non-resident expertise to contribute risk analyses.
- Throughout programming cycles, when new needs or requests for support are received that cannot be responded to within the capacity of the UNCT resident and non-resident entities, RCs/UNCTs can solicit on-demand support from the UN-Water Task Force on country level engagement.
- *Inter-agency level:* UN-Water Members and Partners can respond to requests from RCs/UNCTs for data, policy and technical advice for CCA, cooperation framework design and water- and sanitation-related results groups or subgroups. UN-Water will ensure that RCs/UNCTs and other country- and regional-level United Nations mechanisms and structures can readily draw on the full expertise of the United Nations system and its partners – resident and non-resident – when needed.

#### Output 2.2. Diverse stakeholders and partnerships are mobilized by the United Nations system to support countries' progress on water and sanitation

- *Country level:* RCs/UNCTs can work with partners and inclusive, diverse multi-stakeholder groups to support implementation of the UNSDCF, voluntary commitments (for example, the Water Action Agenda) and decisions from United Nations intergovernmental processes and mechanisms. Relevant stakeholders can include local communities, the private sector, scientific and academic institutions, civil society and under-represented groups such as women, youth, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, people in vulnerable situations and others based on the local context.
- RCs/UNCTs can support national and local governments to establish and operationalize policies and procedures for participation of local communities in water and sanitation management (SDG target 6.b).
- *Partners:* UN-Water Partners are an integral part of UN-Water and bring unique contributions to UN-Water's activities, in terms of diversifying the expertise of the UN-Water network, and by enabling increased outreach across levels through their diverse multi-stakeholder networks. Continuously optimizing Partners' engagements by increasing the opportunities for constructive contributions will remain a focus, to enable Partners' networks to have a multiplier effect for UN-Water initiatives. Partners and their expertise are key to the scaling of UN-Water's impact to regional and country levels.<sup>b</sup>
- United Nations entities can support solidarity-based partnerships and water operators' partnerships.
- Other United Nations system partnership mechanisms can also be engaged to ensure coherence and complementarity, for example in humanitarian settings through the Inter-agency Standing Committee Clusters (for example, the Global WASH Cluster).

### Entry Point 3. Align United Nations system support for the integration of water and sanitation issues across sectors and mainstreaming into intergovernmental processes

#### **OUTCOME 3. IMPROVED POLICY COHERENCE ON WATER AND SANITATION THROUGH UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM SUPPORT FOR INTEGRATION ACROSS SECTORS AND MAINSTREAMING INTO INTERGOVERNMENTAL PROCESSES LED BY MEMBER STATES**

##### **Output 3.1. Operational and financial strategies, policies and approaches of the United Nations system for water and sanitation are aligned to harness complementarity**

- *Country level:* RCs/UNCTs can implement water- and sanitation-related priorities from the UNSDCF through joint programming, including implementation through joint workplans. Joint programming as part of UNSDCF preparation can lead to joint programmes that require closer joint work and have specific requirements.<sup>c</sup> Joint programmes can be an instrument to mobilize inter-agency and cross-sectoral expertise and policy support and financial resources through inter-agency pooled fund mechanisms.
- Throughout programming cycles, RCs/UNCTs can promote country-level inter-agency coordination for water- and sanitation-related programming across the UNSDCF. While coordination around water, sanitation and hygiene often exists in UNCTs, there are needs and opportunities to strengthen coordination across the water cycle and break silos between sectors. RCs/UNCTs can consider establishing a thematic results group or a subgroup on water- and sanitation-related issues to coordinate programming on “water- and sanitation-related issues” across the water cycle, including sanitation, or respond on an ad hoc basis to provide joint support in response to requests from government.<sup>d</sup>
- *Inter-agency level:* UN-Water can coordinate with other inter-agency mechanisms including the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, the United Nations Environmental Management Group, UN-Energy and UN-Oceans among others across the United Nations system,<sup>e</sup> to ensure that approaches to water- and sanitation-related issues are coordinated, coherent and complementary across the United Nations system’s work.
- *Within United Nations system programming and operations:* Water- and sanitation-related programmes and operations can align with the strategy for sustainability management in the United Nations system, 2020–2030, Phase I on environmental sustainability in the area of management<sup>f</sup> initiative and system-wide environmental and social sustainability standards.<sup>g</sup> United Nations entities can share good practices from across the United Nations system, together with implementing partners and suppliers, on managing the water and waste footprint of United Nations operations.
- United Nations entities can incorporate water-related risk considerations into strategies and programmes, as called for in the United Nations system-wide plan of action on disaster risk reduction for resilience.<sup>h</sup>

### **Output 3.2. Integrated policy frameworks to manage water and sanitation across sectors are supported by the United Nations system using latest data and evidence**

- *Country level:* RC/UNCTs can use their convening power to promote cross-sectoral processes across line ministries to address interconnected water- and sanitation-related issues in strategies, policies, plans, budgets and financing plans for new investments in water- and sanitation-related and water-dependent projects. They can support countries to develop and adopt national mechanisms for cross-sectoral coordination and mutually agreed policies, including with the inclusive participation of diverse partners and stakeholders.<sup>i</sup>
- *Regional level:* Regional economic commissions and regional offices can promote integrated cross-sectoral approaches during the regional forums on sustainable development and other regional high-level meetings, dialogues and events, and address the transboundary dimensions as an opportunity to strengthen regional integration, including with the inclusive participation of diverse partners and stakeholders.<sup>j</sup>
- *Inter-agency level:* The UN-Water inter-agency coordination mechanism can develop policy briefs to share lessons learned and good practices on transformative policy approaches to contribute to the evidence base for integrated policy development.

### **Output 3.3. Mainstreaming of water- and sanitation-related issues into intergovernmental processes led by Member States is supported by the United Nations system**

- *Country level:* RCs/UNCTs can support Members States to engage in global and regional intergovernmental processes by providing countries with technical support, data and information to prepare commitments and engage in preparatory processes and by aligning United Nations country programming and resources to support implementation of relevant decisions and national commitments.
- RCs/UNCTs can support follow-up on the achievement of national goals and targets, for instance, those from country-level climate-related frameworks (for example, nationally determined contributions and national adaptation plans), biodiversity frameworks (for example, national biodiversity strategies and action plans) and voluntary commitments (for example, the Water Action Agenda). RCs/UNCTs can support countries to adopt measures to realize the human rights to water and sanitation, a clean and healthy environment and other related human rights.
- *Regional level:* Regional commissions and regional offices can help amplify the dissemination of information, support regional consultations and preparatory processes, and develop region-specific advocacy and policy advice.
- *Inter-agency level:* The United Nations system can provide mapping of water- and sanitation-related issues in different global and regional intergovernmental processes and undertake analysis of water- and sanitation-related elements and decisions in official texts and decisions. The UN-Water inter-agency coordination mechanism with the United Nations entities affiliated with these processes (UN-Water Members) can provide policy advice, and technical and operational support.
- The United Nations system can help facilitate informal dialogue on water and sanitation policy issues, for example as official and unofficial side events, that span across existing intergovernmental processes, for instance, the three “Rio Conventions” (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Convention on Biological Diversity and United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification), to help promote understanding of interlinkages and improve policy coherence on water-related goals and targets.<sup>i</sup>



Entry Point 4. Accelerate progress and transformational change by unifying United Nations system support through the five SDG 6 global accelerators: financing, data and information, capacity development, innovation and governance

**OUTCOME 4. MORE IMPACTFUL UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM SUPPORT TO COUNTRIES TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS AND TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE, INCLUDING THROUGH THE FIVE SDG 6 GLOBAL ACCELERATORS: FINANCING, DATA AND INFORMATION, CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT, INNOVATION AND GOVERNANCE**

**Output 4.1. Financing strategies, frameworks and plans for investing in water and sanitation across sectors are prepared and implemented with United Nations system support, with emphasis on the financing needs of developing countries**

Excerpt from the *SDG 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023*: “**The blueprint for finance.** A widespread absence of enabling environments for efficient investment and spending, and a lack of well-prepared bankable projects and sustainable financing models make the water sector unattractive for investment. New investments must be attracted by better enabling environments, and existing finances must be used more efficiently and effectively. The global development finance architecture needs to be reformed to provide more funding to governments.”<sup>j</sup>

- *Country level*: RCs/UNCTs can support countries to prepare a costed and inclusive financing strategy for water and sanitation, in accordance with international human rights standards. They can work with line ministries and parliaments to include the financing requirements for water and sanitation in national budgets and financing frameworks, including integrated national financing frameworks.<sup>j</sup>
- RCs/UNCTs can help strengthen the national enabling environment for financing, including policies and legal and regulatory frameworks, to make investment in water and sanitation more attractive. They can provide technical support to develop a pipeline of bankable projects and ensure implementation capacity to manage the projects and sustain post-project operations.
- RCs/UNCTs can use their convening power to help connect the demand for finance with the supply of finance.<sup>k</sup> This can be done in close collaboration with global and regional funds, international finance institutions, philanthropic foundations, and other sources of public and private capital.
- *Regional level*: Regional commissions and regional offices can support countries to exchange experiences on financing. They can use their convening power to help support financing proposals and mechanisms for regional and subregional/basin-level transboundary programmes and projects.
- United Nations entities can collaborate with countries and partners to develop innovative financing mechanisms<sup>l</sup> and investment strategies that promote integrated solutions, include those that are water smart, circular, resilient, inclusive and nature based.<sup>l</sup>
- *Inter-agency level*: UN-Water Members and Partners can support multi-stakeholder platforms that address water financing issues.
- United Nations entities can increase collaboration on climate finance proposals for water- and sanitation-related areas and can help unlock new resources from climate funds, particularly for developing countries and in fragile contexts. United Nations entities can collaborate to provide data, scientific information and other technical assistance on the preparation of proposals, and support implementation of climate-funded projects and programmes, as well as act as accredited entities to receive climate funds. For example, United Nations entities that are accredited entities with the Green Climate Fund can coordinate with other United Nations entities for multi-sectoral projects that leverage United Nations expertise and capacities in their respective mandated areas.

**Output 4.2. High-quality, disaggregated water and sanitation data and information are available and shared transparently through strengthened national and subnational monitoring systems, and regional and global platforms, with support from the United Nations system**

Excerpt from the *SDG 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023*: “**The blueprint for data and information.** In too many countries, policymakers lack credible and timely data for decision-making due to inadequate monitoring and reporting systems, and insufficient resources. National monitoring, reporting and data dissemination systems must be strengthened to cover all SDG 6 global indicators, combining data sets from all stakeholders. Earth observation technologies and improved data practices, such as standardization and disaggregation, can improve decision-making and reduce inequalities.”<sup>1</sup>

- *Country level:* RCs/UNCTs can use latest data and information in preparation of United Nations country programmes (CCA and UNSDCF) and plans. United Nations entities can provide support to strengthen national monitoring systems. Data-collection activities can be supported in workplans and budgets including capacity-building support. RCs/UNCTs can support governments to use latest data and information in developing national and subnational evidence-based policies, strategies, plans and programmes.
- UNCTs can link with United Nations Humanitarian Country Team counterparts to consider linkages between development and humanitarian data and monitoring systems to support resilience and preparedness planning.
- *Regional level:* Regional commissions and regional offices can undertake regional assessments to inform policymakers and decision makers, provide support and facilitate sharing between country-level national data collection and analysis with global and regional monitoring and reporting efforts.
- *Global level:* United Nations entities with mandated roles for global monitoring and reporting on water and sanitation targets and indicators can include related data and information activities in strategic plans and ensure sufficient resourcing.
- *Partners:* Partners can support data collection and analysis and, promote the use of data and evidence in water and sanitation policymaking and decision-making processes.

### **Output 4.3. Institutional and human resources capacity-development support that responds to national needs and priorities is provided by the United Nations system, contributing to a skilled water and sanitation workforce**

Excerpt from the *SDG 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023*: “**The blueprint for capacity development.** There are growing gaps in the water and sanitation workforce due to limited access to education, weak supportive frameworks, and poor rates of recruitment and retention of skilled staff, particularly women. Education and employers need to collaborate to promote water and sanitation ‘literacy’ in curricula and to attract, train and retain workers, especially women and youth. There is a need for national-level workforce assessments and studies to determine current in-demand and future skills, with a view towards emerging technologies.”<sup>j</sup>

- *Country level:* RCs/UNCTs can support countries to understand and respond to capacity-development needs for water and sanitation through undertaking national-level workforce assessments and studies to determine current in-demand and future skills, with a view towards emerging technologies and expanding capacity among women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and other under-represented groups.
- Support for human resources and institutional capacity development, based on local needs, can be included as a vital part of United Nations country programme components for water and sanitation.
- *Global and regional levels:* United Nations entities can develop new and update existing capacity-development programmes related to the mandated areas through partnerships with academic and other partners with new and latest areas of expertise.
- United Nations entities can work with public and private sector partners to promote dignified, professionalized, equal and safe employment in water- and sanitation-related fields, related to their respective mandated areas.
- *Inter-agency level:* United Nations entities and partners can collaborate on cross-agency capacity-building initiatives and skills transfer, and consider secondment of staff on water- and sanitation-related issues between entities to support staff learning and greater multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary capacities across the United Nations system. Efforts can also be made to increase human resources mobility between United Nations entities and partners to diversify career pathways for United Nations system staff with expertise in areas related to water and sanitation.

### **Output 4.4. Enabling environments for water and sanitation innovation are supported by the United Nations system, including policies, partnerships and transfer of technology to remove barriers, with emphasis on the needs of developing countries**

Excerpt from the *SDG 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023*: “**The blueprint for innovation.** From planning to implementation, innovation is too limited and slow to meet the need for rapid, transformative change. Innovative approaches can be sped and scaled up through supportive policies, utilizing technology such as artificial intelligence, and customizing innovations to local contexts.”<sup>j</sup>

- *Country level:* RCs/UNCTs can support countries to strengthen the enabling environment for innovative approaches and use of innovative technologies through policy advice on improving policies, legal and regulatory frameworks, and can use their convening power to help foster the innovation-enabling environment through diverse partnerships.<sup>m</sup> RCs/UNCTs can help countries and partners identify areas where innovative solutions are needed and facilitate exchange of knowledge and practices and transfer technology, including providing support to customize it for local needs.
- *Regional level:* Regional commissions and other United Nations system regional offices can provide support and facilitate sharing of innovative practices, policies, institutional models and technologies between countries in the region.
- *Inter-agency level:* The UN-Water Task Force on Innovation can document learning and good practice, build evidence and develop policy briefs to inform the work of the United Nations system, Members States and the international community.

#### **Output 4.5. Governance of water and sanitation is improved through United Nations system support, with emphasis on the needs of developing countries**

Excerpt from the *SDG 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023*: “The blueprint for governance. Water governance is ineffective due to institutional weakness and fragmentation, and poor regulation, accountability and transparency. Improving policy coherence and collaboration across different sectors and national borders will magnify the effectiveness of water and sanitation management and support social cohesion and international peace.”<sup>1</sup>

- *Country level*: RC/UNCT members already support government-led and interministerial coordination on water and sanitation in many countries. This can be further reinforced and enhanced, particularly cross-sectoral coordination linking water, sanitation and hygiene with economic and environmental aspects of integrated water management and increasing inclusive multi-stakeholder participation.
- RCs/UNCTs can provide holistic cross-government advice on policies, strategies and regulatory frameworks with clear roles and responsibilities for addressing water and sanitation challenges and managing trade-offs.
- UNCTs can support the uptake and application of human rights based approaches for water and sanitation in policies and promote inclusion of diverse partners and stakeholders in decision-making processes including civil society, concerned populations, local communities, the private sector, women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and other under-represented groups.<sup>8</sup>
- *Regional level*: Regional commissions and regional offices can support multi-stakeholder coordination on water and sanitation issues at the regional and subregional levels, including support for transboundary river basin, lake and aquifer level coordination and exchange to support regional integration.
- The United Nations system can support countries that express interest in acceding, implementing and complying with the United Nations Water Conventions. In countries that express interest, RCs/UNCTs can include support for transboundary cooperation into CCA and the UNSDCF.

### Entry Point 5. Account for progress through joint review and learning

#### **OUTCOME 5. STRENGTHENED ACCOUNTABILITY FOR PROGRESS ON WATER AND SANITATION THROUGH JOINT REVIEW AND LEARNING**

##### **Output 5.1. Progress on the implementation of the United Nations System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation is reviewed jointly by the United Nations system at technical and leadership levels**

- Specific agreed actions to monitor and review the SWS are included in Chapter IV of the main document.
- *Country level*: RCs/UNCTs can organize reviews of joint workplans for water- and sanitation-related joint programming with partners to learn lessons and exchange experiences. UNCTs can document case studies of good examples and success stories for sharing as part of a web-based SWS implementation “toolbox” that will contain supporting resources for country teams.
- United Nations entities can coordinate and share programme evaluations and management response action plans, and periodically undertake joint evaluation synthesis exercises for water and sanitation.<sup>9</sup>
- *Inter-agency level*: UN-Water biannual meetings can be an opportunity for United Nations entities and partners to exchange experiences on SWS implementation – what is working, what is not – and document learning and case studies of good examples and success stories.

## Output 5.2. Progress on water-related goals and targets is reviewed through joint learning and exchange among all actors, with support from the United Nations system

- *Country level:* RCs/UNCTs can support government-led joint sector reviews to assess progress on national plans, as well as internationally agreed goals and targets including voluntary national reviews (VNRs) and stocktaking processes. They can use their convening power to facilitate country-level learning opportunities for dialogue and exchange of experiences between local governments, communities and diverse partners and stakeholders, with particular attention on local communities, concerned populations, Indigenous Peoples, women, youth, persons with disabilities and other under-represented groups.
- RCs/UNCTs can support countries to document lessons learned and good practices that can be presented and shared during regional and global exchanges, and as part of South–South, North–South and triangular cooperation arrangements. Country-level reviews and reporting on voluntary commitments to the Water Action Agenda and SDG Action Space can also be supported through multi-stakeholder joint review and learning processes.
- *Global and regional levels:* United Nations entities can facilitate transparent and timely exchange and dialogue on good practices and lessons learned that governments could draw upon in implementing their own context-specific policies and strategies. The results from these experiences can be documented and shared during intergovernmental meetings and conferences to enhance knowledge management and international cooperation.
- *Inter-agency level:* UN-Water Members and Partners can support joint review opportunities at national and regional levels by making available data and reports on progress towards SDG 6 targets by the UN-Water Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG 6. These data are publicly available and can be used by national and regional bodies to review progress.
- UN-Water Members and Partners can undertake analysis of VNRs to identify: (a) the commitments Member States have made on water and sanitation and offer support and (b) the issues, gaps, good practices and successes in work related to water and sanitation progress, including the rights to water and sanitation.

a António Guterres, *The Highest Aspiration: A Call to Action for Human Rights* (United Nations, 2020).

b UN-Water, *UN-Water 2030 Strategy* (Geneva, United Nations, 2020).

c United Nations Sustainable Development Group, *Guidance Note on a New Generation of Joint Programmes* (2022).

d UN-Water, *UN-Water Country Level Engagement – Insights From 2020-2021 Pilot Phase And Proposed Way Forward* (Geneva, United Nations, 2022).

e Other United Nations system inter-agency coordination mechanisms that might be relevant include the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs/Inter-Agency Standing Committee cluster coordination in settings with a United Nations supported humanitarian response and the United Nations Climate Security Mechanism. An example approach is that presented by the Global WASH Cluster at the UN 2023 Water Conference side event: *Joined-up Action for Humanitarian and Development Collective Outcomes to Accelerate SDG 6*.

f [CEB/2019/1/Add.1](#).

g [CEB/2021/2/Add.1](#).

h United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination, *UN Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience: Towards a Risk-informed and Integrated Approach to Sustainable Development* (2016).

i United Nations, *Report of the United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028* (New York, 2023). A/CONF.240/2023/10.

j UN-Water, *Blueprint for Acceleration: Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023* (Geneva, United Nations, 2023).

k Integrated National Financing Frameworks, *Welcome to the Integrated National Financing Framework Knowledge Platform*.

l United Nations Sustainable Development Group, *Six Transitions: Investment Pathways to Deliver the SDGs* (2023).

m United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *Ensuring Safe Water and Sanitation for All: A Solution through Science, Technology and Innovation* (United Nations, 2023).

n UN-Water, *Roadmap for the Integration of Human Rights to Water and Sanitation* (Geneva, United Nations, 2022).

o For example, United Nations Children’s Fund, *Evaluation Synthesis of United Nations System and Development Bank Work Towards SDG 6* (New York, 2021).



# **Annex II. Context of the United Nations System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation**

## A. Sustainable Development Goal 6 at the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The text in this section is reproduced from the UN-Water report, *Blueprint for Acceleration: Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023*.<sup>1</sup>

**“Water is humanity’s lifeblood. From the food we eat. To the ecosystems and biodiversity that enrich our world. To the prosperity that sustains nations. To the economic engines of agriculture, manufacturing and energy generation. To our health, hygiene and survival itself. Water is a human right – and a common development denominator to shape a better future.”**

António Guterres, Secretary-General,  
22 March 2023<sup>2</sup>

### Global water challenges

The first United Nations Water Conference (held in Mar del Plata, Argentina, in 1977) warned about an impending water crisis if action was not taken.<sup>3</sup> The New York

conference in 2023 acknowledged that the water crisis is already here, and that it is becoming worse.

Global water challenges comprise all freshwater-related matters. These include: surface water and groundwater resources; the sanitation cycle; the interface between fresh water and seawater; freshwater resources in terms of their quality, quantity, development, management, monitoring and use (i.e. domestic uses, agriculture and ecosystem requirements); disaster risk; and climate-related water challenges.<sup>4</sup>

“Too little, too much, and too dirty water” has become the mantra for the global water crisis:<sup>5</sup>

- **Too little water** (due to drought, depletion of water resources, or lack of infrastructure and services) means people cannot get enough to drink, wash or irrigate crops. Lakes and rivers can run dry – harming plants, fish and other wildlife, and eventually leading to desertification. Economic growth can be limited when there is insufficient water supply for agriculture, industry or urban development. Water shortages can also be a trigger for social tension and unrest within and among communities, and water disputes across international borders in the case of transboundary waters and aquifers.
- **Too much water** (from excessive rainfall, rapid melting of snow and ice, or rising sea levels, preventing drainage) means communities and ecosystems around the world are facing challenges. These include: loss of life and displacement; costly damage to homes, buildings and roads; polluted drinking water systems; spread of waterborne diseases related to overflowing sewerage; upsurges in disease-carrying mosquitos and pests; malnutrition and food insecurity; destruction of crops

1 UN-Water, *Blueprint for Acceleration: Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023* (Geneva, United Nations, 2023).

2 United Nations, *Historic UN Conference Marks Watershed Moment to Tackle Global Water Crisis and Ensure Water-secure Future* (New York, 2023).

3 United Nations, *Water Development and Management: Proceedings of the United Nations Water Conference*. Water Development, Supply and Management Series (Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1978).

4 United Nations, *UN 2023 Water Conference FAQ*.

5 Guangze Chen, *Tackling a crisis of too much, too little, too polluted* (World Bank, 2018); David Boyd, “Too dirty, too little, too much: The global water crisis and human rights” (United Nations, 2020); Global Commission on the Economics of Water, *The What, Why and How of the World Water Crisis: Global Commission on the Economics of Water Phase 1 Review and Findings* (Paris, 2023).

and livestock; flash floods; contaminated and eroded soils; landslides; and mudslides.

- **Too dirty or polluted water** (caused by accelerated urbanization, population growth, economic development, the quantity of domestic and industrial wastewater being generated and its overall pollution load) is increasing globally. Pollutants enter rivers, lakes and oceans, fertilizing blooms of algae that deplete oxygen, thus creating dead zones where little can survive. This further degrades freshwater biodiversity and species populations, and contaminates drinking water.

Many impacts of climate change are felt through water: more intense and frequent droughts, more extreme flooding, more erratic seasonal rainfall and accelerated melting of glaciers. These can have cascading effects on economies, ecosystems, biodiversity and societies. In addition, scientific evidence indicates the Earth's water cycle is changing, alongside continued human activities that aggravate the global water crisis.<sup>6</sup> The water emergency spans many levels – from local to national – crossing borders through transboundary rivers and aquifers, affecting everyone and every living thing.

## The stakes

At the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, progress towards internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, including SDG 6, is alarmingly off track. For most indicators, the current rate of progress is not fast enough to close the gap before 2030. In some regions and countries, for some indicators, progress is even relapsing.

With the growing complexity and intensity of water-related risks on the horizon, failing on water and sanitation undermines all three dimensions of sustainable development: society, economy and the environment. It also undermines human rights, peace and security. Lack of progress on SDG 6 and other

water-related SDG targets can even threaten hard-won development gains in other areas.

Conversely, effectively managing water and sanitation is an essential solution to tackling major pressing global challenges like climate change, affordable and clean energy, biodiversity loss, food insecurity, disease pandemics and epidemics, disasters caused by natural hazards, conflict, extreme poverty and gender inequality. These are all priorities that governments and societies care about.

Water flows throughout the United Nations sustainable development agenda. SDG 6 is highly interlinked and synergistic with all other SDGs in the 2030 Agenda (see figure 1).<sup>7</sup> Accelerated progress on SDG 6 can act as a catalyst for progress on other SDGs, and vice versa. Progress on water and sanitation has a vital role in supporting the “entry points for transformation” identified by the Global Sustainable Development Report 2019<sup>8</sup> to achieve SDGs: human well-being and capabilities, sustainable and just economies, energy decarbonization with universal access, urban and peri-urban development, and global environmental commons.

## SDG 6 in context

The United Nations General Assembly adopted SDG 6 as a dedicated water and sanitation goal at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015. This elevated the importance of water as part of the United Nations sustainable development agenda.<sup>9</sup> This was the consequence of a concerted advocacy effort by Member States and engaged stakeholders for a broader spectrum of water and sanitation issues to be addressed in the 2030 Agenda.

By addressing the entire water cycle and striving for universal coverage of drinking water and sanitation, SDG 6 is far more comprehensive in scope and scale than previous water-related targets adopted by the United Nations. The Millennium Development Goals

<sup>6</sup> Albert Van Dijk and others, *Global Water Monitor: 2022 Summary Report* (Global Water Monitor Consortium, 2022).

<sup>7</sup> UN-Water, *Water and Sanitation Interlinkages Across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Analytical Brief (Geneva, United Nations, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, *The Future is Now: Science for Achieving Sustainable Development, Global Sustainable Development Report 2019* (New York, United Nations, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> Resolution [70/1](#).



(MDGs), over the period 2000 to 2015, monitored only the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation through MDG target 7c.<sup>10</sup> The 2002 Johannesburg Plan of Implementation<sup>11</sup> included a target to develop integrated water resources management (IWRM) plans, but they were never made part of MDGs.

The eight global targets of SDG 6 include: drinking water (target 6.1), sanitation and hygiene (6.2), wastewater treatment and ambient water quality (6.3), water-use efficiency (WUE) and level of water stress (6.4), IWRM and transboundary water cooperation (6.5), water-related ecosystems (6.6), international water cooperation (6.a) and community participation (6.b). Twelve indicators measure the eight targets, as presented in figure 2.

## SDG 6 progress and trends at the halfway milestone

Since the first SDG 6 Synthesis Report was published by UN-Water in 2018, it has been well documented that progress towards SDG 6 targets is alarmingly off track. Now, at the midpoint to 2030, progress towards SDG 6 continues to be well below the pace needed to meet the targets by 2030.

The key messages on SDG 6 progress at the midpoint are as follows:

- To meet the global target of universal access by 2030, progress needs to increase six times faster for safely managed drinking water, five times faster for safely managed sanitation and three times faster for basic hygiene. Access to safely managed drinking water, sanitation and basic hygiene services is still out of reach for billions of people, particularly in rural areas and least developed countries (SDG targets 6.1 and 6.2).
- A significant portion (42 per cent) of household wastewater is not treated properly. Comparable data on total and industrial wastewater flows are lacking in many parts of the world. Although 60 per cent

of the world's monitored water bodies have good ambient water quality, data gaps make it difficult to assess global trends and leave many at risk (SDG target 6.3).

- Water stress has increased globally. Some regions have experienced substantial increases over the past two decades, particularly in the most arid areas, which often rely on non-renewable water resources that will eventually run out. These conditions represent a serious concern for the sustainability of food production and for the resilience of agro-systems in the face of the challenges posed by climate change (SDG target 6.4).
- Doubling the current rate of progress in IWRM implementation is necessary to meet global targets. Only one SDG region is on track to have all its transboundary rivers, lakes and aquifers covered by operational arrangements by 2030 (SDG target 6.5).
- One fifth of the world's river basins are experiencing rapid changes in the area covered by surface waters, indicating flooding and drought events, which are associated with climate change and poor water resource management (SDG target 6.6).
- Official development assistance commitments to the water sector decreased by 12 per cent from 2015 to 2021, and actual disbursements decreased by 15 per cent over the same period, despite the increased funding needed to meet SDG 6 targets (SDG target 6.a).
- National policies and laws increasingly recognize participatory procedures, but implementation has been insufficient (SDG target 6.b).
- On average, United Nations Member States have data for around two thirds of the 12 SDG 6 global indicators. While this represents a major improvement compared to earlier years, there is still a significant knowledge gap.

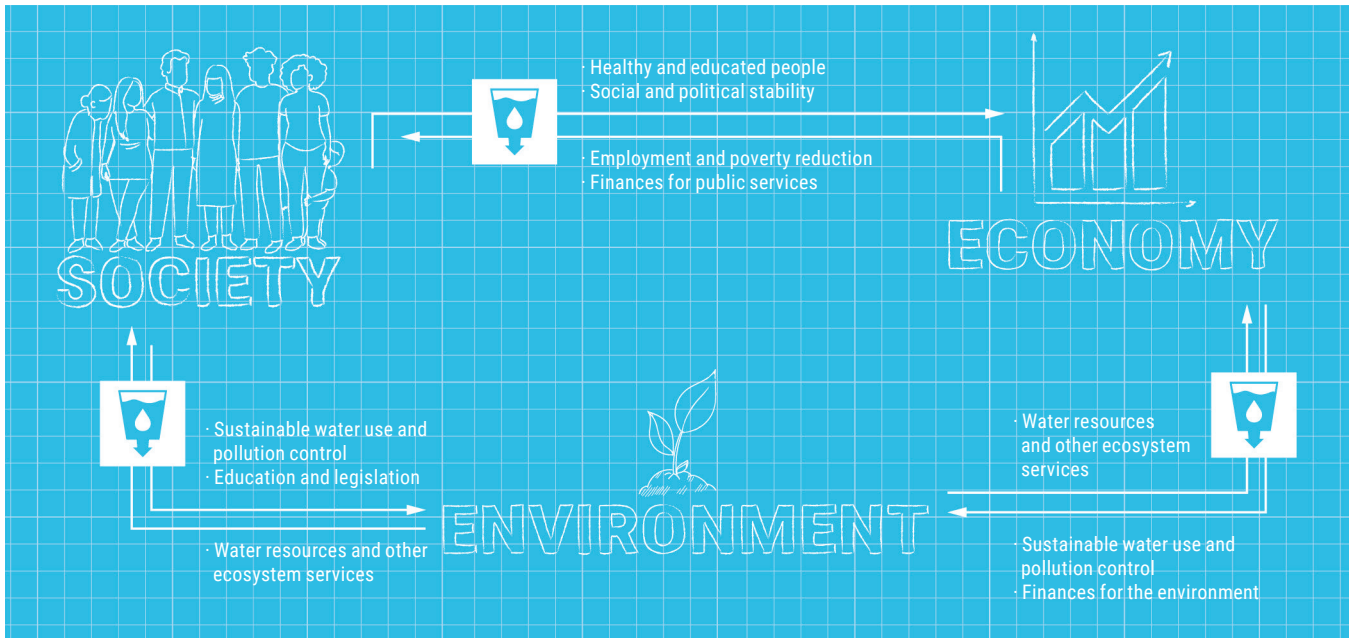
Seven years<sup>12</sup> remain until 2030. A business-as-usual approach will not suffice. A comprehensive step change in the pace of implementation is imperative to close the global gaps on all SDG 6 targets.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations, [Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability](#).

<sup>11</sup> [A/CONF.199/L.6/Rev.2](#).

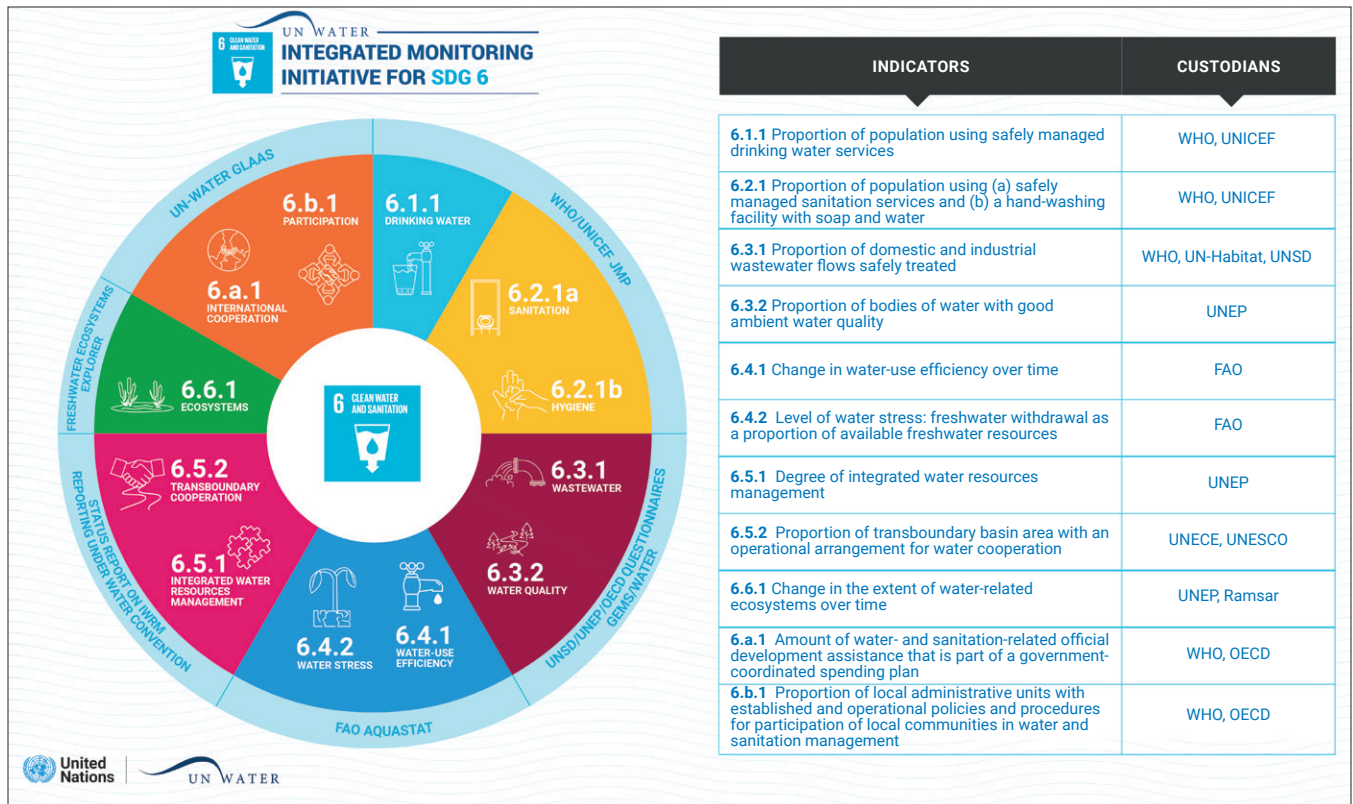
<sup>12</sup> "Seven years" was based on publication of the UN-Water, [Blueprint for Acceleration: Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023](#) (Geneva, United Nations, 2023) in 2023.

Figure 1. SDG 6 interlinks the three dimensions of sustainable development



Source: UN-Water, *Blueprint for Acceleration: Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023* (Geneva, United Nations, 2023), adapted from UN-Water, *Water and Sanitation Interlinkages Across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Analytical Brief* (Geneva, United Nations, 2016).

Figure 2. SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation



Note: AQUASTAT = FAO Global Information System on Water and Agriculture; FAO = Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; GEMS/Water = Global Environment Monitoring System for Water; GLAAS = Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water; IWRM = integrated water resources management; JMP = Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene; OECD = Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; Ramsar = Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat; UNECE = United Nations Economic Commission for Europe; UNEP = United Nations Environment Programme; UNESCO = United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; UN-Habitat = United Nations Human Settlements Programme; UNICEF = United Nations Children's Fund; UNSD = United Nations Statistics Division; WHO = World Health Organization.

## B. Global policy landscape for water and sanitation

The text in this section is adapted from the *UN-Water 2030 Strategy*,<sup>13</sup> and updated for 2024.

The United Nations System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation (SWS), mandated in the United Nations General Assembly resolution on Follow-up to the United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028,<sup>14</sup> is positioned within the context of the global policy landscape. Some key frameworks, which are listed below, provide opportunities and connection points to policy processes during the SWS period.

**Sustainable development agenda.** This landscape is defined by the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs,<sup>15</sup> the associated High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and the updated monitoring of progress towards the SDG targets. This includes the Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs by 2030,<sup>16</sup> the report on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals,<sup>17</sup> the in-depth review of SDG 6 during HLPF 2023<sup>18</sup> and the political declaration of the High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly,<sup>19</sup> as well as the processes related to financing for development,<sup>20</sup> including the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.<sup>21</sup>

United Nations General Assembly resolution [71/222](#) proclaimed the period 2018–2028 as the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, to further improve cooperation, partnership and capacity development in response to the ambitious 2030 Agenda. The United Nations system facilitates implementation of the Decade through the Secretary-General’s plan for the Water Action Decade.<sup>22</sup> The Decade also includes the midterm comprehensive review of the implementation of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028 report of the Secretary-General,<sup>23</sup> the UN 2023 Water Conference<sup>24</sup> called for in resolutions [73/226](#) and [75/212](#), the *Report of the United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028*<sup>25</sup> and the Water Action Agenda.<sup>26</sup>

### **United Nations agreements, conventions, frameworks and conferences addressing water- and sanitation-related issues.**

Water- and sanitation-related issues are addressed in United Nations agreements and intergovernmental processes related to climate, biodiversity, desertification, the environment, disaster risk reduction, urban development, food security, health, oceans, wetlands, gender equality, humanitarian, refugees, migrants, peace and others.

United Nations agreements that include specific and substantive references to water-related issues include the following:

13 UN-Water, *UN-Water 2030 Strategy* (Geneva, United Nations, 2020).

14 Resolution [77/334](#).

15 Resolution [70/1](#).

16 United Nations, *Decade of Action*.

17 [A/78/80-E/2023/64](#), para. 34.

18 [E/HLPF/2023/7](#).

19 [A/RES/78/1](#).

20 United Nations, *Financing for Development*.

21 Resolution [69/313](#).

22 United Nations, *United Nations Secretary-General’s Plan: Water Action Decade 2018-2028* (2018).

23 [A/77/249](#).

24 [United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028; 22–24 March 2023, New York.](#)

25 United Nations, *Report of the United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028* (New York, 2023). A/CONF.240/2023/10.

26 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Water Action Agenda* (2023).

- (a) Paris Agreement, adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,<sup>27</sup> and recent outcomes from United Nations climate change conferences such as the outcome of the first global stocktake<sup>28</sup> (twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 28, 2023), the Glasgow–Sharm el-Sheikh work programme on the global goal on adaptation<sup>29</sup> (COP 28, 2023) and the Sharm el-Sheikh implementation plan<sup>30</sup> (COP 27, 2022), as well as the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) *Climate Change 2023 Synthesis Report* (2023),<sup>31</sup> the IPCC special report on *Global Warming of 1.5°C* (2018)<sup>32</sup> and the IPCC *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate* (2019),<sup>33</sup>
- (b) Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework,<sup>34</sup> United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification 2018–2030 Strategic Framework,<sup>35</sup> and other recently adopted United Nations Environment Assembly resolutions on nature-based solutions, on addressing plastic pollution, on sustainable lake management and on addressing water quality to protect and restore water-related ecosystems,<sup>36</sup>
- (c) Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030,<sup>37</sup> *the Report of the Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030*,<sup>38</sup> *the Report of the Main Findings and Recommendations of the Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030*<sup>39</sup> and the political declaration of the high-level meeting on the midterm review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030,<sup>40</sup>
- (d) Quito Declaration on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements for All, the “New Urban Agenda”,<sup>41</sup>
- (e) Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition<sup>42</sup> and 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit related processes, including the key messages from the global dialogue on water: the game changer for food systems;<sup>43</sup>
- (f) United Nations 2022 Ocean Conference, including the Special Event, “High-Level Symposium on Water, Bridging SDG 6 and SDG 14 – fresh and saltwater communities working together”,<sup>44</sup>
- (g) World Health Assembly resolution [EB144.R5](#) on water, sanitation and hygiene in health-care facilities, adopted on 30 January 2019, and United Nations General Assembly resolution [78/130](#) on sustainable, safe and universal water, sanitation,

27 [FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1](#), decision 1/CP.21, Annex.

28 [FCCC/PA/CMA/2023/16/Add.1](#), decision 1/CMA.5.

29 [FCCC/PA/CMA/2023/16/Add.1](#), decision 2/CMA.5.

30 [FCCC/CP/2022/10/Add.1](#), decision 1/CP.27.

31 IPCC, *Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report* (Geneva, 2023).

32 IPCC, *Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the Impacts of Global Warming of 1.5°C Above Pre-industrial Levels and Related Global Greenhouse Gas Emission Pathways, in the Context of Strengthening the Global Response to the Threat of Climate Change, Sustainable Development, and Efforts to Eradicate Poverty* (Cambridge, United Kingdom, and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2018).

33 IPCC, *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate* (Geneva, 2019).

34 United Nations Environment Programme, [Convention on Biological Diversity](#). CBD/COP/DEC/15/4. 19 December 2022.

35 United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, [The UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework](#) (2018).

36 United Nations Environment, [Fifth session of the UNEP Assembly \(UNEA-5\)](#).

37 Resolution [69/283](#), Annex II.

38 United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, *The Report of the Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030* (Geneva, 2023).

39 United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, *The Report of the Main Findings and Recommendations of the Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030* (Geneva, 2023).

40 Resolution [77/289](#), Annex.

41 Resolution [71/256](#), Annex.

42 Committee on World Food Security, [Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition \(GSF\)](#) (2017).

43 United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021, [“Water: The game changer for food systems”](#).

44 United Nations Ocean Conference, [High-Level Symposium on Water](#) (June 2022).

hygiene, waste and electricity services in health-care facilities;

- (h) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women;<sup>45</sup>
- (i) Human rights frameworks with reference to the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation,<sup>46</sup> notably resolution [64/292](#) on the human right to water and sanitation (2010), resolution [70/169](#) on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation (2015) and subsequent follow-up resolutions on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, including resolution [78/206](#) (2023) and Human Rights Council resolution [52/L.7](#) on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment (2023).

**United Nations conventions on international freshwater issues.** There is also increased attention on water diplomacy and specifically on the link between water, peace and security and transboundary cooperation, following the entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (1997)<sup>47</sup> and the global opening of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (1992).<sup>48</sup> These two United Nations Water Conventions are directly related to SDG 6 implementation through SDG target 6.5.2, with UNECE and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization as the co-custodians for its global monitoring and reporting.

Additionally, the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention),<sup>49</sup> with a mission for the “Conservation

and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world”,<sup>50</sup> is also related directly to SDG 6 through SDG target 6.6, which seeks to protect and restore ecosystems. The Ramsar Convention is a co-custodian of SDG indicator 6.6.1 that monitors change in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time. It provides data submitted by Contracting Parties on wetlands critical to monitoring the status and taking decisions on managing water ecosystems.<sup>51</sup>

**United Nations agreements with a focus on action for developing countries.** In accordance with the mandate from resolution [77/334](#), this SWS has a specific focus on the needs of developing countries, which contributes to the following United Nations action plans: The Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024,<sup>52</sup> the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway<sup>53</sup> and the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the decade 2022–2031.<sup>54</sup>

**United Nations system policy and processes.** This SWS capitalizes on the process of United Nations reform,<sup>55</sup> notably the repositioning of the United Nations Development System through reinvigoration of the role of the resident coordinator system and United Nations country teams.<sup>56</sup> It builds on the policy direction provided by Member States to the United Nations system through resolution [75/233](#) on the QCPR of operational activities for the development of the United Nations system through 2024, and subsequent QCPR-related processes. The SWS is also oriented by the Secretary-General’s Our

<sup>45</sup> Resolution [34/180](#).

<sup>46</sup> UN-Water, [Human rights to water and sanitation](#).

<sup>47</sup> United Nations, [Convention on the Law of Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses](#) (1997).

<sup>48</sup> UNECE, [Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes](#) (1992).

<sup>49</sup> Convention on Wetlands Secretariat, [Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat](#) (1975).

<sup>50</sup> Ramsar Convention, [The 4th Strategic Plan 2016 – 2024, 2022 Update](#) (2022).

<sup>51</sup> Ramsar Convention, [Scaling up Wetland Conservation, Wise Use and Restoration to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals](#) (2018).

<sup>52</sup> Resolution [69/137](#), Annex II.

<sup>53</sup> Resolution [69/15](#), Annex.

<sup>54</sup> Resolution [76/258](#).

<sup>55</sup> United Nations, [United to Reform](#).

<sup>56</sup> Resolution [72/279](#); see also United Nations, [Development reform](#).

Common Agenda report<sup>57</sup> and related policy briefs,<sup>58</sup> in particular Policy Brief 11, *UN 2.0: Forward-thinking Culture and Cutting-edge Skills for Better United Nations System Impact*.<sup>59</sup>

**Other relevant United Nations frameworks.** The Core Humanitarian Standard on quality and accountability<sup>60</sup> (nine commitments for humanitarian and development actors to measure and improve the quality and effectiveness of their assistance), the Global Compact on Refugees<sup>61</sup> and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration,<sup>62</sup> the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples<sup>63</sup> and the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030),<sup>64</sup> proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly under resolution [73/284](#), also contribute to the policy context for this SWS.

**United Nations system-wide strategies, common approaches and frameworks.** This SWS is aligned with and contributes to other United Nations system-wide strategies, common approaches and frameworks such as the following:

- (a) United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) common principles to guide

the United Nations system’s support to implementation of the 2030 Agenda;<sup>65</sup>

- (b) Common Approach to Integrating Biodiversity and Nature-based Solutions for Sustainable Development into United Nations Policy and Programme Planning and Delivery;<sup>66</sup>
- (c) United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy;<sup>67</sup>
- (d) United Nations System Strategic Approach on Climate Change Action;<sup>68</sup>
- (e) United Nations System-wide Strategy on Sustainable Urban Development;<sup>69</sup>
- (f) System-wide action plan on the rights of Indigenous Peoples;<sup>70</sup>
- (g) UN Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience: Towards a Risk informed and Integrated Approach to Sustainable Development;<sup>71</sup>
- (h) United Nations system-wide policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women;<sup>72</sup>
- (i) Youth 2030: Working with and for Young People;<sup>73</sup>
- (j) United Nations System Common Approach Towards a Pollution-Free Planet;<sup>74</sup>

57 United Nations, *Our Common Agenda: Report of the Secretary-General* (New York, 2021).

58 United Nations, *Policy Briefs*.

59 United Nations, *UN 2.0: Forward-thinking Culture and Cutting-edge Skills for Better United Nations System Impact*. Our Common Agenda, Policy Brief 11 (2023).

60 Core Humanitarian Standard, *Core Humanitarian Standard on quality and accountability* (2024).

61 Resolution [73/151](#); see also United Nations, *Global Compact on Refugees* (New York, 2018).

62 Resolution [73/195](#); see also International Organization for Migration, *Global Compact for Migration*.

63 Resolution [61/295](#).

64 Resolution [73/284](#); see also UN-Water, *The United Nations General Assembly declare 2021 – 2030 the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration* (2019).

65 CEB, *CEB common principles to guide the UN system’s support to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2016).

66 [CEB/2021/1/Add.1](#).

67 [CEB/2019/1/Add.6](#).

68 [CEB/2017/4/Add.1](#).

69 [CEB/2019/1/Add.5](#).

70 United Nations, *System-wide Action Plan for Ensuring a Coherent Approach to Achieving the Ends of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2015).

71 CEB, *UN Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience: Towards a Risk-informed and Integrated Approach to Sustainable Development* (2016).

72 [CEB/2006/2](#); see also CEB, *CEB policy statement: UN system-wide policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women* (2006).

73 United Nations, *Youth 2030: Working with and for Young People* (United Nations Youth Strategy, 2018); see also United Nations Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, *Youth 2030: The UN Youth Strategy*.

74 United Nations Environment Management Group, *The United Nations System Common Approach Towards a Pollution-Free Planet* (United Nations, 2023).

- (k) UN System-wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment for the UN System;<sup>75</sup>
- (l) Strategy for sustainability management in the United Nations system, 2020–2030;<sup>76</sup>
- (m) Towards a United Nations system-wide strategic approach for achieving inclusive, equitable and innovative education and learning for all.<sup>77</sup>


Looking forward, important policy processes and major events include: the United Nations Summit of the Future, Social Summit, Fourth Conference on Financing for Development, the HLPF and other future processes that will inform the post-2030 sustainable development agenda; periodic water conferences notably those mandated by resolution [77/334](#) in 2026 and 2028; and other ongoing follow-up processes and intergovernmental conferences and meetings for the aforementioned United Nations agreements, conventions and frameworks.

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<sup>75</sup> United Nations Environment Management Group, *System-wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment for the UN System (SWFS)* (United Nations, 2016).

<sup>76</sup> [CEB/2019/1/Add.1](#); [CEB/2021/2/Add.1](#).

<sup>77</sup> [CEB/2019/1/Add.4](#).



# **Annex III. Development process for the United Nations System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation**



## A. Entities and actors consulted during the strategy development process

### United Nations system

#### UN-WATER MEMBERS

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)  
International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)  
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)  
International Labour Organization (ILO)  
International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
International Telecommunication Union (ITU)  
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)  
Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)  
Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)  
Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)  
United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)  
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)  
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)  
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)  
United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA)  
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)  
United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)  
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)  
United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC)  
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)  
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA)  
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)  
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)  
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)  
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)  
United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)  
United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)  
United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)  
United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)  
United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA)  
United Nations University (UNU)  
World Bank Group (WB)  
World Food Programme (WFP)  
World Health Organization (WHO)  
World Meteorological Organization (WMO)  
World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism)

## OTHER UNITED NATIONS ENTITIES (NON-UN-WATER MEMBERS)

Secretariat of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB)

Secretariat of the High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP)

Sustainable Development Unit of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EoSG)

United Nations Development Coordination Office (DCO)

United Nations Department for Global Communications (DGC)

United Nations Office for the Coordination on Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

## UNITED NATIONS RESIDENT COORDINATOR'S OFFICES AND UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAMS

Brazil	Jordan
Cambodia	Kazakhstan
Chad	Kenya
Chile	Pakistan
Costa Rica	Peru
Ethiopia	Philippines
Ghana	Sierra Leone
Indonesia	Uganda
Iraq	Multi-country office – Malaysia, Brunei and Singapore

## Member States

Member States maintaining permanent missions at United Nations Headquarters:<sup>78</sup>

Afghanistan	Barbados
Albania	Belarus
Algeria	Belgium
Andorra	Belize
Angola	Benin
Antigua and Barbuda	Bhutan
Argentina	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
Armenia	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Australia	Botswana
Austria	Brazil
Azerbaijan	Brunei Darussalam
Bahamas	Bulgaria
Bahrain	Burkina Faso
Bangladesh	Burundi

<sup>78</sup> As per the United Nations [Protocol and Liaison Service](#) on 22 December 2023.

Cabo Verde	Guinea
Cambodia	Guinea-Bissau
Cameroon	Guyana
Canada	Haiti
Central African Republic	Honduras
Chad	Hungary
Chile	Iceland
China	India
Colombia	Indonesia
Comoros	Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Congo	Iraq
Costa Rica	Ireland
Côte D'Ivoire	Israel
Croatia	Italy
Cuba	Jamaica
Cyprus	Japan
Czechia	Jordan
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Kazakhstan
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Kenya
Denmark	Kiribati
Djibouti	Kuwait
Dominica	Kyrgyzstan
Dominican Republic	Lao People's Democratic Republic
Ecuador	Latvia
Egypt	Lebanon
El Salvador	Lesotho
Equatorial Guinea	Liberia
Eritrea	Libya
Estonia	Liechtenstein
Eswatini	Lithuania
Ethiopia	Luxembourg
Fiji	Madagascar
Finland	Malawi
France	Malaysia
Gabon	Maldives
Gambia	Mali
Georgia	Malta
Germany	Marshall Islands
Ghana	Mauritania
Greece	Mauritius
Grenada	Mexico
Guatemala	Micronesia (Federated States of)

Monaco	Senegal
Mongolia	Serbia
Montenegro	Seychelles
Morocco	Sierra Leone
Mozambique	Singapore
Myanmar	Slovakia
Namibia	Slovenia
Nauru	Solomon Islands
Nepal	Somalia
Netherlands (Kingdom of the)	South Africa
New Zealand	South Sudan
Nicaragua	Spain
Niger	Sri Lanka
Nigeria	Sudan
North Macedonia	Suriname
Norway	Sweden
Oman	Switzerland
Pakistan	Syrian Arab Republic
Palau	Tajikistan
Panama	Thailand
Papua New Guinea	Timor-Leste
Paraguay	Togo
Peru	Tonga
Philippines	Trinidad and Tobago
Poland	Tunisia
Portugal	Türkiye
Qatar	Turkmenistan
Republic of Korea	Tuvalu
Republic of Moldova	Uganda
Romania	Ukraine
Russian Federation	United Arab Emirates
Rwanda	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Saint Kitts and Nevis	United Republic of Tanzania
Saint Lucia	United States of America
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Uruguay
Samoa	Uzbekistan
San Marino	Vanuatu
Sao Tome and Principe	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
Saudi Arabia	Viet Nam
Yemen	
Zambia	
Zimbabwe	

## **Non-Member States having received a standing invitation to participate as observers in the sessions and the work of the United Nations General Assembly<sup>79</sup>**

Holy See

State of Palestine

## **Regional and other organizations**

European Union

## **Partners and stakeholders**

### **UN-WATER PARTNERS WITH SPECIAL STATUS**

Green Climate Fund (GCF)

Mandate of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation

Sanitation and Hygiene Fund (SHF)

Sanitation and Water for All (SWA)

United Nations Global Compact

### **UN-WATER PARTNERS**

Aquafed

CDP

Center for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology (CAWST)

Conservation International Gender and Water Alliance (GWA)

Geneva Water Hub (GWH)

Global Water Partnership (GWP)

Human Right 2 Water (HR2W)

International Association of Hydrogeologists (IAH)

International Association of Hydrological Sciences (IAHS)

International Association for Hydro-Environment Engineering and Research (IAHR)

IHE Delft Institute for Water Education

International Association for Water Law (AIDA)

International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID)

International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre (IGRAC)

International Hydropower Association (IHA)

International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA)

International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)

International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO)

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

International Water Association (IWA)

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

International Water Management Institute (IWMI)  
International Water Resources Association (IWRA)  
International Water and Sanitation Centre (IRC)  
Public Services International (PSI)  
Ramsar Convention  
Rural Water Supply Network (RWSN)  
Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future  
Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI)  
Toilet Board Coalition  
United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)  
WaterAid  
Water Environment Federation (WEF)  
Water Integrity Network (WIN)  
Water.org  
Women for Water Partnership (WfWP)  
World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)  
World Council of Civil Engineers (WCCE)  
World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO)  
World Resources Institute (WRI)  
World Water Council (WWC)  
World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)  
World Youth Parliament for Water (WYPW)

## B. Consultation and review processes

### Consultations and briefings

- UN-Water 37<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 18 and 19 August 2023, Stockholm
- First Technical Consultation with UN-Water Members, 22 November 2023, virtual
- Second Technical Consultation with UN-Water Members, 17 January 2024, virtual
- Third Technical Consultation with UN-Water Members, 1 and 2 February 2024, virtual
- Member States Informal Technical Briefing, 19 December 2023, New York and virtual
- Member States Consultation, 23 January 2024, New York and virtual
- Technical Consultation with UN-Water Partners (intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and stakeholders), 17 January 2024, virtual
- Consultation with United Nations High-Level Committee on Programmes, 5–13 February 2024, virtual by email

### Review of the draft strategy (version 22 December 2023)

- United Nations system, 22 December 2023 to 22 January 2024
- Member States, 22 December 2023 to 29 January 2024
- UN-Water Partners (intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and stakeholders), 22 December 2023 to 22 January 2024

Comments received on the draft strategy are available on the [UN-Water website](#).



# **Annex IV. UN-Water Inventory**



The UN-Water Inventory provides an overview of the collective work of the UN-Water “family”: UN-Water’s Members and Partners working on water- and sanitation-related goals and targets. The UN-Water Inventory is meant to become a tool for increased coordination, collaboration and harnessing of synergies to accelerate progress on Sustainable Development Goal 6.

This Annex consists of the two online resources that comprise the UN-Water Inventory:

- The UN-Water report, [\*UN-Water Inventory: An Overview of the UN-Water Family’s Work on Water and Sanitation\*](#) (Geneva, 2019).
- The UN-Water database, [Member and Partner Activities](#).

While the Inventory report provides an initial overview of current activities, the collected information is also available through a dynamic, online web tool on the UN-Water website that is periodically updated to reflect new programmes while increasing collaboration between United Nations and non-United Nations entities.

# Notes

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