

# United Nations System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation

## Highlights by UN-Water

June 2024



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Through the first-ever United Nations System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation, United Nations (UN) entities have committed to uniting their efforts and maximizing the collective strength of the UN system to support country progress.

Accelerating action on water and sanitation through the System-wide Strategy will help the UN transform billions of people's lives and drive gains across all dimensions of sustainable development.

## The need

Faster and greater action on water and sanitation is key to tackling global challenges, including climate change, disease outbreaks, gender inequality, extreme poverty, biodiversity loss and food insecurity.

However, there are major challenges standing in our way:

- **Progress is much too slow:** Sustainable Development Goal 6 (to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by 2030) is seriously off track. For example, on current trends, billions of people will still be living without safely managed water and sanitation in 2030.
- **Water is becoming more unsafe and unpredictable:** Water quality is suffering, climate change is causing more water stress, food systems are at risk, and water-related disasters are increasing.
- **Funding is decreasing:** The share of official development assistance for water and sanitation is shrinking, and there is a declining trend in many UN entities' budgets for water and sanitation programmes.
- **Integrated approaches are lacking:** 'Silo thinking' among sectors and lack of transboundary water cooperation are holding us back.

## The context

Responding to the high level of ambition set by UN Member States and stakeholders at the UN 2023 Water Conference, UN-Water released the milestone *Blueprint for Acceleration: SDG 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023*. This report contains key policy recommendations on how to move forward and work better together.

Most notably, the 'Blueprint' identifies two crucial needs: for Member States to develop a UN political process for water and for the UN system to better unify its water-related efforts to support countries.

As a result, in September 2023, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution following up on the UN 2023 Water Conference. This resolution, among other points, established two UN water conferences, one in 2026 and another in 2028, which will also mark the end of the Water Action Decade 2018-2028.

Additionally, the resolution requested the UN Secretary-General to present to Member States the first-ever UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation, for which the UN Secretary-General relied on UN-Water's expertise.

# What the System-wide Strategy will do

- **Strategy vision:** A world with accessible, available and sustainably managed water and sanitation for all people and the planet.
- **Strategy impact:** A more holistic, integrated approach that accelerates progress on internationally agreed water-related goals and targets and leaves no one behind.

The System-wide Strategy reflects the fact that water and sanitation have multiple, interrelated impacts across sectors. It is designed to help UN entities to align their various programmes to work holistically on water and sanitation as a driver for sustainable development, human rights and peace.

The System-wide Strategy complements the existing water and sanitation strategies and plans of UN entities, and it builds upon UN-Water's long experience as the UN's inter-agency coordination mechanism on water and sanitation.<sup>1</sup>

## The five 'entry points' of the System-wide Strategy

- 1 Lead and inspire collective action** on water and sanitation.
  - UN leaders and UN entities will make water and sanitation top organizational priorities and strengthen water and sanitation programmes.
  - The UN system will boost communication and advocacy on water and sanitation issues and link with major global themes, observances and events.
- 2 Engage better for countries** by leveraging whole-of-UN system support and by mobilizing stakeholders and partnerships for water and sanitation.
  - Each part of the UN system will contribute its expertise, skills and assets in a coherent and complementary manner.
  - The approach will help governments and local communities leave no one behind, with emphasis on the needs of developing countries.
- 3 Align UN system support for the integration** of water and sanitation issues across sectors and mainstreaming into intergovernmental processes.
  - The UN system will provide integrated policy advice and implement multi-sectoral programming approaches to managing water and sanitation.
  - The UN system will assist the mainstreaming of water and sanitation-related issues into relevant intergovernmental processes.
- 4 Accelerate progress and transformational change** by unifying UN system support through the five SDG 6 global accelerators:<sup>2</sup> financing, data and information, capacity development, innovation, and governance.
  - By supporting progress through these accelerators, the UN system will mobilize financial and non-financial resources necessary to create an enabling environment for the achievement of water-related goals and targets.

<sup>1</sup> UN-Water (2020). UN-Water 2030 Strategy. Available at <https://www.unwater.org/publications/un-water-2030-strategy>; and, UN-Water (2018). UN-Water external review 2018. Available at <https://www.unwater.org/publications/un-water-external-review-2018>.

<sup>2</sup> UN-Water (2020). SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework. Available at <https://www.unwater.org/our-work/sdg-6-global-acceleration-framework>.

## 5 Account through joint review and learning.

- The UN system will increase accountability and transparency of its work on water and sanitation through joint UN system reviews and learning at technical and leadership levels.
- The UN system will provide support to Member States and partners to review progress on internationally agreed water-related goals and targets through existing Member State-led platforms at the global level, as well as at national and sub-national levels.

>>Explore the full 'Results Chain' in the graphic.

## The Collaborative Implementation Plan

A Collaborative Implementation Plan will guide the operationalization, localization, and monitoring of the System-wide Strategy.

The plan will have timebound joint activities and progress indicators to help UN entities be more effective and efficient in delivering water and sanitation programming. The first cycle will cover the four-year period from 2025 to 2028.

*>>See Annex 1 of the System-wide Strategy for the terms of reference for the Collaborative Implementation Plan and a table of illustrative supporting actions that provide concrete, practical examples of how the strategy can be implemented.*

## About UN-Water

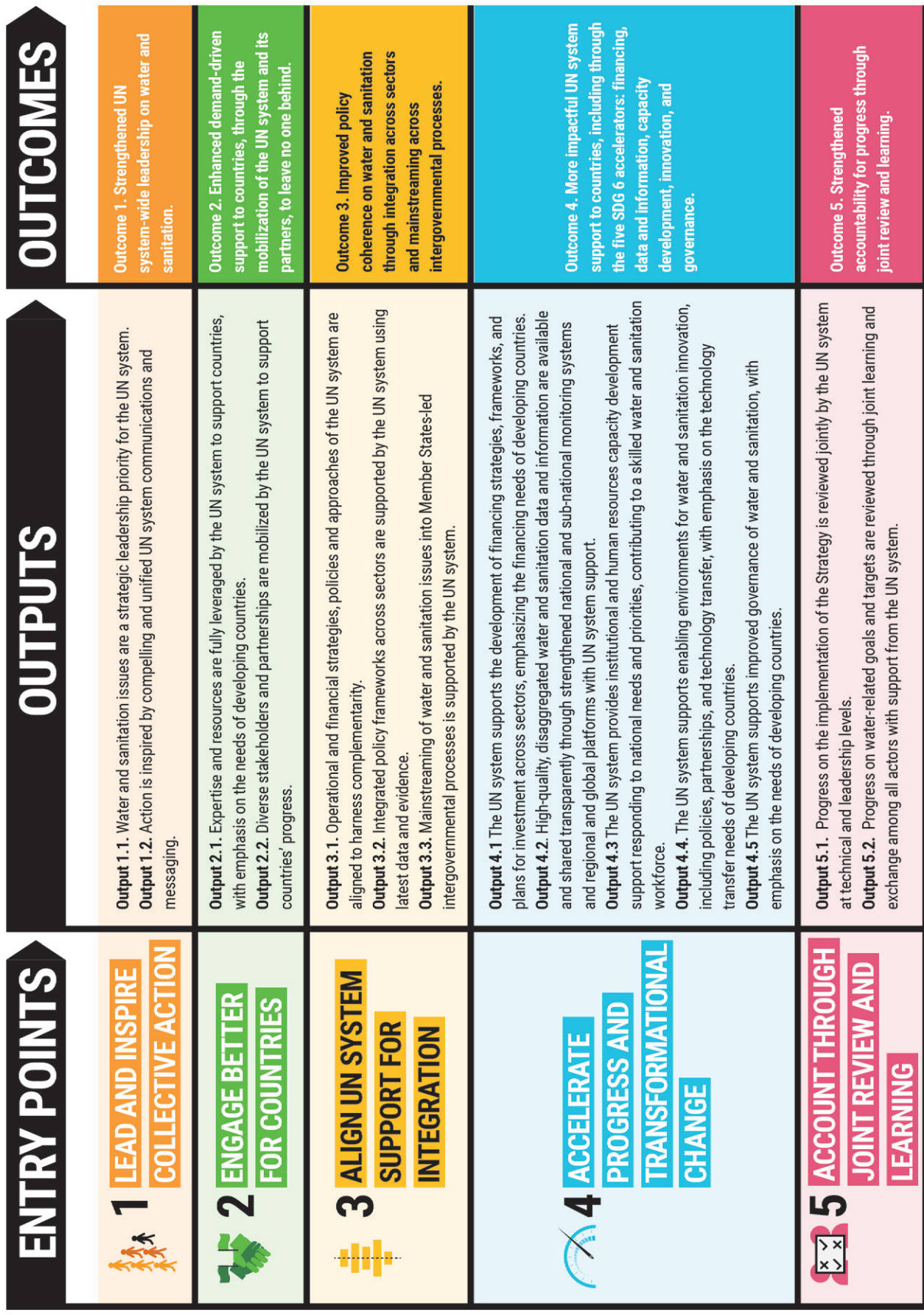
As the UN's inter-agency coordination mechanism, UN-Water brings together 36 UN entities and over 40 international partners to 'deliver as one' on water- and sanitation-related challenges across the spectrum of sustainable development.

Through its collaborative initiatives, UN-Water has helped elevate the importance of water and sanitation on the international stage, leading to significant advancements in internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, landmark agreements, improved monitoring and reporting, and heightened public awareness.

The UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation will accelerate progress through a more holistic and integrated approach that matches Member States' ambition and assists countries in ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

[www.unwater.org](http://www.unwater.org)

# Results Chain for the UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation





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