

Information

note



RIO+20
United Nations
Conference on
Sustainable
Development

Questions and Answers on Water in Rio+20

Prepared by the UN-Water Decade
Programme on Advocacy and
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Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and others have urged governments to take action on a number of important global issues for the sake of future generations. He has emphasized the process for developing Sustainable Development Goals- a set of benchmarks to guide countries in achieving targeted outcomes within a specific time period. To determine a more sustainable future for the planet and its people, Mr. Ban highlighted seven key areas on which governments should take action at Rio+20, including endorse action on universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation (29th of May 2012).

>> [Full press release](#)

How is water been considered in Rio?

Momentum has been building on water as a priority issue for Rio+20. In the preparatory process, Brazil supported the idea of water being a key emerging issue to be addressed at the conference. Member States, major groups and civil society, with the involvement of the private sector, have become increasingly engaged in making proposals and making water a central theme in Rio. The UN agencies, the Secretariat and UN-Water have provided support and substantive inputs to the process.

Rio is providing an opportunity for assessing progress on international commitments in water. There are three global reports that provide the basis to do so: the 2012 Joint Monitoring Programme Report on access to safe drinking water and sanitation services, the Water Resources Management Report that will be launched at Rio and the March 2012 UN World Water Development Report 4.

The preparatory process has been a long one, with many proposals ranging from concrete targets for improving efficiency of water use and reducing pollution to improving cooperation, water resources allocation and management. Not all of these proposals have been incorporated in the negotiated outcome document and there may still be a disconnection in the discussion on water and the green economy. The expectation is that there will be advances in the water agenda on access to basic water and sanitation services, Integrated Water Resources Management and Cooperation.

There are some issues that have been tabled to ensure that Rio serves to move into increased political will, action and commitment. This includes the preparation of Sustainable Development Goals, the need for global leadership for change, the need to focus on the means of implementation in water assuming that we are building an action agenda, and the establishment of monitoring and reporting systems on advances in Water Resources Management to make international commitments meaningful and encourage progress.

Increasingly, there are calls to manage expectations for water in Rio as an intermediate step: a basis for establishing the post 2015 global agenda.

Beyond the negotiated outcome document Rio is an opportunity for commitments, forming partnerships, exchanging and explaining in the many events and dialogues and for overall shaping the water agenda for the years to come.

What is the progress on trends and international commitments in water?

Internationally goals in access to water and sanitation services and in water resources management have been agreed in Agenda 21 (1992), MDGs (2000), JPOI (2002), and the Dushanbe Water Appeal (2003).

>> [Rio+20 Water Issue Brief](#)

Progress in access to basic water and sanitation services

The MDG 7 target regarding access to safe drinking water is tracked in the yearly reports by the Joint Monitoring Programme of UNICEF and WHO. According to the 2012 report, between 1990 and 2010, 2 billion people have gained access to “improved” drinking water services, but the water quality still remains a factor. Though it has been forecasted that we have met the goal of halving the amount of people who do not have access to an “improved” water source well ahead of the 2015 deadline, there remains more than 780 million people who still do not drink improved water. Access to safe water is a major concern. This leads to increases in health and sanitation problems. For sanitation the situation remains a major concern since, although 1800 million have gained access to improved sanitation facilities between 1990 and 2010, there still remain 2.5 billion people without access to basic sanitation.

According to the [MDG Report 2011](#), a main concern is that 1 in 10 people may still be without access to basic sanitation services in 2015. At the current rate of progress it will take over three extra decades beyond 2015 to meet the sanitation target and, globally, rural populations remain at a significant disadvantage. There are important regional disparities with access to safe basic water services below 61% in sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, the rapid rate of urbanization and the sluggish pace of infrastructure improvement in many cities pose a challenge for sustaining improvements in access to safe drinking water in urban areas. Particularly affected are those in developing countries, countries in conflict and countries that have recently emerged from conflict. “In urban areas, the poorest households are 12 times less likely than the richest households to enjoy the convenience and associated health benefits of having a piped drinking water supply on premises.”

According to the UN-DESA [Issue Brief 11: Water](#) (2012), water is one of the most pressing challenges facing society today. If we continue along the same path, experts predict that the amount of water needed by humans could exceed the amount available by as much as 40 percent by 2030. This reality would have devastating consequences for economies and the lives of people worldwide. According to the 2011 MDG report, sustainable water resource limits have been exceeded in Western Asia and Northern Africa, whereas Southern Asia, the Caucasus and Central Asia are approaching water scarcity. In the remaining regions, water resources are still abundant.

The UN-Water [4th World Water Development Report](#) (2012) has been presented and discussed in the World Water Forum in Marseille and points to unsustainable trends arguably leading to increasing scarcity, more instances of pollution of rivers, and depletion of aquifers. The report explains that Global water resources are coming under increasing pressure from growing human demands and climate change. Demand for water is growing in energy and electricity, due to increased population growth (urban population of the world is forecast to practically double over the first half of the current century) and increasing economic activity, including industrial processes and production of crops and livestock which is water-intensive: agriculture accounts for 70 percent of all water withdrawn. However, estimates of future global agricultural water consumption are that this will increase by about one fifth by 2050. At the same time climate change is expected to have a major impact on the availability of water. The main effects will be felt through an increasing variability of water supplies and growing extremes of climate. The frequency and impact of water-related disasters is likely to increase, including a greater incidence of floods and droughts. The world is changing faster than ever in often unforeseeable ways, creating additional uncertainty and increasing risks. The relationship between the quantities of available water and shifting future demands can no longer be approximated solely on the basis of historical experience.

The need to improve the management of the world's water resources has been underlined at previous international conferences on sustainable development. To this end, UN-Water has undertaken a global survey of 133 countries to take stock on the progress that has been made so far and to identify implementation gaps. This global status report on the 'application on integrated approaches to the development, management and use of water resources' will be delivered at Rio+20. [Preliminary findings](#) from the survey indicate that most governments have made progress with water sector reform; but that the implementation process which sees principles turned into policy, laws, strategies and plans remains slow. Some countries have

difficulty moving beyond the first political steps. Targeted support tailored to individual country circumstances is needed to help bring all countries up to speed.

The UN-Water [4th World Water Development Report](#) points out that the new uncertainties and associated risks create additional challenges to sustainable water management. Protecting water resources, optimizing the use of water across personal and socio-economic activities, and ensuring an equitable distribution of benefits from water-intensive activities needs to be set at the heart of public policy and regulation. A nexus perspective and concerted action is needed more than ever to ensure that water's many benefits are maximized and shared equitably. Failure to deal strategically with these issues, resulting in a fragmented approach to water management, will jeopardize the future sustainability of water resources and is likely to reduce economic and social welfare below attainable levels. Business as usual is no longer an option. Conversely, investment in water infrastructure, its governance and management can be a driver of growth and a key to poverty reduction. The WWDR4 points out that there are tools and potential response options for leaders in government, the private sector and civil society whose decisions depend upon – and ultimately affect – water, and which can help them address current and future challenges in the face of growing risks and uncertainties. Institutions can be reformed, capacities improved, and institutional behavior modified, financing for investments in water is urgently needed. Integrated Water Resources Management can help to align water management issues across all relevant sectors, policies and institutions. It enables different uses of water to be considered alongside each others, and provides a structure within which competing interest groups can agree coherent strategies for managing water resources. Through education, advocacy and policy instruments, national and local governments can promote an appreciation of the social and economic value of water, and reverse the low priority which water typically has in public debate. Water needs effective governance in areas such as regulation, tariff setting, environmental controls, groundwater monitoring and abstraction licensing, and monitoring and policing of pollution.

What is the role of water and the Green Economy in the preparatory process of Rio+20?

The poverty agenda, and the concern with equity and planetary boundaries, are very much at the center of Rio+20 preparatory discussions. If there is an issue in which inequities “in the access to water and sanitation services” and the planetary limits “of water resources” are compelling, this is water.

UNEP, in the [water chapter](#) of its 2011 publication ‘Towards a Green Economy’, showed that water needs to be considered as fundamental to the green economy because it is interwoven with so many sustainable development issues, such as: health, food security, and poverty. In

developing countries, access to water and sanitation services is a fundamental precondition for poverty reduction and economic progress. The multiple benefits of providing access to water and sanitation in terms of health, life expectancy, and the freeing of time for education and economic activities, have been highlighted by international organisations and Member States.

Water is the common thread that connects the critical issues of food, energy, land tenure, and climate change. Sustaining economic growth is only possible if we recognise the limited capacity of ecosystems to supply the water needed for agriculture and land tenure, industry, energy generation and the production of the many goods and services demanded by society. The **green economy** implies managing water in a way that catalyses social and economic development, whilst also safeguarding freshwater ecosystems and the services they provide. Water management must be improved in order to achieve food security, conserve ecosystems and reduce risks from water scarcity and pollution, natural disasters such as floods and droughts, and from climate change.

Against the backdrop of economic and financial crises, the green economy focus of the Rio conference is expected to help highlight the socio-economic opportunities of Sustainable Development. Water in the green economy is again an example of how improved basic water and sanitation services brings about socio-economic benefits and sets the basis for economic development, and of the employment and economic opportunities that proper water management provides to social and economic development, including those from safeguarding freshwater ecosystems. The green economy agenda for water provides also the impulse for action and a focus on the need to shift from current practice; actions that are not merely the responsibility of governments but also of the private sector, other stakeholders and the civil society.

The Zero draft and the different rounds of negotiations leading up to the Rio Conference have shown that so far the discussions on the green economy may be to some extent disconnected from those on several differing issues, including water, that are addressed in Section V, Framework for Action. Issues of access and water resources management, however, are core parts of the green economy agenda, as explained by UNEP's **[Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication](#)** (2011).

The themes and the [Zero draft](#) discussions and negotiations on water

Access to Water and Sanitation and Water and Sanitation as a Human Right

Renewing the commitment to the MDG on water and sanitation and the push toward global commitments on progressive realization of universal access to water and sanitation are currently being discussed as possible outcomes of the Rio Conference. The General Assembly, recognizing “the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights”, gives additional impetus to the forward motion that the commitments since Agenda 21 have provided.

The Human Rights Council voted unanimously in September 2010 on a resolution that reinforces and clarifies the General Assembly resolution including States’ responsibility to ensure “the provision of a regular supply of safe, acceptable, accessible and affordable drinking water and sanitation services of good quality and sufficient quantity”.

>> [More on the human right to water and sanitation](#)

Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and efficiency

IWRM is now accepted internationally as the way forward for efficient, safe and sustainable management of the world's limited water resources as well as for coping with conflicting demands. Renewing commitments to water efficiency plans and improved WRM as a way forward has included explicit consideration in the negotiations of issues such as reduce scarcities, pollution, improve wastewater management, participatory approaches and management of competing demands.

>> [More on Integrated Water Resources Management](#)

Water cooperation

Nurturing the opportunities for cooperation in water management among all stakeholders and improving the comprehension of the challenges and benefits of water cooperation can help build mutual respect as well as understanding and trust among countries, promoting peace, security and sustainable economic growth. Enhancing cooperation and strengthening dialogue to resolve current water issues is crucial to address current sustainable development challenges.

>> [International Year of Water Cooperation 2013](#)

Some questions and issues raised in the negotiation process on water

General

- Moving to action requires establishing goals and targets. Can these be set so as to consider common but differentiated responsibilities?
- Are we willing to make ourselves accountable to our commitments? Can really improved monitoring and accountability help achieve MDGs, improve water resources management and cooperation?
- Where is the discussion lost on means of implementation?

Access to basic services

- Water as a human right and essential for the enjoyment of all human rights: reaffirm our commitments or underline its importance. What are the concerns? How progressive realization needs to be factored in?
- SDGs promoting or competing with the MDGs?
- Rights versus markets in water in the green economy? How rights help emphasizing participation, transparency and accountability?
- What are the implications of focusing in the bottom billion for action in water? What financing, technology, and capacity development actions to achieve this?
- What are basic safe sanitation services and how is this part of the ladder of sanitation, including wastewater treatment and reuse?

IWRM and Cooperation

- Why sustainable water management? How improved efficiency can be a goal for all?
- Is water in the Green Economy displacing IWRM? What is the Green Economy adding?
- Water quality, ecosystems and forests? What way to move forward to commitments?
- How improving adaptation to CC and preparation for floods and drought needs to be considered? Are we ready to move forward on this?
- Do we need to talk more about means of implementation? What does technology transfer mean in water? How can we insure appropriate technology use?
- Is there a role for water infrastructure and non conventional resources in water in the green economy?
- How and why the Water Convention can help countries sharing water resources? Where are the sovereignty concerns?
- Where enforceability has lacked behind?

How useful has the global process for building the water agenda for Rio been?

The process of building the water agenda for Rio has been progressing since 2011. At 2011 World Water Week a joint statement was made directed to the Rio+20 Summit with a strong focus on **efficiency**. This 2011 World Water Week [Stockholm Statement](#) declares that “water is the bloodstream of the green economy”. A number of specific targets were proposed for participants of the Rio+20 Summit, such as a “20% increase in water use efficiency in agriculture” and a “20% decrease in water pollution” by 2020. More general outcomes for Rio+20 were also proposed. For instance, the statement urges that “economic and social incentives are created to promote water use efficiency and protect freshwater ecosystems”, and for a commitment “to policy and institutional reforms that create an enabling environment for the coherent and integrated management of water, energy and food”.

At the seventh [‘Environment for Europe’ Ministerial Conference](#) in Astana, Kazakhstan, on 21-23 September 2011, Ministers of the European region gathered to discuss pathways for greening the economy and sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems. Ministers made the declaration “save water, grow green!” and confirmed their commitment to improving water and environmental systems and policies, and to enhancing **intersectoral and multilateral environmental cooperation**. There was broad agreement to implement principles of integrated water resources management, **an ecosystem approach and the integration of ecosystem values in economic accounting**. With recognition of the need for increased investment in water, Ministers called for greater **use of economic instruments, the provision of incentives** for water efficiency and the generation of revenues to finance water services aiming at **full cost recovery prices while making provision for vulnerable social groups**.

On 26 September 2011, the UN Secretary General’s Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB) released its [official contribution to Rio+20](#), arguing that, “there are many compelling reasons to take on water and sanitation challenges in Rio”. The Board contends that good management of water and sanitation is a precondition for sustainable development and urges **decisive objectives and targets on (a) access to safe drinking water and sanitation; (b) wastewater management; and (c) more productive water use in agriculture**.

The Preparatory Conference [‘Towards the UN Conference on Sustainable Development \(Rio+20\): Water Cooperation Issues’](#) on 19-20 October 2011 represented another important milestone on the Rio+20 roadmap. The conference was organised by the

Government of Tajikistan in cooperation with UN-Water, the United Nations Development Programme and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Dushanbe. Participants discussed current issues and challenges in water cooperation, identifying ways to strengthen cooperation and dialogue, demonstrating best practice, and showcasing effective approaches for the joint management of transboundary water resources. An outcome of the conference was a concept note for the thematic session on water cooperation of Rio+20, which highlighted the importance of **'water cooperation for peace and security'**, **'water cooperation for sustainable development'**, **'water cooperation for poverty alleviation'**, **'water cooperation for environmental sustainability'**, and **'cooperation for universal water access'**.

The UN-Water conference **'Water and the Green Economy in Practice: Towards Rio+20'** on 3-5 October 2011 in Zaragoza, Spain, focused **on tools for the transition to a green economy**. It identified four priority water-related loci where change needs to take place in the transition to a green economy: agriculture, industry, cities and watersheds. Six tools were proposed which can be used to facilitate change and support the transition towards a green economy: (1) economic instruments; (2) green jobs; (3) cost recovery and financing; (4) investments in biodiversity; (5) technology; and (6) water planning. These tools can enable us to 'do more with less', overcome barriers, harness opportunities and change behaviours in order to achieve a green economy. The sessions of the conference were dedicated to the proposed tools, with two additional sessions with a regional focus on Latin America and the Caribbean, and Western Asia.

The important issue of water policy reform was the focus of the OECD **'Global Forum on Environment: Making Water Reform Happen'** which took place on 25-26 October 2011. The forum sought to identify the challenges of designing and implementing water policy reforms and strategies to address them. There was ample opportunity for both developing and developed countries to share experiences **about past and on-going water policy reforms and to identify key factors for success**. The November Bonn Conference on the nexus between water, energy and food was crucial to understand the importance **of coordination and policy coherence**.

A key event in the calendar for water has been the Bonn2011 Conference: 'The water, energy and food security nexus – solutions for the green economy' on 16-18 November 2011 and organised by the Government of Germany. This event aimed to tackle the complex interconnections between water, agriculture and energy, taking a nexus perspective on the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social, ecological). The Conference brought together people from all other water-using sectors to develop **integrated and**

coherent solutions. UN-Water organized a side-event on ['Water for Development and Poverty Eradication'](#) at the Conference.

The March 2012 [6th World Water Forum](#) of Marseilles called for solutions from stakeholders, experts and governments. Solutions were presented for many of the themes above. They showed the **multiple technologies and know-how available in water** including that many solutions are not necessarily expensive but that they may need to be tailored to specific circumstances. Implementing them may require strategic financial planning and innovative financing including the development of accounting frameworks that take into account the needs of the environment. There were proposals for improving communication across groups and other actors, such as the **establishment of a helpdesk mechanism to share good practices** and a water legislation helpdesk for development of legislation.

The UNCSO Rio+20 Secretariat asked for inputs to **the compilation document** before November 2011. Of a total of 677 contributions, 398 were about water or considered water as a key issue. This was used as a basis for the preparation of the Zero Draft. According to the analysis of the Children and Youth Major Group of the CSO (Rio+20: A Water Guide), the majority of these came from NGOs with specializations in the protection of human right and gender issues. Sixty-four Member States mentioned water in their submissions. Germany, Brazil, the United States, Japan, Algeria, Tajikistan, and Israel were among the countries that addressed multiple water challenges. Member states' supported policies related to: implementation of national water strategies; increase of citizens' access to water and sanitation; adoption of new technologies that monitor water quality; implementation of IWRM and water efficiency frameworks at regional and national levels; recognition of the water basins as the unit of management and implementation of its strategies; recognition of the water-energy-food security nexus and cross-sectoral water priorities; and participation of water users and stakeholders in policy process. Major Groups also provided some key inputs (see below).

Summary of Contributions by Major Groups (prepared by the Children and Youth Major Group [Rio+20: A Water Guide](#))

Aquafed prepared the proposals for water policies in behalf of BASD. They recognize the key role water plays for all aspects of sustainable development, the green economy, and for poverty alleviation. Among the water policies proposed are: Accelerate access to safe drinking water and sanitation in rural and urban settlements; Promote a common vision and adopt an action plan for wastewater management in order to protect the health of individuals by economic means; Ensure sustainable water economics to provide services through the execution of Sustainable Cost-Recovery mechanisms; To furnish water services to all users while supporting the long-term social, environmental, and economic dimensions of a green economy. They support language to address the true scale and urgency of the water and sanitation crisis. Similar to the MGCY, they also support the crosscutting dimensions of water resources in the development of wastewater policies and city planning within the green economy.

CSD-Women is the official constituency for women within the CSD process. CSD-Women promotes the incorporation of gender mainstreaming in Rio+20 to grant exposure and support to both women's and men's contributions to water management. According to the MG, policies and programs that ignore the differential impact on gender groups are often gender-blind and hinder human development. CSD Women promote: The vital role of women in water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) interventions; The adoption of the human right to water; The implementation of the Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM); Effective public participation, particularly among women.

The Major Group of **Scientific and Technical Community (ICSU)** considers that water must be given the prominence it deserves on the global agenda; the future should be viewed through "water lenses." They call for the improvement of the availability of data and information, particularly on transboundary water resources and planetary thresholds. Other priorities presented by ICSU are: Water-related climate change adaptations should be an integral part of water resources management plans (and vice versa); Need for greater stakeholder participation and collective action; Urbanization should be interpreted as an opportunity, rather than a risk; The need to introduce and implement strong policy and legal frameworks; Proper finance mechanisms are required to ensure sustainability of water services while capacity building is required at all levels.

The Major Group of **Indigenous Peoples (CSD-Indigenous)** calls for the inclusion of indigenous people in major decision-making processes, especially on decisions that may

hamper their access to water. They call for better protection of water supplies from industrial activities and mining. Also, they call for the implementation of existing agreements such as the UN Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational uses of International Watercourses, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Major Group of **Local Authorities (ICLEI)** calls for a good water governance that increases access to water supply and wastewater management in the context of urbanization. Additionally, ICLEI supports the concept of self-sufficient cities, which supports the idea that a city would be able to generate its own resources, including water. Improving water quality has also been of concern for ICLEI representatives.

The Major Group of **Workers and Trade Unions (CSD-Workers)** asserts that the experiment of privatization in the water and sanitation sector has failed to deliver for the poor. They encourage governments to prioritize water and sanitation investments using public ownership and public management in order to ensure universal access to these fundamental services. Their comments state that commodification of water will only lead to greater exclusion for the most poor and vulnerable. Above all, they state that privatization of water resources affects water sanitation and other productive sectors directly.

The Major Group of **Farmers (CSD-Farmers)** petitioned for an increase in resource efficiency in agricultural practices, particularly for nutrients and water. The Major Group also petitioned for: Best practices that improve watershed management; Programs that support better rainwater harvesting and efficient use of water in agriculture; The use of crops better adapted for dry land conditions

The Major Group of **Non-Governmental Organizations (CSD-NGOs)** has underlined the importance of restoration and conservation of forests and other ecosystems that play a crucial role in the conservation of watersheds. Furthermore, they support an array of positions for water management such as: The implementation of equitable and sustainable Integrated Water Resources Management; The implementation of an Environmental Reserve to ensure healthy flows of water in rivers and other water systems for thriving species and habitats; The development of a Basic Needs Reserve ensuring adequate flows for the achievement of the human right to water; The urgent need to halt the further reduction of aquatic biodiversity. Sanitation is also a priority for the NGOs. For example, in the Zero Draft they called to make sanitation a priority with the purpose of reducing threats to the health and wellbeing of inhabitants. They stated that political will is the main obstacle in increasing access to water and sanitation. Consequently, the human right to water must be acknowledged at Rio+20 to guarantee the implementation of universal access to water.

Not all of these proposals are now incorporated into the negotiated outcome document. The expectation is that there will be advances in the water agenda on access to basic water and sanitation, Integrated Water Resources Management and Cooperation. There still remain key open issues in preparation for the Rio Conference.

What are some issues for water in the process to Rio?

Sustainable development goals (SDG) for water

Many governments and other stakeholders have expectations that agreements in Rio will serve to set the basis for establishing sustainable development goals and targets; this being the basis for moving into action and the action agenda beyond 2015 with a greater focus on financing, and accountability.

A clear starting point for a water-related SDG for freshwater would be the MDG regarding access to safe drinking water. Proposals for broadening water goals are based on the recognition of the overall importance of water for health and social well-being, economic development and adaptation to climate change. The goals that have emerged from the preparatory processes and that have been part of the submissions to the Compilation text and discussions in the UNCSD preparatory meetings include: universal access to safe drinking water by 2030; improved efficiency of water uses, overall and/or by sector; improved water quality; increased rate of safe water reuse; improvement and protection of water resources and aquatic ecosystems; nurturing and reinforcement of cooperation to improve water management.

The Members States that are part of the Friends of Water for Rio +20 have presented jointly a [**proposal for a Global Goal on water and sanitation**](#) that should “embrace the principle of sustainable access to water and its quality, pollution control and the reuse of water, water efficiency and integrated water management, all within the rationale of a functioning economy”.

Global Leadership

Rio+20 will encourage international efforts to assist countries in building a green economy in the context of sustainable development (SD) and poverty eradication. Leadership proposals for the future functioning and organisation of Sustainable Development within the UN System include changes in UNEP, the CSD and ECOSOC. For the Water sector in the UN system, global leadership has relied on the individual work of the agencies and, importantly, on UN-Water,

the interagency coordination mechanism that brings together 30 UN member agencies, water programmes, and 26 partner organisations.

UN-Water has prepared a [statement for Rio](#) in which it highlights the importance of sustainable water management and the efficient provision of adequate drinking water and sanitation services, investment in water infrastructure and water-based adaptation to climate change, for successfully achieving a green economy. **The importance of targeting the poorest** individuals/countries to help lift them out of poverty and realize their human right to basic drinking water and sanitation services was emphasized. **Water policy and institutional reform** is urged, in order to promote efficient water use, protect freshwater ecosystems and achieve water, energy and food security. **Increasing the water resilience and sustainability of cities** is identified as a priority area, as is agriculture, where there is a need to increase efficiencies along the whole food supply. Proposals for a UN-System wide initiative on progressive realization of Universal access to basic water and sanitation services have been considered, and this may be possible a response to the negotiations in Rio.

UN-Water is organizing a [Water Day at the Rio+20](#) Conference on 19 June, 2012 with the following objectives:

- To demonstrate to the broad range of stakeholders, particularly decision makers, that some of the major challenges facing humanity today relate to water management; this will be based on findings of the major UN-Water reports.
- To identify major water issues that connect with the themes of the Rio+20 Conference, particularly its link with the notion of green economy.
- To Focus on the means of implementation, especially the action areas where UN organizations and agencies can act together through UN-Water.

At the Water Day UN-Water will release its Report on Water Resources Management, specifically produced for Rio+20, and it will engage in high level panel discussions on the relevance of water in the Rio+20 outcomes and beyond, and on the role of the human right to water and to sanitation. Finally, 2013 the International Year of Water Cooperation will be introduced, as a first concrete step to follow on the Rio+20 outcomes. It will gather Heads of UN Agencies, Heads of State, Ministers and Heads of key partner organizations of UN-Water. There will be a Press conference to launch of report on water resource management; UN system drive for universal access.

UN-Water agencies' statements for the 2011 UN-Water Zaragoza Conference on Water and the Green Economy in Practice

“By harnessing the advantages of concentrated populations in metro areas, cities give great economies of scale and opportunities for efficiency to infrastructure development, including water, sewerage and sanitation services”.

Mr. Joan Clos. Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

“Green Industry is a two-pronged agenda for achieving this. Firstly, it aims to reduce resource consumption and environmental impact of all industries (or greening of industry, in particular through Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production). Secondly, it sets out to develop a vibrant and innovative supply of environmental goods and services, from green industries, that deliver for example waste management and recycling services, develop and market clean technologies and renewable energy systems and safe chemicals.”.

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

“Feeding a growing world population would be unimaginable without irrigation. However, a lot needs to happen in terms of how we irrigate. Old, rigid systems of water distribution will need to be replaced by much more flexible ones, offering more reliable water supply, allowing for higher yields and crop diversification. In such modernized systems, pressurized irrigation technologies will play an important role in boosting water productivity and getting “more crops per drop”. Finally, much more should be done to reduce food waste in storage, distribution and at consumer's level and therefore reducing the water needed to produce this food.”

Mr. Alexander Müller Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

“Integrated approaches to water resources management are being implemented and are having impact on the ground. However progress with national implementation does take a long time and some countries have difficulty moving beyond the first political steps. There is no alternate vision for better water management so national and international leaders have to demonstrate their commitment for the long haul.” **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**

Fostering the action agenda: the means of implementation for water

There are many barriers to achieving a green economy for water, including lack of institutional capacity, information, and access to finance. There is a range of approaches for overcoming barriers, from investments, capacity development, and structural reforms, to technology policies and incentive systems. This may need facilitating the transfer and adoption of technology, water conservation, improved irrigation methods, the promotion of water reuse and improvements in water efficiency. To reverse the degradation of freshwater ecosystems, better governance is also needed. Governance which develops the legal and institutional framework including, for example, defining property rights, incorporating the cost of water services into decision making, developing water information and accounting systems and preparing plans and implementing measures for water to be a catalyst for development and the protection of the environment.

The negotiations on water have been focusing on the framework for action and the proposals on means of implementation have been general (such as financing for SD) and not specific to issues such as water. However, the Conference of Zaragoza 2011 proposed that moving to action requires efforts to increase and improve effectiveness and efficiency of financing of basic services and water resources management; to improve capacity building and engage stakeholders; and to establish mechanisms for development and sharing of water technologies. The [water toolbox](#) – or best practice guide of actions, developed in the Conference on Water in the Green Economy in Practice put forth proposals based on the analysis of existing practices, reflecting specifically on lessons from implementation, scaling up and the relevance for developing and transition countries. The water toolbox proposes six tools that can be used to promote change and support the transition towards a green economy: (1) economic instruments; (2) sustainable financing; (3) investments in natural capital; (4) technology; (5) green jobs; and (6) water planning.

The need for water accounting and for a regular monitoring and reporting framework

Overall, in Rio there are proposals for improving the accountability framework with increased transparency for international commitments on sustainable development. For water the proposals that have been tabled in the [UN-Water report on IWRM](#) includes the establishment of a regular monitoring and reporting framework to promote sustainable development and management of water resources.

The [International Resources Panel](#) hosted by UNEP (2012) argues that countries need to have a better understanding and quantification of water use throughout the life cycle of uses, involving the integrated needs of ecosystems and society, the pressures arising from climate

change and environmental degradation, economic drivers and the impacts of pollution and abstraction on water availability and quality. Many quantitative approaches are available. From a policy perspective, indicators and measures across a simplified Drivers, Pressures, State, Indicators and Responses (DPSIR) framework will also be needed (EEA, 1999; Stanners et al., 2007).

Is there a place for water in Rio beyond the negotiated outcome document?

Some countries are starting to consider that expectations may need to be low for the Outcome Document that is being negotiated for the Rio+20 Conference, and start thinking about the follow up of Rio; ensuring that specific wording is included for follow up work. There is a need to be optimistic on what we have achieved and for a pragmatic attitude for the Rio Conference; and focus on progress that has happened (knowledge, technological development, success of green industries).

The opportunity of forming coalitions/partnerships is been enthusiastically embraced by many in Rio and these are expected to support follow up after Rio. There are currently 29 registered [partnerships in water](#). The partnership Forum will take place from the 20-22 of June. Water is part of the sessions on brokering best practices and contributing to the future we want. The brokering best practices session is a speed networking session limited to 72 senior-level participants. It is an opportunity for financiers, governments, international organizations, major groups representatives and key leaders to forge strategic contacts with sustainable development Partnerships and other stakeholders. One of the three thematic clusters is water.

The potential for a different **“variable architecture” of coalitions** moving away from divides (North-South member states, NGOS and other Major Groups versus governments) is helping in opening the process. An example of crossing the divides is the Friends of Water group (including countries from the North and the South) that agreed on [10 water commandments](#) that go well beyond those of the negotiated text. Proposals include that access to safe drinking water and sanitation should be regarded as inseparable; Water reuse and recycling will be unavoidable, particularly in rapidly growing urban settlements; Sanitation / wastewater treatment should be achieved at reduced costs on infrastructure - due to new technologies; Integrated and efficient water management and sanitation would be a catalyst for a more sustainable economy; Proper pricing on water and sanitation is not contradicting to the principle of Water and Sanitation being part of human rights; well-regulated and monitored transboundary cooperation is essential throughout shared water catchment area - based on

river basin approach; cross-sectorial integration and cooperation on all water and sanitation related issues are unavoidable; Participatory approach; Risk reduction and preparedness and emergency response require increased environmental awareness and improved permit procedures control, monitoring and early warning systems, emergency plans and strengthened national, bilateral and multilateral international water governance; ensuring long term sustainability of water use and sanitation requires proper educational and awareness raising programs.

All participants at the Rio+20 conference are encouraged to ***make voluntary commitments*** to deliver concrete results for sustainable development. **Commitments** are invited from various stakeholders, NGOs, civil society, businesses, foundations, other Major Group organizations, associations, academic institutions, philanthropic organizations, UN entities, partnerships involving more than one stakeholder, and Member States.

Contributions can be made also to the dialogues organised by the Brazilian government. At the beginning of June there were 542 of which 135 were on water. A total of a 100 recommendations have been selected through an e-voting process. A second round of voting is now open to the 15th of June. Recommendations, ranked by the support received inside the platform and by the votes received in the public site will be assembled and organized by the Facilitators and presented to the Panelists in the Sustainable Development Dialogues (Rio de Janeiro, 16-19 June 2012), during Rio+20. The recommendations emanating from these Dialogues will be conveyed directly to the Heads of State and Government present at the Summit. Water is one of the selected topics for the dialogues. These are accessible “virtually” through the internet platform www.riodialogues.org.

The top 10 recommendations for the dialogues on water that are being considered (they are being voted) are:

- Adopt more ambitious global policies to address the needs for water that is really safe and for sanitation.
- Put water at the heart of future development goals.
- Assert the importance of integrated water, energy and land-use planning and management at all scales.
- Strengthen solidarity financing mechanisms.
- Build a common vision and adopt an action plan at the global level regarding wastewater management.
- Expand and strengthen global mechanisms for the monitoring of water, sanitation and hygiene.
- Promote sustainable water usage and health. People need access to sustainable water and hygiene to ensure the sustainable growth of a nation.

- Implement the right to water.
- Secure water supply by protecting biodiversity, ecosystems and water sources.
- Improve water and sanitation facilities to ensure the education of children.

There are about **49 [registered events on water](#)** and more than 157 where water is a cross-cutting issue of the total of more than 500. The 40 events are organised by member states, UN agencies and different major groups. The main topics of these events show the concerns of them and include: Basic drinking Water and Sanitation services/water as a human right/water for Health; Drought, desertification/climate impacts/disasters; Sustainable development principles, goals and targets; Efficient water and sanitation services; Private sector engagement and partnerships; Water Resources management; Water for productive uses; Rights of nature/valued eco-regions/biodiversity; Payment for Ecosystem Services; Education; the Poverty Agenda in water and green growth; and Water Cooperation.

The major groups organizing events on water in Rio include Business and Industry, Local Authorities, NGOs, Scientific and Technical Community. The NGOs and Business and Industry/Global Compact have been especially active on water. NGOS have coordinated their participation in the process of Rio through thematic clusters. These are voluntary associations of the NGO Major Group “for the purpose of arriving at common policy positions and lobbying strategies”. For water there is one on the nexus energy-water and food (Facilitated by the International Partners for Sustainable Agriculture, Biovision and ISPA) and one on water and sanitation (Facilitated by the Freshwater action network).

NGOs and other groups will also bring water issues to the [People’s Summit for “environmental and social justice in defense of the commons”](#) that will take place in Rio from the 15th to the 23rd of June. **The Global Compact** organises [Rio+20 Corporate Sustainability Forum: Innovation & Collaboration for the Future We Want](#) from 15-18 June 2012. One of the themes is water and ecosystems. Sessions will have a common purpose and design: to spur action and stimulate greater uptake. Innovative public-private partnerships, business contributions and new commitments will be showcased for each theme. They also organize an event on water as a human right on the 17th and a soft launch of the global water action hub on the 18th of June.

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