



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

15 February 2021

Excellency,

Sequel to my letter dated 19 January circulating the preliminary concept note for the one-day high-level meeting on the “Implementation of the Water-related Goals and Targets of the 2030 Agenda”, to be held on Thursday, 18 March 2021, in the General Assembly Hall, I have the honour to share the revised Concept Note and draft programme for the meeting.

The high-level meeting will include an opening segment, followed by a high-level plenary segment from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. I strongly encourage Member States to participate at the Head of State or Government or Ministerial level. The afternoon segment will feature two consecutive interactive panels and a closing segment. The panels will focus on the five areas of the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework as outlined in the concept note.

The list of speakers for the high-level plenary segment will open for inscription on Wednesday, 17 February 2021 at 10 a. m. until Friday, 5 March 2021, at 5 p.m. For inscribing on the list of speakers, please contact the General Assembly Affairs Branch (email: galindo@un.org with copy to gaspeakerslist@un.org). The time limit for statements will be three minutes for individual delegations and five minutes for statements made on behalf of a group of States. The list of speakers will be established in accordance with established practices of the General Assembly. The provisional list of speakers, to be circulated on Monday, 8 March 2021, will be determined on a first-come, first-served basis, based on the level of representation. Statements may be pre-recorded or delivered in-person by the representatives physically present in the General Assembly Hall. In view of the limited time available for the plenary segment, pre-recorded video statements will be played without introductions by a representative physically present in the General Assembly Hall. Further details on the guidelines for submission of the pre-recorded video statements will be circulated separately.

For further information on the meeting, you may contact Mr. Shaoxuan Liu (shaoxuan.liu@un.org) and Ms. Nehali Anupriya (nehali.anupriya@un.org).

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Volkan Bozkir'.

Volkan BOZKIR

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York



HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WATER-RELATED GOALS AND TARGETS OF THE 2030 AGENDA



18 March 2021, United Nations Headquarters, New York

BACKGROUND

As per General Assembly Resolution A/RES/73/226, the President of the General Assembly will convene a one-day high-level meeting to promote the implementation of the water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda in support of the implementation of the Decade on Water and Sustainable Development (2018-2028) and the high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF).

Water is essential for the survival and productivity of all life and ecosystems. Sustainable Development Goal 6 on ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all underpins much of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Growing threat of water stresses in different parts of the world has far reaching consequences, impacting economic development, food security, health, ecosystems, energy production, poverty eradication and gender equality, amongst others.

The world is currently off-track to meeting the targets of SDG 6. Some 2.2 billion people lack safely managed drinking water, 4.2 billion people lack safely managed sanitation, 3 billion people have no access to hand washing facilities at home, and 700 million people could be displaced due to scarcity of water by 2030. These figures indicate a concerning trend, but also an immense opportunity to bolster progress towards the attainment of all SDGs.

Taking place just prior to World Water Day (March 22), this high-level meeting will inspire action while drawing attention to the 2021 theme: Valuing Water. Water has environmental, social and cultural value that can vary depending on context. The different ways that water is valued reflects the broad linkages which require cross-sectoral cooperation in order to accelerate progress on all Sustainable Development Goals.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the New Urban Agenda represent a collective global commitment, a clear roadmap. However, Member States need support to strengthen their ability to comprehensively review and accelerate progress towards meeting the global water-related goals. With only 10 years to go to achieve the SDGs, we need an immediate and integrated global response to rapidly improve progress on SDG 6. The United Nations, Governments and key stakeholders are fully behind the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework which was launched during the HLPF in July 2020. This Framework is galvanizing the international community's support around five key accelerators: financing, data and information, innovation, governance, and capacity development.

With the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrating the critical importance of adequate access to safe water and sanitation for preventing and containing diseases, and climate change increasing variability in the water cycle, the Decade on Water and Sustainable Development

(2018-2028) must succeed. The meeting will seek to showcase solutions in various contexts, and also identify the lessons learnt and best practices in implementing the water related targets and goals.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the high-level meeting are as follows:

- Raise global awareness among people on the importance and urgency of implementation of SDG6.
- Support the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework, the recommendations of the High-Level Panel on Water and encourage announcement of actions in this regard.
- Identify gaps and obstacles in the implementation of the water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda whilst sharing solutions from various contexts
- Highlight the urgency of the need for mobilization of resources and enhanced investment in the water infrastructure including in the context of advancing urgent action to promote water and sanitation as key to contain COVID-19 and build a more resilient and just future.
- Reinforce the role of partnership between the global, regional and national actors from different sectors to engage with water sector, share lessons and experiences, improve collection and allocation of resources and synchronize actions on water and sanitation.

THEME

Scaling-up multilateral cooperation and accelerating concrete actions to meet the water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

DRAFT PROGRAMME

10:00am-11:00am	Opening Segment
11:00am – 1:00pm	High-Level Plenary
3:00pm-4:25pm	Panel 1: Data and Information and Governance
4:25pm-5:50pm	Panel 2: Financing, Innovation and Capacity Building
5:50pm-6:00pm	Closing Segment

1. Opening

Opening Statements will be delivered by the President of the General Assembly and other high-level representatives including a keynote speaker.

2. High-level Plenary

“Urgent action on water for 2030 and a sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic”

The plenary will call for accelerated implementation of the water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda as a centrepiece to contain COVID-19 and as a starting place to build back better. It is anticipated that high-level representatives from Member States will demonstrate ambition and action to ensure that no one is left behind. Member States will share their experiences and lessons on promoting the progress of achieving SDG6 at national, regional and global level and accelerating concrete actions through multilateral cooperation to meet the water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda.

Guiding questions

1. What steps have been taken by your country accelerate concrete actions to meet the water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?
2. What are the gaps and obstacles in the implementation of the water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda?
3. How can we leverage implementation of the water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda as a centrepiece to contain COVID-19 and facilitate an integrated approach to build back better?
4. How can we prepare for the long-term risks, such as climate change and natural disasters, by using water-related SDG policy tools and strategies?
5. What high-level political commitments and actions have been made by your country to accelerate the achievement of water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda, in light of the Decade of Action?
6. What are the best practices or challenges successfully handled by your country? And how can this experience be replicated in the regional or global context?

3. Panel Discussions

Panel 1: Data and Information and Governance

Credible and timely water and sanitation data provide stronger political accountability and commitment, as well as enabling evidence-based policymaking, regulations, planning and investments at all levels, to ensure the most effective deployment of resources. However, data and information are often not available or not shared between sectors to effectively inform decision-making. In relation to SDG 6, the average UN Member State has data for about two thirds of the global indicators for SDG 6.

All sectors of society depend on water and sanitation and yet policy and institutional fragmentation often means that decisions taken in certain areas (e.g. agriculture, energy, health, environment) often do not consider the associated impacts on water availability and water quality for other sectors. Integration is essential to capture synergies and manage trade-offs among different social, economic and environmental development objectives.

Progress on SDG 6 is everyone's business and depends on commitments and action in other SDG areas as well. Governance and cross-sector collaboration, clear roles, involvement of local authorities, multi-stakeholder involvement and effective and inclusive institutions are needed, as well as improved data generation, validation, standardization and information exchange to build trust. These steps will help leaders to make informed decisions while increasing accountability, commitment and investment. Changes are needed at all levels to generate data and optimize monitoring and assessment, to deepen disaggregation and analysis, especially for vulnerable, marginalized and disadvantaged groups.

In this interactive discussion, panelists will present concrete acceleration actions for water and sanitation focusing on two of the accelerators set forth in the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework: data and information and governance. They will demonstrate how to scale-up international cooperation and accelerate concrete action to meet the water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda. The session further aims to generate commitments for the SDG Acceleration Actions on SDG 6.

Objectives:

- Highlight the value of high-quality data and information on water-related goals and targets being generated, shared and made easily accessible for decision makers.
- Showcase the importance of better governance, establishment of efficient mandates for delivery of water-related goals and targets in all sectors, strengthened institutions to deliver and effective intersectoral coordination mechanisms.
- Present solutions proven by evidence and positive outcomes to member states and multi-stakeholders.
- Identify challenges and obstacles with examples and real cases and share various working modalities and know-how to match demands with resources, existing answers with questions.

Guiding questions:

- 1) How can improved data and information enable policy makers to make evidence-based decisions, while increasing accountability and improving water management?
- 2) How can countries set up systems or mechanisms to improve data and information collection, distribution and analysis for decision-making through collaboration across sectors?
- 3) What innovative approaches can be taken to increase the numbers of diverse stakeholders involved in implementing water-related goals and targets?

- 4) Action on water is necessary at all levels of governance, national, sub-national and local. What are some examples of effective governance coordination, and action that can be shared in relation to achieving the water related goals?
- 5) Can we use the COVID-19 experience to improve governance (including risk management) for water and sanitation to build back better?

Panel 2: Financing, Innovation and Capacity Building

Financing, innovation and capacity building potential exists in the water and sanitation sector, however, there are several bottlenecks which stall greater progress. Significant financing gaps impede progress, while existing funding from different sources is often uncoordinated among donors. Innovations need to be leveraged or scaled-up, and capacity building efforts have often not paid sufficient attention to education, training, attracting and retaining the skilled workforce needed to deliver water and sanitation-related services.

If we are to reach the transformative progress needed to meet water and sanitation objectives, business-as-usual is no longer an option. Optimized financing through improved targeting, better utilization of existing resources and mobilization of additional domestic and international funding will lead to efficient service delivery and implementation. Innovation with modernised practices and technologies need to be leveraged and scaled-up to improve integrated water resources management and sanitation service delivery. Capacity needs to be developed to build inclusive human and institutional capacities at all levels to improve service delivery, operating and maintenance technology while creating a skilled workforce in the water and sanitation sector and beyond.

In this interactive discussion, panellists will present acceleration actions for water and sanitation focusing on three of the accelerators set forth in the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework: financing, innovation and capacity development. They will demonstrate how to scale-up international cooperation and accelerate concrete action in these areas to meet the water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda. The session further aims to generate commitments for the SDG Acceleration Actions on SDG 6..

Objectives:

- Outline the importance of adequate and devoted resources, (including financial resources) to plans and actions related to delivery of water-related goals and targets.
- Present innovative practices and technologies for water and sanitation and the approaches taken to leverage innovation at the country and local level.
- Demonstrate the effectiveness of skilled staff in enhancing sustainable implementation of water-related SDG goals and targets.
- Showcase successful and innovative business models, working methods, financial mechanisms.

Guiding questions:

- 1) How can we optimize financing for more efficient service delivery and implementation?
- 2) What lessons and experiences can be shared which lead to an improved collection and allocation of resources and synchronize actions on water and sanitation?
- 3) Under the constraint of governments' budgets due to the COVID-19 recovery, how can we implement the SDGs programs and projects more efficiently? What support can be leveraged from the UN system or other development partners and stakeholders to bolster national efforts?
- 4) What innovative strategies and policies, practices and technologies for water and sanitation exist and what approaches are taken to scale-up these practices at the national and local levels? Can you share some examples?
- 5) What is the scale and scope of training needed to ensure a skilled workforce in the water and sanitation sectors to support the rapid implementation of water-related SDG goals and targets?

4. Closing

The President of the General Assembly will highlight main messages and commitments in the lead up to the Midterm Review of the Water Action Decade.

OUTCOME

President's Summary

The President of the General Assembly will prepare a summary of the High-level Meeting which will be transmitted to the 2021 High-Level Political for Forum on sustainable development, and the UN Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Water Action Decade.

SDG 6 Acceleration Actions

Member States and other stakeholders will be encouraged to announce their commitments to advance SDG 6 as well as related goals, as part of the ongoing Decade of Action. The SDG 6 Acceleration Actions will be captured on an online platform (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgactions>) and the SDG 6 Action Space (<https://www.unwater.org/sdg6-action-space>).