



**Permanent Mission of Spain Permanent Mission of Tajikistan**

**to the UN to the UN**

**The Permanent Mission of Spain to the United Nations**

**The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Tajikistan to the United Nations**

cordially invite you to

**Briefing Session : The role of water utilities in the implementation of SDG 6 : Clean Water and Sanitation and the New Urban Agenda**

DATE: 12 July 2018, 3:00 – 4:30 pm

VENUE: Conference Room 8, United Nations Headquarters, New York

Cities are complex and water is only one of many perspectives that need to be taken into account in promoting “inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” urbanization. Nevertheless, the foundation that sound water management provides for all aspects of sustainable urban development needs to be adequately reflected in the frameworks that will guide urban development in the coming decades, namely SDG 6 on Clean Water and Sanitation as well as the New Urban Agenda. To drive this progressive urban agenda, it is critical that water and sanitation services are universally accessible and affordable, in particular for vulnerable populations. This session aims at briefing Member States and their representatives to the United Nations in New York on the role of water utilities in the implementation of SDG 6 and on the different aspects of urban water management. This Briefing Session is organized back to back to the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) taking place in New York from 9 to 18 July 2018.

**Agenda**

3 :00 Welcoming remarks

Ambassador, Mission of Tajikistan to the UN

Ambassador, Mission of Spain to the UN

3 :20 Keynote: The New Urban Agenda for sustainable urban development

Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director, UN-Habitat (TBC)

3 :35 The role of water utilities in delivering on the Agenda 2030

Andre Dzikus, Coordinator, Urban Basic Services Branch, UN-Habitat

3 :50 Successes and challenges of water utilities in addressing SDG 6

Paula Kehoe, Director of Water Resources, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, USA

Nadege Augustin, Project Manager, DINEPA, Haiti (TBC)

4 :10 Catalyzing achievement of SDG 6 through Water Operators’ Partnerships

Jose Luis Martin Bordes, Officer in Charge, GWOPA/UN-Habitat

4 :20 Questions and answers

4 :30 Closing remarks

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Note: Non-UN badge holders should register till 9 July, 2018

**CONCEPT PAPER**

**Briefing Session : The role of water utilities in the implementation of SDG 6 : Clean Water and Sanitation and the New Urban Agenda**

12 July, 2018

CR8, UN HQ, New York

Sustainable development will only be possible with safe water and sanitation. Achieveing SDG 6, to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, is a noble goal in itself, but also an underlying imperative for the attainment of all other SDGs, from peace to prosperity.

Water and sanitation utilities are on the front lines of this challenge. Utilities are essential for meeting Goal 6 by delivering safe, affordable, accessible and sufficient water, as well as to its other component targets, including water quality, water use efficiency and watershed protection. Furthermore, utilities contribute directly to urban SDG targets relating to slum upgrading (11.1), resilient infrastructure system and disaster preparedness (SDG 11.5) and the reduction of deaths associated with water-borne diseases (SDG 3.9). In the same spirit, the New Urban Agenda (NUA) resolution A/RES/71/256, calls for “Equip(ping) public water and sanitation utilities with the capacity to implement sustainable water management systems, sustainable maintenance of urban infrastructure services, (…and promote) the universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water, and adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all” (120).

Yet for many utilities, these responsibilities are beyond their current technical and financial capacity. Too many suffer from weak operational and management approaches, inadequate resources, and deteriorating infrastructure that put them in a weak position to be facing up to a widening scope of challenges. Operators’ ability to address these challenges is further marred by poor governance, ineffective institutional frameworks, and outdated water management paradigms. But what’s more, utilities are also facing a rising tide of new problems:

* Water scarcity affects more than 40 per cent of the global population and is projected to rise, with over 1.7 billion people currently living in river basins where water use exceeds recharge. Low natural water abundance is intensified by antiquated, wasteful approaches to water management, high losses from declining infrastructure and pollution from untreated wastewater.
* Rapid urban growth is outpacing the ability of service providers to respond in many places, leading to the expansion of slums, degradation of human and ecosystem health, and the aggrevation of urban inequities and associated social tensions.
* The effects of climate change are already being felt in many parts of the world. With increasing global temperatures the quality, quality and timing of source water upon which service providers depend is no longer reliable. For water and sanitation services, droughts can reduce the availability of water for unknown periods of time, increasing the cost of treatment and risking reliability of service and infrastructure damage. Without reliable public services, private boreholes tend to proliferate, leading to unsustainable aquifer decline, exacerbating water shortages and compromising quality. Extreme heat causes bacterial growth or die off that can compromise treatment processes.
* In disaster and post-conflict contexts, access to water and sanitation generally deteriorates, and where infrastructure has been damaged, the absence of reliable water and sanitation services can further exacerbate strife and inequities.

Local water and sanitation utilities can only address sustainable development through dedicated support and improvement programs. Thousands of small and large utilities around the world need well-skilled staff and the institutional capacity and resilience to deal with both current and future challenges.

Increasing water and sanitation access sustainably requires much more than operators extending the pipes. Utilities need the technical, managerial, financial capacities to provide environmentally and socially sustainable services over the long term. Utility improvement is a long-term and complex endeavor that requires appreciating the complexity of the challenge and the important role of capacity building. A short-term and narrow focus on performance improvement can overlook utility sustainability considerations with the result that while access may go up initially, it will soon fall again because services lack the capacity or financial underpinnings to keep them going, long-term. Over-focusing on or rushing towards improved financial performance can lead to short-sighted and socially or environmentally counterproductive moves that do not translate into benefits for target communities, even once cost recovery has been achieved. WOP experience and research suggests that a balanced focus on utility sustainability needs to take precedence over one-sided approaches.

Water Operators’ Partnerships (WOPs) help water and sanitation service providers develop knowledge with the support of peers, to raise utilities’ overall level of capacity and performance, for the long term, for the betterment of all. WOPs are based on the observation that capacity building and retention, facilitated by networking and mentoring, can equip service providers to meet the challenges facing the sector[[1]](#footnote-1). They also draw on the fact that much of the innovation and expertise to address service providers’ challenges – from Water Safety Planning to Non-Revenue Water Reduction, and improving Energy Efficiency to extending services in informal areas – reside with service providers themselves, and that a growing number of these successful operators are highly motivated to share their expertise and innovation with others as “mentors” [[2]](#footnote-2) on a not-for-profit basis.

Since January 2009, UN-Habitat has hosted the Secretariat of the Global Water Operators’ Partnerships Alliance (GWOPA) whose main objective is to strengthen the technical and management capacity of urban water and sanitation operators, through not-for-profit peer support partnerships. In the context of SDGs and NUA, GWOPA‘s work in equipping water utilities to realize the human right to water and sanitation and promote sustainable water development through not-for-profit capacity development, including knowledge sharing and peer-learning partnerships is more relevant than ever.

**Utilities and their contributions to SDG 6**

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|  | **SDG Goal 6 Target** | **How Utilities Contribute** |
| **6.1** | By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all | Providing services and ensuring service quality, safety, affordability, reliability. |
| **6.2** | By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations | Depending on the setting, utilities are responsible for different steps along the sanitation chain, including capture, containment, emptying, and transport, treatment and safe reuse and disposal. |
| **6.3** | By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally | Wastewater collection, treatment and reuse. |
| **6.4** | By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity | Water Demand Management, leak reduction, wastewater reuse, |
| **6.5** | By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate | cooperation with watershed stakeholder |
| **6.6** | By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes | Upstream water catchment protection, water withdrawal minimization, use of green infrastructure, wastewater treatment and disposal |

1. In contrast to approaches which displace operators while changes are being implemented, WOPs aim to develop and maintain the resident human resource capital within a utility. In this light, WOPs also focus on the key role that workers, as well as managers, play in the delivery of safe and accessible water and sanitation services. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Mentors are the experienced service providers who offer their support through a WOP. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)