

**STRATEGY  
2014 - 2020**

**DELIVERING AS  
ONE  
ON  
WATER RELATED ISSUES**



**UN WATER**





**UN-Water  
Strategy  
2014-2020**

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# 1. WHY A STRATEGY TO

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UN-WATER IS THE UNITED NATIONS (UN) INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION MECHANISM FOR FRESHWATER RELATED ISSUES, INCLUDING SANITATION.

IT WAS FORMALLY ESTABLISHED IN 2003 BUILDING ON A LONG HISTORY OF COLLABORATION IN THE UN FAMILY. UN-WATER IS COMPRISED OF UN AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS WITH A FOCUS ON, OR INTEREST IN, WATER RELATED ISSUES AS MEMBERS, AND OTHER NON-UN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AS PARTNERS<sup>1</sup>.

The main purpose of UN-Water is to complement and add value to existing programmes and projects by facilitating synergies and joint efforts, so as to maximize system-wide coordinated action and coherence. UN-Water seeks to increase the effectiveness of the support provided to Member States in their efforts towards achieving international agreements on water.

In doing so, UN-Water seeks to:

- (a) improve the coherence in UN system actions at all levels;
- (b) contribute to the global policy debate on water related issues through active participation in global policy fora and events and the production of assessments and policy briefs;
- (c) contribute to increased knowledge on water related issues through relevant monitoring and reporting mechanisms and by serving as an entry point for water related indicators, data and information; and
- (d) identify emerging issues related to global water challenges and provide a platform for UN system strategic discussions on how to prepare for and cope with them more effectively.



# 2020?

## ‘WATER IS AT THE CORE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT’

The Future We Want (United Nations, 2012)

The years since the Millennium Declaration (2000) have seen major changes in the way that the world approaches the challenges of eradicating poverty. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have highlighted the importance of improving access to safe drinking-water and adequate sanitation for human development – leading to improved health, education, household incomes, human dignity and gender equality.

In ‘Delivering as One’, the Report of the UN Secretary-General’s High Level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance, and the environment, the authors assert that ‘the UN needs to overcome its fragmentation and deliver as one through a stronger commitment to working together on the implementation of one strategy, in the pursuit of one set of goals’, with particular emphasis to be placed at the country level. Given its mandate, UN-Water is therefore well placed to play an important role in assisting the UN system and Member States to respond to the major global, regional and national water related challenges in a more coordinated and effective manner.

Following the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 (Rio+20), Member States and the UN system reflected on the move from the MDGs to the Post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

In the context of the Rio+20 outcomes and of the changes and challenges towards 2015 and beyond, the fundamental role of water to address critical issues such as health, the environment, gender and human rights, climate change, energy security and food security, and to contribute to poverty eradication and sustainable development in general, has been recognised. It is therefore now an opportune moment for UN-Water to set out a new Strategy to 2020 to be able to continue to respond to needs and demands of the UN system and of Member States in a new development framework.

<sup>1</sup> At the time of the finalization of this document (January 2014), UN-Water includes 31 UN agencies and organizations as Members and 36 other international organizations as Partners [www.unwater.org/members.html](http://www.unwater.org/members.html)

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a white paper airplane. The hand is positioned in the lower center, with fingers gripping the fuselage. The paper airplane is oriented diagonally, pointing towards the upper left. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green field. The overall lighting is bright and natural.

## **2. UN-WATER'S VISION, MISSION AND STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS**



**UN-WATER'S VISION**

According to its mandate, UN-Water's vision is to 'deliver as one' on water related issues.

**UN-WATER'S MISSION**

UN-Water's mission is to complement and add value to water related activities by facilitating synergies and joint efforts, so as to maximize UN system-wide coordinated action and coherence as well as increase the effectiveness of the support provided to Member States.

**UN-WATER'S STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS**

To achieve its mission, UN-Water's work is guided by three strategic directions:

1. UN-Water will continue to foster greater coordination amongst its Members and Partners as they work together to address the global water challenges in all their facets. This involves a strategic prioritization of the work of the UN-Water Task Forces and Thematic Priority Areas.
2. UN-Water will increase efforts to ensure that water is included in critical global policy debates. These debates cover a wide range of pressing challenges, including the post-2015 development agenda, the global financial crisis, climate change, food security and international peace and security concerns.
3. UN-Water will continue to seek avenues to improve sustainable water outcomes by its Members and Partners at the country level.



A silhouette of a person's arm and hand reaching out towards the left, set against a bright, warm, golden-yellow background. The background is out of focus, showing vertical lines that could be trees or poles. The overall mood is hopeful and aspirational.

# **3. MAXIMIZING --- THE POTENTIAL**

### **MATCHING AMBITION WITH REALISM**

The world faces many water related challenges including: feeding a growing population; rapid urbanization; ensuring household access to safe water and adequate sanitation; managing the effects of a changing climate; ensuring adequate water for agriculture and industry; controlling pollution and managing wastewater. To meet these challenges it is important that countries develop policies and effective institutions and implement actions that optimize the use and re-use of the water resources available to them. The UN system has a vital role to play in supporting Member States to meet these challenges and UN-Water must set out an ambitious, but realistic agenda if its Members and Partners are to maximize their effectiveness.

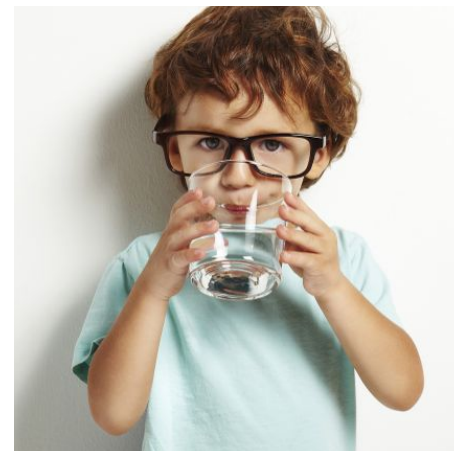
### **MEMBERS AND PARTNERS - THE KEY TO THE UN-WATER MECHANISM**

With many parts of the UN system working on water related challenges and numerous other bodies also dealing with water issues, the world of water is a complex one. The value of the UN-Water

mechanism lies in its ability to underline the strength of its various Member and Partner organizations. UN-Water is ideally placed to help governments, organizations and individuals involved with water issues to navigate this complex world of water by identifying the roles and responsibilities of all these different organizations and mapping out their policies, activities and achievements.

### **ENHANCING UN-WATER'S RELEVANCE TO MEMBERS, PARTNERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANIZATIONS**

UN-Water still has untapped potential to add even further value to the work of its Members and Partners. To do this and thus further demonstrate its value as a global public good, UN-Water must build on the substantive role it has played in facilitating coordination of water related monitoring activities undertaken by some of its Members. UN-Water also plays a major role in coordinating the release of major UN reports and in harmonizing their messages. Similarly UN-Water has been instrumental in ensuring that the UN system delivers coordinated and coherent messages to the outside world through the release of UN-Water's technical and policy



recommendations on water related matters.

### **SUPPORTING REGIONS AND MEMBER STATES TO ADDRESS WATER-RELATED ISSUES MORE EFFECTIVELY**

At the regional level, UN-Water can play a stronger role to ensure that, through the UN regional economic commissions and other relevant regional bodies, water related issues are included in regional development plans. Similarly at the national level, UN-Water can increase its role by raising awareness on water related challenges and opportunities. Where a country has a One UN Programme<sup>3</sup>, UN-Water will support the inclusion of water related issues, challenges and opportunities.

<sup>3</sup> At the time of preparing this document there were 35 Delivering as One countries



**4. UN-WATER**  
**'DELIVERING AS ONE'**

### **PUTTING WATER 'CENTRE STAGE' FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

It is widely recognized that the UN system needs to 'deliver as one', including on a range of water related issues to increase efficiency and to maximize the effectiveness of the individual UN system entities. Given the emerging challenges the world faces in achieving sustainable development, it is important that UN-Water stays ahead and demonstrates its leadership role and added value by aiming to be 'the first and the smartest' with the evidence and messages that it puts out. In this way UN-Water intends to maximize its influence on, and improve the effectiveness of, the whole UN system when it comes to water related issues.

### **CONTRIBUTING TO THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**

A specific opportunity is presented by the desire to design, implement and monitor the post-2015 sustainable development agenda with regards to water. The work by UN-Water for the Rio+20 Conference is recognized as being an important start in ensuring that water is at the core of the sustainable development agenda.

UN-Water is well placed in the UN system to provide the coordination platform to address water issues in the post-2015 development agenda and to monitor progress against internationally agreed global goals and targets. UN-Water also will play an important role in supporting Member States to realize the post-2015 development agenda by providing the UN system's consolidated technical experience and expertise and by transmitting the voice and needs of a wide range of stakeholders such as water users, academia, experts, civil society, youth groups and the private sector.

### **FOSTERING CONCERTED ACTION BY MEMBERS AND PARTNERS**

UN-Water is a mechanism to improve the effectiveness of the UN system on all water related issues and thus to assist Member States to realize their long-term development objectives. UN-Water is therefore not another agency that deals with water issues but it can, however, have a major influence by setting out best practice guidance, highlighting the activities of its Members and Partners and coordinating the monitoring of progress against specific goals and targets.

An important area of work for UN-Water is to prepare policy briefs and reports that can be used to inform the actions of decision-makers based on the UN system's consolidated technical experience and expertise. The production of these materials calls for significant work on both internal information sharing and coordination among UN-Water Members and Partners and on external communications of what the UN system does aimed primarily at an external audience.

### **CREATING THE MAJOR WATER KNOWLEDGE HUB**

Thanks to its Members and Partners, UN-Water has access to key data, information and reporting on policies related to water. UN-Water thus aims to be the first point of contact when stakeholders at all levels require the most up-to-date thinking on water related issues, channelling inquiries to the relevant UN-Water Members or Partners where appropriate. UN-Water also plays a significant role in monitoring progress towards internationally agreed goals and targets. The knowledge hub on water related issues, thus created by UN-Water, is a vital global public good that needs the support of all UN-Water entities and stakeholders if it is to reach its maximum potential.



### COMMUNICATING WITH ONE VOICE

A major contribution to UN-Water 'delivering as one' is its capacity to communicate the coherent and integrated response of the UN system to freshwater related issues and emerging challenges. UN-Water communications are therefore the means to inform all stakeholders of the activities and products of UN-Water.

UN-Water also coordinates the UN awareness campaigns on water, such as those on World Water Day, the International Decade for Action 'Water for Life' 2005–2015, the Sanitation for All 'The Drive to 2015', and the World Toilet Day. Campaigns are coordinated by one or more Members on behalf of UN-Water, with the support of other relevant Members, Partners, Programmes and other stakeholders.

### LINKING TO THE UN SYSTEM CHIEF EXECUTIVES BOARD FOR COORDINATION

UN-Water reports, through its Chair, to the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) within the framework of the High-Level Committee on Programmes. Since 2012, the Chair of UN-Water has been appointed at the level of UN Executive Head. This enables the work of UN-Water to be more visible within the UN system and helps UN-Water play the kind of leadership role that was intended when UN-Water was established. The Chair is in the position to demonstrate leadership on policies and to encourage UN system coherence on water issues, flagging the emerging issues related to water that need to be addressed by both UN and non-UN entities.





# 5. STRENGTHENING THE MECHANISM

## THE VARIOUS PARTS OF THE MECHANISM

The organizational structure of UN-Water is designed to manage the interactions between the various Members and Partners across the wide scope of work of UN-Water.

The main organizational elements of UN-Water are:

- **Members:** These are UN entities (e.g. funds, programmes, specialized agencies, regional commissions, conventions) with water related activities. Their representatives in UN-Water (i.e. the UN-Water Senior Programme Managers) collectively constitute the highest operational decision-making body of UN-Water.
- **Partners:** These are non-UN global organizations involved with water related activities.
- **Programmes:** UN-Water also operates through specific Programmes, each with their own mandate, work plan, budget and an executing agency.
- **Management Team:** It fosters the implementation of Senior Programme Managers' decisions and supports increased collaboration and effective coordination. It is composed of the Chair nominated among the UN Executive Heads, the Vice-Chair elected among the Senior Programme Managers the Secretary based at the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs in New York to strengthen the liaison with the Member States and the UN General Assembly processes, and a Technical Advisory Unit that provides administrative, technical and logistic support.
- **Joint Steering Group:** Comprising the Chair, the Vice-Chair, the Secretary and four rotating Senior Programme Managers. It oversees the implementation of UN-Water's work programme and the operations of the UN-Water Inter-Agency Trust Fund.







The work of UN-Water is organized around Thematic Priority Areas and Task Forces. Each one is coordinated by one or more Members and engages Members, Partners and Programmes. Thematic Priority Areas address specific issues that require long-term attention and strong inter-agency collaboration and coordination. Task Forces are time-bound and cover areas where UN-Water Members have identified specific activities to be implemented aimed at enhancing coordination of water related activities by UN bodies.

#### **BINDING THE PARTS INTO A COHESIVE UNIT**

With the structure of the UN-Water mechanism being complex, it is of utmost importance to seek harmony among all the different parts of UN-Water, ensuring the presence of a robust central management structure to share information and facilitate coordination.

It is important that the different parts of UN-Water work together across the different locations and time zones, making best use of available remote collaborative workspaces and tools. The biannual UN-Water Meetings also play an important role in bringing all parts of UN-Water together to report on the progress of their activities and to discuss strategic and emerging issues in the water sector.

#### **LINKING THE GLOBAL TO THE REGIONS AND THE COUNTRIES**

The UN-Water mechanism is currently well established at the global level. However, actions taken at the regional and country level are what makes a difference to achieving agreed goals and targets. According to its mandate, UN-Water will therefore re-double its efforts to contribute to UN system's coordination through the strengthening of regional and country networks.

#### **ENSURING ADEQUATE FUNDING OF UN-WATER**

In addition to the considerable in-kind support from its Members and Partners, UN-Water activities and operations are currently funded through a relatively modest multi-donor trust fund while the UN-Water Programmes are primarily funded by the countries hosting them.

Ensuring that UN-Water is adequately funded and staffed over the medium-to long-term is important if UN-Water is to achieve its mandate. UN-Water will therefore better communicate to potential donors what UN-Water does, the value that it adds to the UN system and its role as a global public good.



# **6. TOWARDS** **A SUCCESSFUL** **UN-WATER**



### SETTING REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

There is a risk that external stakeholders and even UN-Water Members and Partners are unclear as to what to expect from UN-Water. Expectations may be too high and then inevitably lead to disappointment; or they may be too low and lead to a lack of enthusiasm for what UN-Water aims to do. Establishing a clear understanding of what UN-Water aims to achieve, how it will do this, who will be involved in ensuring the aims are met is essential.

The activities carried out during the 2014–2015 biennium set the tone for UN-Water's work right up to 2020 and even beyond. Ensuring that all parts of the UN-Water mechanism work harmoniously together is critical in the lead-up to, and following, the definition of the post-2015 development agenda.

### BUILDING ON PAST ACHIEVEMENTS

UN-Water policy briefs, status reports and analytical briefs are essential reading for both specialists and non-specialists who are involved with water related issues. UN-Water publications cover a wide range of issues, including water resources, water supply, sanitation, wastewater, water governance, climate change, green economy, and gender aspects of water and sanitation.

UN-Water is widely recognized as having achieved some significant successes over the years. UN-Water has been instrumental in supporting the monitoring of water related activities towards globally agreed goals and targets such as the MDGs and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. UN-Water flagship publications are therefore key global public goods that help to inform the world of the status of the key water related challenges.

UN-Water also raises awareness on these challenges through its central role in the highly successful World Water Day campaigns that happen each year on 22 March focus on a specific water related issue. The World Water Day campaigns

bring to the attention of the global population the importance of water through dissemination of information and through events that highlight the importance of water to sustainable development. Starting from 2013, another opportunity to raise awareness on key water related challenges is the World Toilet Day celebrated each year on 19 November.

In addition, building on the technical experience and expertise of its Members and Partners, UN-Water supports Member States' global policy debates by providing the evidence base for decision-making and by transmitting the voice and needs of a wide range of stakeholders. In this respect, it is important to mention UN-Water's critical input and contribution to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 and to the processes to define the post-2015 development agenda.

### WHAT SUCCESS MIGHT LOOK LIKE

By 2020, a successful UN-Water is likely to:

- Be a genuine voice of the UN system and help the UN system to 'deliver as one' on water related issues;
- Be at the forefront of water issues;
- Through the strength of its 'water knowledge hub', be seen as an effective instrument to inform decision-making on water related issues;
- Be in a position to respond to the needs and demands of the international community with regard to water in the sustainable development agenda;
- Have a strong relationship with the UN Secretary-General and with Member States;
- Be financially secure with increased support from UN-Water Members and Partners and from Member States to enable it to meet its medium- and long-term objectives;
- Have communicated water issues in a high profile way.



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