

# A Post-2015 Global Goal for Water:

Synthesis of key findings and recommendations from UN-Water

## Executive Summary

Detailed Targets and Associated Indicators



UN-Water is the United Nations (UN) inter-agency coordination mechanism for all freshwater related issues, including sanitation. It provides the platform to maximize system-wide coordinated action and coherence and serves UN Member States in their efforts towards achieving development goals related to freshwater and sanitation.

UN-Water's paper 'A Post-2015 Global Goal for Water' is the result of a broad technical consultation process among UN-Water Members and Partners, as well as a range of other stakeholders. It proposes a set of potential targets and indicators to support a dedicated global goal for water and is conceived as a contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) consultation process as well as to the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda.

The paper draws upon multiple sources including, but not limited to, the reports of the UN Secretary General's High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (HLP), the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), the UN Development Group (UNDG), the Budapest Water Summit, the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG), as well as the results of the numerous thematic, national and regional stakeholder consultations.

# Executive Summary

## Suggestions for a global goal for water

Water's fundamental importance for human development, the environment and the economy needs to feature prominently in the new post-2015 development agenda. UN-Water and its partners have therefore come together to develop these suggestions for a dedicated global goal for water, 'Securing sustainable water for all'. This is intended as a constructive contribution to current discussions on the new development agenda and how water related issues are incorporated into it. The framework for this global goal for water is designed to promote human well-being, economic prosperity and the preservation of environmental capital. The framework thus contains all three dimensions of sustainable development - social, economic and environmental.



The proposal aims to support the protection of water resources from over exploitation and pollution while meeting drinking water and sanitation needs, energy, agriculture and other uses. It further aims to protect communities from water-related disasters. It supports the realization of the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation as well as other rights including those to life, of the child, of an adequate standard of living, and health. The proposal is a key building block for sustainable development, underpinning all other efforts to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030. It proposes targets and related indicators that will help

countries to reach the goal by 2030. It illustrates the costs and benefits of doing so and discusses means of implementation. The diagram to the left shows the suggested goal and the key interlinked targets.

The proposed global goal for water seeks to be universally applicable while responding to specific national circumstances. It is designed to be tailored to the contexts and priorities of each country. Implementing this goal for water should create social, economic, financial and other benefits that greatly outweigh its costs. These benefits will extend well beyond the water domain as it is normally understood. The development of health, education, agriculture and food production, energy, industry and other social and economic activities all depend on the effective management, protection and provision of water and the delivery of safe water supply and sanitation services. Communities also need protection from the dangers that water-related hazards can present.

Meeting the goal will call for improved water governance and actions in the realms of policy-making, legislation, planning, coordination, and administration. Tools for project preparation, monitoring, and management will also need to be developed to enable effective implementation to take place. All this will require enhanced institutions and human capacities at all levels.

## Supporting targets

The global goal for water is supported by a coherent, cohesive and mutually reinforcing set of targets. Used together these would enable the global goal to be met. To facilitate understanding of the multiple functions water plays in society, the framework is structured into five measurable and interconnected targets. The short versions of these targets are:

- A. Achieve universal access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene
- B. Improve by (x%) the sustainable use and development of water resources in all countries
- C. All countries strengthen equitable, participatory and accountable water governance
- D. Reduce untreated wastewater by (x%), nutrient pollution by (y%) and increase wastewater reuse by (z%)
- E. Reduce mortality by (x%) and economic loss by (y%) from natural and human-induced water-related disasters

These short versions are provided for ease of communication. More detailed text and the complete and operative wording of these targets, together with indicators for monitoring progress for each of them, is contained in the Annex. These targets are designed to meet the need for precise definition that would enable implementation. The targets are



## Building the global consensus for Water

It is increasingly obvious that the current use, development and management of the planet's finite water resources, and the services they provide, is unsustainable. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 (Rio+20), governments recognized that water is "at the core of sustainable development as it is closely linked to a number of key global challenges". Achieving the development objectives of ending poverty, overcoming inequalities, realizing human rights for all and boosting and sustaining economic development is reliant upon healthy freshwater systems.

The proposed global goal for water addresses the priorities agreed at Rio+20 and in other intergovernmental processes. It draws on lessons learnt from the MDGs, the unfinished business of implementing the MDG agenda, and on outputs from global, national and regional stakeholder consultations. The goal also reflects the reports of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, the UN Global Compact, the UN Development Group, the Progress Report of the Co-Chair of the intergovernmental Open Working Group on SDGs (OWG), and the Budapest Water Summit, among others.

## Towards the future we want

UN-Water's paper on a Post-2015 Global Goal for Water's aim is to inform ongoing discussions on the post-2015 agenda. UN-Water Members and Partners recommend that the many interrelated water issues need to be addressed coherently through a dedicated water goal in order to achieve the future we want.

The suggested water goal and targets recognise the development aims of societies whilst ensuring achievements are sustainable over the long term. The suggested water goal would promote the following development outcomes, among others: Healthy people, increased prosperity, equitable societies, protected ecosystems and resilient communities [see box].

The post-2015 aspirations for poverty eradication in the context of sustainable development will fail unless the proposed approach to the management of water and the provision of water-related services is adopted in all countries. It is important, too, for water to be linked to the other goals and targets selected by UN Member States.

UN-Water's paper demonstrates the magnitude and urgency of the task that needs to be accomplished at the global scale. The size of the population without access to clean and safe water and sanitation is measured in billions of people. The demands for freshwater to meet growing human needs, the imperative for wastewater treatment to preserve and protect water quality and action to arrest the impact of nutrient pollution imply a major step change from 'Business As Usual'. The new development agenda can stimulate the urgent action that is needed to correct current trends.

measurable at national level to enable comparisons to be made between countries and allow aggregation at a global scale. The aim is for target percentage values for each target to be set at the national level and the global percentage values given above would be determined based on averages aggregated from those nationally set targets and associated elements. This is further discussed in section 3 in the full paper.

These proposed targets are relevant to all countries. They build on existing commitments and experience to address challenges that globally are considered most critical to progress.

The suggested global goal for water builds on and extends existing commitments. A global goal for water is fundamental to all other development goals and the proposed framework works for all countries. The targets for the goal for water have important explicit and implicit inter-linkages, making them mutually supportive. For example, access to drinking water and ensuring it is fairly shared requires good governance, balancing competing demands, and the protection of natural supply systems from pollution and water-related disasters. Furthermore, the goal for water and its targets is of direct importance to addressing other proposed areas within the post-2015 framework, such as health, energy, food, employment, gender equality and environmental sustainability.

As water is crucial to all dimensions of sustainable development, it should be feasible to demonstrate strong links between water and other goals and their related targets. Integrating the different development goals into a coherent structure offers the best hope of delivering maximum sustainable benefits for the greatest number of people.

The suggested water goal would promote the following outcomes among others:

<p><b>Healthy people</b></p> <p><b>Increased prosperity</b></p> <p><b>Equitable societies</b></p> <p><b>Protected ecosystems</b></p> <p><b>Resilient communities</b></p>	THROUGH	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Universal access to safe <b>drinking water, sanitation and hygiene</b>, improving water quality and raising service standards</li> <li>2. The sustainable use and development of <b>water resources</b>, increasing and sharing the available benefits</li> <li>3. Robust and effective water <b>governance</b> with more effective institutions and administrative systems</li> <li>4. Improved <b>water quality</b> and <b>wastewater</b> management taking account of environmental limits</li> <li>5. Reduced risk of <b>water-related disasters</b> to protect vulnerable groups and minimize economic losses</li> </ol>
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# ANNEX:

## Proposed Goal, detailed illustrative targets and associated indicators

### A dedicated global goal for water: Securing sustainable water for all

#### Target A: Achieve universal access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene<sup>1,2</sup>

##### Element 1:

###### No Open Defecation

“to eliminate open defecation”

##### Element 2:

###### Basic Access

“to achieve universal access to basic drinking water, sanitation and hygiene for households, schools and health facilities”

##### Element 3:

###### Safely Managed Services

“to halve the proportion of population without access at home to safely managed drinking water and sanitation services”

##### Element 4:

###### Equality

“to progressively eliminate inequalities in access”

##### Element 1 core indicators

1. Percentage of population practicing open defecation

##### Element 2 core indicators

1. Percentage of population using basic drinking water  
2. Percentage of population using basic sanitation  
3. Percentage of population with hand washing facilities at home  
4. Percentage of health facilities with basic drinking water, basic sanitation and hygiene  
5. Percentage of primary and secondary schools that have basic drinking water, basic sanitation and hygiene

##### Element 3 core indicators

1. Percentage of population using a safely managed drinking water service at home  
2. Percentage of population with basic sanitation whose excreta is safely managed

##### Element 4 core indicators

1. Data will be disaggregated by the four population groups urban/rural; rich/poor; slums/formal urban settlements; disadvantaged groups/general population  
2. The difference in rate of change for the disadvantaged groups versus the general population

##### Desired outcomes/country actions

- Water allocation decisions and water withdrawals that take into account both human and Governments integrate open defecation targets within strategies for improving child survival and nutrition and reducing extreme poverty.
- Governments adopt ambitious targets for improving WASH service levels in order to reduce global burden of WASH related diseases, to improve productivity and economic growth, and to reduce inequalities between population groups.
- Governments adopt ambitious targets in order to reduce global burden of disease from diarrhea and other WASH related diseases, improve child and maternal health, improve nutrition, improve (girls) education outcomes and reduce (gender) inequalities.

<sup>1</sup> Full wording of target: By 2030: To eliminate open defecation; to achieve universal access to basic drinking water, sanitation and hygiene for households, schools and health facilities; to halve the proportion of the population without access at home to safely managed drinking water and sanitation services; and to progressively eliminate inequalities in access

<sup>2</sup> ([http://www.wssinfo.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/resources/Fact\\_Sheets\\_4\\_eng.pdf](http://www.wssinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/resources/Fact_Sheets_4_eng.pdf) provides a full list of supporting definitions and indicators

## Target B: Improve by (x%) the sustainable use and development of water resources in all countries

**Element 1:** Bring freshwater withdrawals in line with sustainably available water resources

**Element 2:** Restore and maintain ecosystems to provide water-related services

**Element 3:** Increase water productivity for all uses

### Element 1 core indicators

1. Change in withdrawal-to-availability ratio (change in withdrawals as % of total actual renewable water resources, within sustainable limits)
2. % of basins with an allocation framework (balancing demands for all sectors, including the environment, from groundwater and surface water)
3. Storage capacity per capita/% of available water

### Element 2 core indicators

1. % change in freshwater ecosystem area and condition (indicator of change in ecosystem extent and health, includes brackish ecosystems)
2. Threatened Species (Red List) Index and Living Planet Index (for relevant flora and fauna)
3. Environmental water stress (based on deviation from natural flow/availability)

### Element 3 core indicators

1. Change in agricultural GDP per agricultural withdrawals (agricultural water productivity)
2. Change in industrial GDP per industrial withdrawals (industrial water productivity)
3. Change in electricity production per unit of water (energy sector water productivity)
4. Change in withdrawals for domestic use per capita (domestic water supply and use efficiency)

### Desired outcomes/country actions

- Water allocation decisions and water withdrawals that take into account both human and environmental water needs and impacts of water use on freshwater ecosystems, ensuring sustainable withdrawals in the long term.
- Ensuring ecosystem health and capacity to be able to supply water of a sufficient amount and quality for human uses.
- Countries take actions towards increasing available supply and productivity in the main water use sectors. The productivity and efficiency indicators are used to set targets and inform decision-makers of priority intervention areas.

## Target C: All countries strengthen equitable, participatory and accountable water governance

**Element 1:** Implement integrated approaches to water management at local, basin and national levels including participatory decision-making

**Element 2:** Deliver all drinking water supply, sanitation and hygiene services in a progressively affordable, accountable, and financially and environmentally sustainable manner

**Element 3:** Ensure regulatory frameworks are in place for water resources, infrastructure and services, and enhance the performance of responsible public authorities and their water operators

**Element 4:** Strengthen knowledge transfer and skills development

### Element 1 core indicators

1. Percent of countries implementing IWRM plans
2. Percent of countries with strategic planning and participatory decision-making processes
3. Percent of transboundary basins and aquifers with cooperative management frameworks
4. Percent of countries with national policies supporting integrated disaster risk management (including drought and flood policies), as part of national development plans
5. Proportion of communities which have implemented risk strategies
6. Monitoring and evaluation systems that include surveys on governance issues (building on Rio+20 status report)

### Element 2 core indicators

1. Percentage of population using water and sanitation service providers registered with a regulatory authority (disaggregate rural and urban)
2. Percentage of population in the poorest quintile whose financial expenditure on water, sanitation and hygiene is below 3% of national poverty line (disaggregate rural and urban)
3. Ratio of annual revenue to annual expenditure on maintenance (including operating expenditures, capital maintenance, debt servicing)
4. Ratio of annual expenditure on maintenance (including operating expenditures, capital maintenance, debt servicing) to annualized value of capital assets

### Element 3 core indicators

1. Number of countries with regulatory frameworks and enforcement capacity
2. Proportion of responsible water authorities and water operators for which operational performance is measured and reported

### Element 4 core indicators

1. No. of institutions using relevant education and training materials in local capacity building programs
2. No. of capacity building networks using multidisciplinary skills of competent members to scale up capacity building and actively support implementation programs
3. No. of countries with knowledge management systems in place that ensure access to the best of international and local knowledge and measure the effectiveness of capacity building services through locally developed indicators and monitoring systems

### Desired outcomes/country actions

- Countries have an enabling environment established that supports an integrated approach to water resources management and cohesive policies across the range of water users (sectors) and at different administrative levels (regional, national, basin, local).
- Water and sanitation are embedded within National Development Plans and budgets.
- Societies take account of risks from water-related hazards and make risk-based decisions and investments to enhance preparedness and resilience.
- Nations establish institutional frameworks to integrate water disaster management into everyday water management activities and design policies and programs to assist communities in managing risks.
- Governments invest in strengthening drinking water supply and sanitation policy and institutional arrangements to ensure that improvements in services are sustained and that inequalities in access between population groups are progressively reduced.
- Countries put in place policies and regulations that lead to a reduction in the negative impacts of pollution, starting with, but not limited to the priority to reduce nitrogen and phosphorous pollution.
- A systematic global monitoring framework for water development, management and use established, which allows for prioritizing resources and identifying key areas of importance.

## **Target D: Reduce wastewater pollution and improve water quality by reducing untreated domestic and industrial wastewater by (x%); increasing wastewater reused safely by (y%); and reducing nutrient pollution by (z%) to maximize water resource availability and improve water quality.**

**Element 1:** Reducing untreated domestic and industrial wastewater (including point source agricultural) by (X%)

**Element 2:** Increasing wastewater reused safely by (Z%)

**Element 3:** Reducing nutrient pollution by (Y%)

### **Proposed core indicators**

1. Proportion of the population for whom all domestic wastewater is treated to national standards in either collective or individual facilities.
2. Proportion of industrial (and point source agricultural) wastewater flows not collected in public systems that is treated to national standards.
3. Proportion of the flows of treated municipal wastewater that are directly and safely reused
4. Proportion of the flows discharged by industrial wastewater treatment plants that are safely re-used. (This indicator does not include water directly re-used without leaving the factory)
5. Proportion of receiving water bodies meeting water quality standards (nitrogen & phosphorous as a minimum)

### **Proposed Supporting indicators**

1. Proportion of the population connected to collective sewers or with on-site storage of all domestic wastewaters

### **Desired outcomes/country actions**

- Stimulate action in countries to ensure the collection and treatment of used water and related pollutants arising from domestic water users and from 'point sources' of industry and agriculture so as to protect human health, the environment and ecosystems.
- Countries take actions towards increasing the amounts of used water that are re-used or recycled for beneficial purposes, thus contributing to satisfy sustainably all water needs.
- Countries put in place policies and regulations that lead to prevention of pollution and a reduction in the negative impacts of diffuse pollution, starting with, but not limited to the priority to reduce nitrogen and phosphorous pollution.

## Target E: Reduce mortality by (x%) and economic loss by (y%) from natural and human-induced water-related disasters

**Element 1:** Increased knowledge and understanding of nations with respect to communities at risk to water-related disasters, especially in a changing climate

**Element 2:** Adoption of integrated disaster risk management, including an appropriate mix of structural and non-structural approaches, to reduce mortality and economic losses for water-related disasters

**Element 3:** Adoption and implementation by nations of monitoring and people-centered early warning systems for communities at most risk to water-related disasters

**Element 4:** Application of an end-to-end preparedness approach to water-related disaster management which sees the needs of user communities being met, to the last mile

### Proposed core indicators

1. Mortality due to water-related disasters and mortality within vulnerable groups and by gender
2. Direct economic losses due to water-related disasters, as percentage of GDP
3. Proportion of at-risk communities with effective people-centred early warning systems for water-related disasters.
4. Proportion of nations that have assessed their risk of water-related disaster and that have established plans and strategies for integrated disaster risk management, including monitoring systems and preparedness.

### Supporting indicators

- Number of total victims per disaster (persons)
- Gender of victims per disaster (male/female)
- Age of victims per disaster (year)
- Income of victims per disaster (USD)
- Direct economic losses per disaster (USD)

### Desired outcomes/country actions

- At-risk communities implement hazard-specific early warning systems and evaluate effectiveness of their systems with respect to lead time and accuracy of forecasts and efficiency of dissemination.
- Countries understand trends in disaster impacts and are able to make informed decisions as to investments in disaster risk mitigation and preparedness. Leaders are aware of the impact of disasters to vulnerable groups and are able to tailor policies to address the specific root causes of vulnerability in their country.
- Economic losses reduced and livelihoods improved for vulnerable communities.



The full report  
can be downloaded on  
[www.unwater.org](http://www.unwater.org)

27 January 2014