Brief analysis of the resolution on "Midterm comprehensive review of the implementation of the International Decade for Action, 'Water for Sustainable Development' 2018-2028"

Overview of the resolution

On Wednesday 28 November 2018 the Second Committee adopted by consensus the resolution on the "Midterm comprehensive review of the implementation of the International Decade for Action, 'Water for Sustainable Development' 2018-2028".

The resolution calls for two UN high-level meetings on water and sanitation:

- "Requests the President of the General Assembly, through voluntary contributions, to convene in New York, in 2021, a one-day high-level meeting to promote the implementation of the water-related Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda (…)" (OP5);
- "Decides to convene, in New York, from 22 to 24 March 2023, coinciding with World Water Day, the United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action (…)" (OP4).

The resolution decides that the 2023 Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review will be preceded by preparatory meetings:

- "Decides that the Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action shall be preceded by regional and global preparatory meetings, as appropriate, and informed by existing water-related meetings at the regional and global level (…)" (OP7).

The resolution requests two reports to be produced:

- A report for the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, to assess progress in the implementation of the first half of the Decade (OP6);
- A summary of the proceedings of the 2023 Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review, to be prepared by the President of the General Assembly as its outcome document (OP4).

The resolution decides that all costs relating to the high-level meeting in 2021 as well as the 2023 Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review and its preparatory process shall be financed through voluntary contributions (OP5 and OP7).

The resolution decides to finalise the arrangements for the 2023 Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review during its seventy-fifth session (OP11).

Implications for UN-Water

The resolution includes two operational requests/invitations for UN-Water:

- "Requests the Secretary-General, with the support of UN-Water, the specialized agencies, the regional commissions and other entities of the United Nations system, to prepare a

report for the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, to assess progress in the implementation of the first half of the Decade (…)" (OP6);

- "Invites the Secretary-General, with the support of UN-Water, to continue taking appropriate steps, within existing resources, to support and organize the activities of the Decade at the global, regional and country levels (…)" (OP12).

Other possible opportunities for UN-Water support include:

- Supporting the President of the General Assembly in organising the high-level meeting in 2021 to promote the implementation of the water-related Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda (OP5);
- Supporting the UN Secretary-General to coordinate the preparatory process for the 2023 Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review (OP7);
- Providing technical advice for the finalisation of the arrangements for the comprehensive review during the seventy-fifth session in 2020, i.e. the "modalities resolution" (OP11).

Other positive aspects of the resolution include:

- UN-Water's technical advice on Addressing Global Water Challenges and Accelerating Progress on SDG 6 at the Country Level provided substantial input to the resolution and its elements were incorporated in the 2023 Conference and in the 2021 high-level meeting.
- The UN-Water SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2018 on Water and Sanitation and the United Nations World Water Development Report 2018 are mentioned (PP12) as well as the UN Secretary-General's Plan: Water Action Decade 2018-2028, prepared by UN-Water (OP1).
- Considering the urgency to address the global water challenges, the 2021 high-level meeting will provide the opportunity to accelerate progress.

Strategic issues to be considered:

- In order to make the 2021 high-level meeting relevant and impactful, it could be held on the margins of another event to ensure high-level participation. Possibilities include holding the high-level meeting during the High-level Political Forum in July or during the General Assembly's high-level General Debate in September.
- Since UN-Water coordinates the Secretary-General's Action Plan and manages the Decade website, how do we leverage the Action Plan and website to start shaping an impactful Midterm Comprehensive Review.
- The 2023 Conference, its preparatory process and the 2021 high-level meeting need to be financed through voluntary contributions. Therefore, using and integrating existing meetings could provide an opportunity to support the preparatory process without budgetary implications.
- It will be critical to assess how the high-level meetings in 2021 and 2023 fit into the schedule of the High-level Political Forum and its possible in-depth review of SDG 6. No formal discussion has yet taken place on thematic clustering of the next High-level Political Forum cycle, with the earliest opportunity for guidance from Member States in the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly (i.e. 2019-2020).
- It will be important to assess all opportunities for how the resolution can contribute to the implementation of the Decade at the country level.