Explanatory note for the UN-Water Open Space session

Item 4, 30th UN-Water Meeting, 1 February 2019, 10:00-12:30

What is an Open Space?

An Open Space is a participant-led facilitation process in which participants suggest the topics to be discussed during the session and other participants join the topics they are most interested in discussing. As such, the Open Space format invites participants to share and discuss issues they care about together with the colleagues in the room most interested and able to do so. The Open Space is a useful format to share knowledge, solve problems, initiate collaborations, network and build shared leadership around topics. There is no pre-defined output from the group discussions.

Theme for the UN-Water Open Space session

The UN-Water Open Space session is open to any UN-Water related topic that participants would like to discuss. Topics can be big or small, technical or non-technical, communications-related, policy-related, academic – really anything that a participant thinks would benefit from an informal discussion with the collective expertise of UN-Water Members and Partners. Examples may include new ideas that you would like to get feedback on, projects that you would like to discuss, upcoming strategic issues or topics you want to foster increased collaboration on or develop thinking around.

How it works

In the beginning of the session, participants suggest topics to be discussed and the facilitator organises the room and schedule based on the topics. Those who suggest topics become hosts for their respective topic and other participants join any group they like, for as long as they like.

Discussions in the Open Space format is informal and builds on the *Law of Two Feet*, which means that each participant takes responsibility for what they care about and use their own two feet to move to the group they can best contribute to and/or learn from.

There are also four principles guiding how you navigate in an Open Space: *whoever comes are the right people*, *whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened*, *whenever it starts is the right time*, and *whenever it ends is the right time*.

Is there anything to prepare?

All meeting participants may reflect on whether they have a topic to suggest in advance of session.

Brief session schedule

10:00-10:15: Introduction to the Open Space and suggestion of topics. The facilitator introduces the Open Space session and participants write down topics to be discussed on post-it notes along with their name and affiliation.

10:15-10:45: Coffee break. The facilitator organises the room and agenda.

10:45-11:30: First round of discussions. Topic hosts briefly introduce each topic and participants join any group they like for as long as they like according to the law and principles of Open Space.

11:30-12:15: Second round of discussions. New topics are introduced by new topic hosts.

12:15-12:30: Feedback and optional reporting back by the topic hosts.