UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation

1. General comments

The Kingdom of the Netherlands (KNL) fully aligns itself with the comments made by the European Union on the UN System-Wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation (SWS).

KNL would like to thank UN-Water and the secretariat for the swift development of the draft SWS. We are encouraged by the current direction of the System-Wide Strategy which aligns well with our vision of a collaborative and integrated approach to global water management and sanitation. The proactive engagement of various UN entities and the focus on tangible, measurable outcomes give us confidence in the strategy's potential for significant and meaningful impact.

KNL underlines that the SWS is fundamentally the prerogative of the Secretariat. It is crucial that the development and implementation of this strategy remain an internal process within the UN framework, led and coordinated by the Secretariat. We trust in the Secretariat’s ability to lead this important endeavor effectively, integrating MS inputs where beneficial, while retaining the overall direction and coordination of the strategy.

KNL is pleased to see that the SWS continues to build upon existing UN processes, mechanisms and frameworks including the Water Action Agenda and its voluntary commitments, the Global Acceleration Framework and the three core principles of the UN 2023 Water Conference (inclusive, action-oriented, and cross-sectoral). KNL encourages a strong emphasis on all the above throughout the SWS.

KNL would prefer to see stronger formulations / clearer definitions of the expected outcomes, entry points and outputs; Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART). The current framing gives the impression that the outcomes are mostly optional. As the SWS sets the tone for the UN system’s engagement on water, KNL recommends formulating these outputs in a more action-oriented manner while clearly outlining roles and responsibilities. Monitoring and accountability needs to be at the heart of the SWS, so SMART metrics need to be approved and endorsed by the HLCP/CEB as part of the SWS itself (and not only as part of the Collaborative Implementation Action Plan that is developed after).

The UN 2023 Water Conference has significantly boosted political momentum towards addressing global water issues, both in- and outside of the UN system. KNL underlines the importance of enhancing UN system-wide coordination and delivery of water-related priorities in parallel with initiatives from the private sector, international financial institutions and academia.
2. **Specific proposals**
   - Recommend including a proper executive summary that clearly outlines the intended goals, objectives and expected outcomes of the strategy. The current summary reads more like an introduction and largely over lapses with the context section.
   - Recommend including an organizational chart illustrating the different UN agencies responsible for water, their current capacities, and the specific coordination structures (how do the agencies interact with each other) that will be enhanced by the SWS.

3. **Areas of improvement**
   - KNL wishes to see a more concrete and in-depth vision on how the enhanced cooperation between the Country team and the Resident Coordinators will take place and how the UN will support commitment holders to follow-up on their commitments in the Water Action Agenda. At this stage we see very little involvement by the UNCT in the implementation of the Water Action Agenda. How will this SWS improve this coordination and support?
   - The appointment of a UN Special Envoy for water and sanitation serves as a precondition and central pillar for the enhanced coordination and delivery of water priorities across the UN system. The Netherlands is concerned that the Envoy is rarely mentioned in the current draft and would like for the SWS to more clearly define the role of the UN Special Envoy.
   - KNL looks forward to clear linkages with the UN Water Conferences of 2026 and 2028 that show how the UN system will capitalize on these conferences as milestones to advance the objectives of the SWS.

4. **Other points**
   - KNL would suggest for the SWS to elaborate more on the cooperation with IFI's to enhance synergies and stimulate investments, especially as this topic has becoming increasingly important for developing countries and the mandate for the SWS promises to accommodate their needs as well.
   - Cross-sectoral: address the mainstreaming of water in all relevant UN fora, intergovernmental processes and other international processes more concretely throughout the strategy to preserve political commitment and establish the necessary policy coherence.
   - Include a Roadmap with water-related important events until 2030, which will serve as opportunities to enhance the objectives of the SWS.