



**United
Nations**

UN-Water Innovation Task Force

**Recommendations for advancing the innovation accelerator of the SDG 6
Global Acceleration Framework**

For discussion at the 39th meeting of UN-Water

March 12th-13th, 2024

UN WATER





Initial mandate of the TF

“To develop a set of concrete recommendations for advancing the innovation accelerator of the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework for discussion at the next UN-Water Meeting. The Task Force members will express their interest in participating in the Task Force via email. The UN-Water Technical Advisory Unit will convene the first meeting by end of October 2023, where the Task Force coordinator(s) will be selected.”

Decision from the 38th UN-Water meeting, in August 2023

Members of the Task Force

AquaFed

THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF
PRIVATE WATER OPERATORS



GREEN
CLIMATE
FUND



International Association
of Hydrogeologists
the World-wide Groundwater Organisation



IUGG



International Association
of Hydrological Sciences



Reminder: What innovation isn't and is

It doesn't follow a single, narrow definition; it adapts to local conditions

It's not a one-time effort or a box-ticking exercise; it's an ongoing process which implies risk taking

It's not a goal in itself; it's a means to an end (achieving SDG 6)

It's not to be left to just one sector; it should involve several sectors and combinations

It isn't limited to technology; social and governance innovations are just as important

It's not business-as-usual; it's the antidote to BAU

Innovation is both doing things differently and doing different things

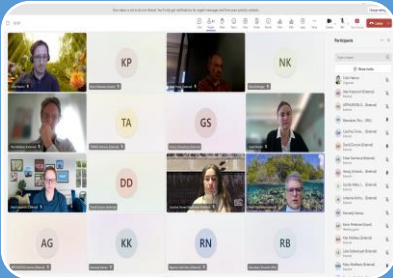
[Please refer to the background note drafted for UN-Water for more details](#)

Input for this proposal



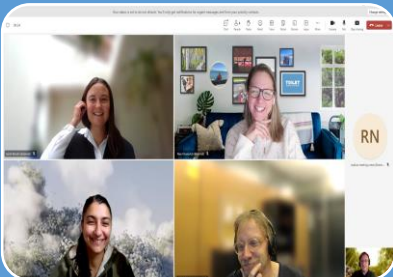
UN-Water meeting in August 2023

- Discussion on the background note presented at the meeting



Three meetings of the Task Force

- Discussions and in-meeting/offline survey results: prioritisation of proposed action pathways, on platforms and on meeting frequency



Various meetings and e-mail exchanges among the co-coordinators

- Reviewed and discussed all of the above, formulated various iterations of this proposal, with the support of the TAU



Basic principles of the TF's work



Our overarching objective is to **accelerate progress towards SDG 6**. There are many available tools which may be employed to that end, including the Water Action Agenda and coordinate with other UN-Water groups



The TF's main activities will be **focused on a few specific areas** in which it will aim to advance (quick and/or big wins), and it will not aim to cover *everything* related to water innovation



The activities of the TF will be **open and collaborative**, and the TF will be **innovative in its approaches** to work, including as regards mindsets, platforms, meeting modalities, etc.



Being **realistic about the time and resources** available to TF members, the TF will harness what its members are already doing on the topic, fostering synergies among them, leveraging additional resources where possible



The TF will look to **influence broader opinion** on the topic, through communicating within the water community and with water-related sectors (presentations in events, online posts and polls, among others)

Proposed scope of work

The TF has crystallised its proposed focus around four main areas, defined in general terms in the following slides, with more detailed action plans to be developed following feedback from the 39th UN-Water meeting



WATER INNOVATION AXLE



WHITE PAPER ON SUPPORT TO
WATER INNOVATION

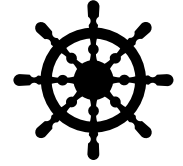


SHARING OF INSTITUTIONAL
SETUPS TO SUPPORT
INNOVATION



DEFINE MEANS OF ATTRACTING
GREATER INVESTMENT IN
WATER INNOVATION

Water innovation axle



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- An informal coordination mechanism through which (initially) all members of the Task Force can understand and discuss their water innovation initiatives*
 - May include online and in-person events and activities
 - Featuring bimonthly meetings and regular exchanges between TF members on their initiatives, aiming to share resources, enhance collaboration, foster synergies and reduce fragmentation
 - First example (in the February TF meeting): work by IAHR on Technology Readiness Levels, opening up for collaboration across TF members
 - An ecosystem analysis of broader water innovation stakeholders and initiatives will be conducted
 - Potentially expandable in the future to a more outward-facing audience

* “Water” in the context of the circular economy, not as a stand-alone

White paper on water innovation

This white paper aligns perfectly with draft output 4.4 of the UN System-Wide Strategy on water and sanitation

- Consultancy to be administered through UNDP, and overseen by UNDP and GWP (other volunteers welcome)
- Identifying opportunities for the public sector to support greater water innovation through public policy, as applied to governance, data, finance and capacity development
- Building on successful examples of innovation policy from other sectors
- Targeting specific audiences with key messages and recommendations about what they can do to enhance the enabling environment for water innovation
- A separate consultancy will focus on preparing the comms/outreach products for those target audiences
- Roll-out of the white paper will seek adoption from countries within their own policy frameworks

Decision submitted for approval by the SPMs:
Request for allocation of 20K USD in UN-Water funding to hire the consultancy, to be administered by UNDP

Institutional setups



-
- Semi-structured “safe space” for members of the Task Force to share experiences on the obstacles they have overcome in order to support and implement innovation, and the lessons learned
 - Capturing insights as actionable recommendations
 - Will be run through the water innovation axle
 - Objective: for UN-Water Members and Partners to have actionable insights that allow them to embed innovative approaches within their own institutions
 - Possible output: an outward-facing thought leadership piece / TED talk, targeting water organisations from all sectors (format to be defined)
 - The TF will promote the adoption of these insights in water organisations, at the highest level possible

Attracting greater investment



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- Currently there is insufficient investment in water innovation, from the public and private sectors
 - To increase such investments, the obstacles will be identified through a mapping of current funding streams and a gap analysis
 - These analyses should lead to a high-level action plan on enhancing investments in water innovative from multiple sources
 - Specific funding sources will be identified on which adjustments may be suggested to support greater investment in water innovation
 - This work is not currently resourced, so the TF will be seeking financial and in-kind support to be able to conduct it in an appropriate manner

Simple theory of change

Insufficient innovation in progressing towards SDG 6

Lack of **coordination** and synergy between innovation stakeholders

Lack of an **enabling environment** for innovation to prosper

Lack of appropriate **institutional setups** to foster water intrapreneurship

Lack of **investment** in scaling innovative solutions

Establish the Water innovation axle

Produce a white paper to improve public policy on water innovation

Exchange openly on institutional setups to produce a thought piece

Map funding sources, do a funding gap analysis and plan to bridge the gap

Problem

Causes

Workstreams

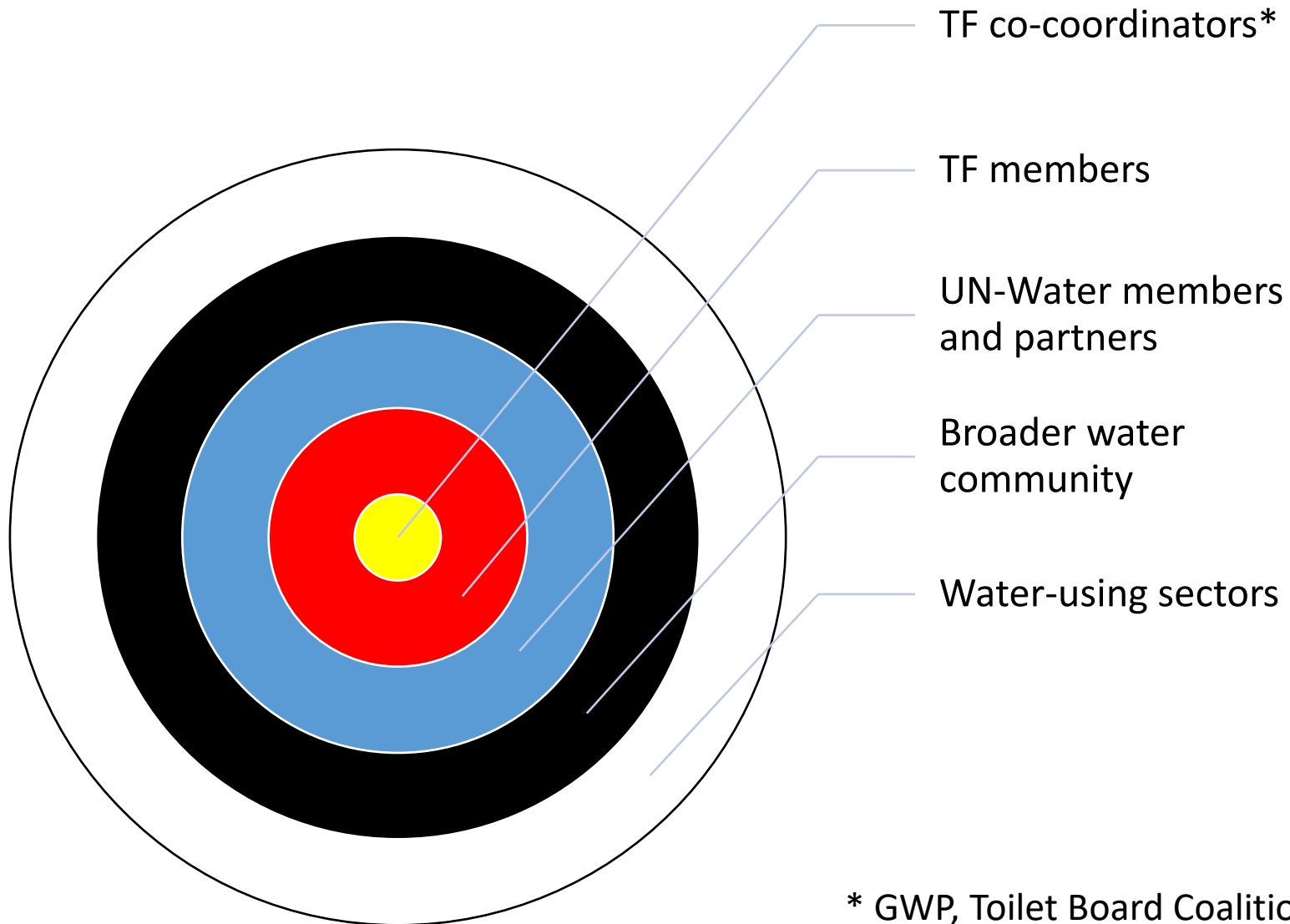
Engaging UN-Water Members and Partners and key external stakeholders to foster and support greater water innovation

Timeline 2024-2025

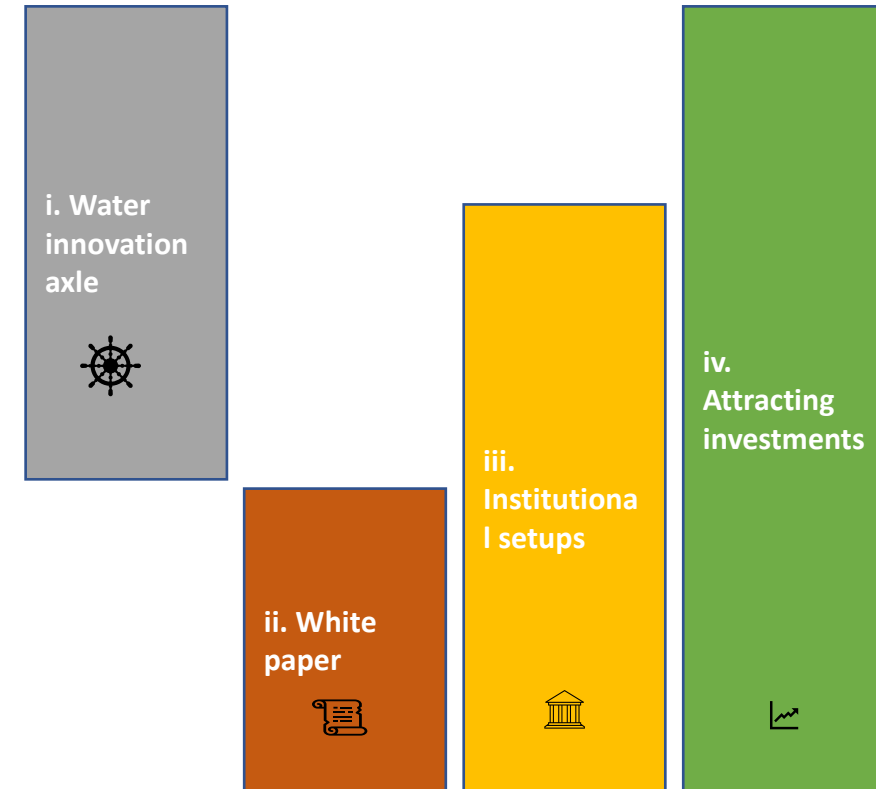


i. Water innovation axle	Bimonthly meetings of the Task Force, online exchanges, in-person events, creation of synergies						
ii. White paper	Decision, drafting of ToR	Hiring consultant, starting work, regular check-ins	Presentation / discussion of results	Publishing / launching white paper	Production of specific outreach products	Promotion of uptake with national governments	
iii. Institutional setups	Semi-structured exchanges among Task Force members (Chatham House rules), capturing lessons learned and key findings				Definition of a thought piece	Production, promotion and uptake of thought piece	
iv. Attracting investments	Mapping of existing funding sources for water innovation and gap analysis	Definition of means of overcoming gaps		Preparation/discussion of action plan to attract additional investment		Roll out of action plan with key funding schemes identified	

Structure of the Task Force



Who would be targeted for which activity?



* GWP, Toilet Board Coalition, UNDP and Water Environment Federation

KPIs / success metrics

Outputs



1 thriving water innovation axle leading to greater coordination among members, within and outside of meetings



1 white paper on the enabling environment for innovation adopted and published by UN-Water



1 thought leadership piece on institutional setups published and rolled out



1 action plan approved and rolled out on increasing (public-private) investment in innovation

Impacts

5 synergetic water innovation schemes fostered through the axle

5 countries which commit to including recommendations from the white paper by 2025

5 institutions which commit to making internal changes to foster water innovation by 2025

3 existing funding sources which commit to allocating increased funding for water innovation



Working modalities

- **Bi-monthly meetings of the TF**, with a mixture of information-and experience-sharing (rotational, from volunteer members) and checking in on progress on the TF's activities
- **Pooling of financial, in-kind and intellectual resources** from TF members and external sources wherever possible
- **Divide and conquer:** members of the TF are invited to be involved in as many of the four workstreams as they have interest in and the capacity to do
- Making use of **innovative online communication tools** to foster exchanges across the members of the TF



**How does this
proposal
sound to you?**