

UN-Water Operational Guidelines

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BACKGROUND

These Operational Guidelines provide operational guidance to UN-Water and complement the UN-Water Terms of Reference. The UN-Water Terms of Reference are attached in Annex 1.

ARTICLE I. OBJECTIVE, ORGANISATION OF WORK AND BUDGET

Section I.1. UN-Water objective and scope of work

UN-Water is the United Nations (UN) inter-agency coordination mechanism for all freshwater related matters, including sanitation. UN-Water was endorsed in 2003 by the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), building on a long history of coordination in the UN system. It provides the platform to address the cross-cutting nature of water and maximize system-wide coordinated action and coherence.

UN-Water plays a key role in identifying and disseminating UN common positions on various water-related issues within global fora and processes. The expected outcome of UN-Water activities is improved system-wide coherence and coordination of water-related UN system actions aimed at the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other relevant policy frameworks, such as the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development and the New Urban Agenda. This results in increased effectiveness and collaboration in the support to Member States in their efforts towards the achievement of agreed goals, targets and actions.

UN-Water has no direct authority to resolve issues of gaps, overlaps or duplications between the mandates of its Members, but it is expected to highlight the scope for rationalisation and play an influencing role to improve accountability and delivery in water-related activities.

Section I.2. Organisation of work

UN-Water is not an organisation with legal entity and activities outlined in the UN-Water Work Programme are primarily implemented through Members and Partners. The UN-Water Senior Programme Managers (SPMs) are the representatives of the UN-Water Members at UN-Water. They provide the overall governance and strategic direction of UN-Water. UN-Water is supported by the UN-Water Management Team, which fosters increased collaboration and effective coordination. The UN-Water Management Team is composed of the Chair nominated among the UN Executive Heads, the Vice-Chair elected among the SPMs, the Secretary, served *ex officio* by the SPM of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) in New York to ensure the liaison with the UN Member States and the UN General Assembly processes, and a Technical Advisory Unit to provide substantive technical support, including administrative, budget, and logistic support.

The UN-Water Joint Steering Group (JSG) comprising the Chair, the Vice-Chair, the Secretary and four rotating UN-Water SPMs steers the operational management of UN-Water in between UN-Water Meetings. It is accountable to, and takes strategic guidance from, the SPMs.

The WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation (JMP), led by the two agencies in Geneva and New York, is associated with UN-Water but has an independent governance structure.

The governance of UN-Water is further regulated under ARTICLE III of these Operational Guidelines. The Terms of Reference of the SPMs, the Management Team, and the JSG are annexed to the UN-Water Terms of Reference.

Section I.3. UN-Water budget

Members and Partners of UN-Water pay no membership or partnership fees. An Inter-Agency Trust Fund (IATF), administrated by United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) has been established to support UN-Water activities. This IATF is used to support the core coordination functions as well as identified activities of UN-Water and specific projects that are initiated and implemented under the UN-Water umbrella. Members and Partners are generally expected to cover their own expenses associated with their engagement in UN-Water activities, unless other arrangements have been agreed upon in the case of specific activities. The operational management of the IATF is guided by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between UNOPS and Participating UN-Water Members.

ARTICLE II. MEMBERSHIP

Section II.1. UN-Water membership

Any UN agency, programme or other UN entity dealing with water-related issues, including sanitation and natural disasters, as part of its mandate may become Member of UN-Water. The expression of interest should be sent to the UN-Water Management Team, which will bring it to the attention of the UN-Water SPMs. The Member's name will be featured on the UN-Water web-page and other relevant UN-Water printed material as a UN-Water Member, and such Member will have full decision-making rights in UN-Water. Each Member appoints one focal point (i.e. the SPM) and one alternate as principal contact persons.

Section II.2. UN-Water Partner status

Any organisation, professional union or association or other civil-society group actively involved in freshwater- and sanitation-related issues that has the capacity and willingness to contribute tangibly to the work of UN-Water and operates at the global level and not with a single region focus may request Partner status with UN-Water. Such an organisation should be non-profit and have: registered legal status; extensive global networks of members or partners or a high global presence or

visibility, through regional or country offices, on ground project activities or globally recognised events/publications; and specific expertise with a strong emphasis on water-related issues in their organisational mandate. It should not be a political party or state or government agency nor be dominated by single-issue advocacy or single-country focus, and should be committed to diversity and inclusive. In order to initiate the partnership process, the organisation sends the UN-Water Partner application form available in the Guidelines on UN-Water Partners (Annex 2) to the UN-Water Management Team, which then assesses whether the applicant meets the established criteria as listed in the Guidelines. If the organisation meets all criteria, the partnership request is reviewed by the JSG and then considered by the SPMs. If the request is approved by the SPMs, the applicant is registered as a UN-Water Partner and the name of the organisation is featured on the UN-Water web-page and other relevant UN-Water printed material as a UN-Water Partner. Each Partner appoints one focal point and one alternate as principal contact persons.

Section II.3. Refusal or cancellation of Partner status

The SPMs may refuse the Partner status to an applicant or cancel such status of any Partner when the integrity of UN-Water, in their judgment, justifies such action. If a Partner fails to meet the requirements for UN-Water Partner status as stipulated in Annex 2, the Partner is notified that it must meet said requirements within a specified period of time or else its partnership status with UN-Water will be terminated.

Section II.4. UN system hosted entities

Entities that have entered into an agreement with a UN entity (e.g. with a UN-Water Member) for their legal hosting but maintaining independent governance may apply for the status of Partner with Special Status with UN-Water. High-level Advisory Boards / Panels / Committees / Funds which are legally connected to the UN system will also be eligible as Partners with Special Status. Partners with Special Status may participate in all sessions of the UN-Water Meetings but have no decision-making power. Their rights and obligations are in all other matters regulated through the UN-Water Partner Criteria.

ARTICLE III. GOVERNANCE

Section III.1. UN-Water Senior Programme Managers

The SPMs are the main representatives of the UN-Water Members in UN-Water. Collectively, they constitute the highest operational decision-making body of UN-Water and provide the overall governance and strategic direction of UN-Water. The SPMs agree upon the level of delegation to the UN-Water Management Team and to the JSG, as stipulated in Annex 1 of these Operational Guidelines.

Section III.2. UN-Water Joint Steering Group

The role of the JSG is to steer the operational management of UN-Water in-between UN-Water Meetings. Appointed by the SPMs, it is accountable to and takes strategic

guidance from the latter. It is composed of the UN-Water Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary as permanent members, and four additional rotating SPMs appointed from among the UN-Water Members, who serve for a period of two years. On average, two new members are elected each year in order to secure continuity. The Chairperson of the JSG is the Chair of UN-Water and the Secretary of the JSG is the Secretary of UN-Water. JSG meetings, usually by tele/videoconference, are normally held at least two times per annum while discussions and decision-making in between meetings takes place through remote means. The Terms of Reference of the JSG are enclosed in Annex 1.

Section III.3. UN-Water Management Team

The principal role of the UN-Water Management Team is to carry out the decisions of the SPMs and JSG in order to foster increased collaboration and effective coordination across UN-Water and promote coherence in UN system water-related policies, approaches and activities in accordance with the Terms of Reference of UN-Water. The UN-Water Management Team is composed of the UN-Water Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary, and the UN-Water Technical Advisory Unit.

UN-Water Chair and Vice-Chair

The Chair of UN-Water is nominated among the UN Executive Heads, after consultations in the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination.

The Vice-Chair of UN-Water is elected among the UN-Water SPMs. The election of the Vice-Chair can be conducted through a cast of vote if more than one candidate is running. If three or more candidates are running for election, a second vote will be held if none of the candidates receive at least 50% of the SPMs' votes in the first round. The second round will only be held between the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes in the first round.

The service period of both the Chair and the Vice-Chair is normally two years. The Chair and Vice-Chair serve in a personal capacity, and the organisations to which they belong are represented in UN-Water by their respectively nominated SPMs. The Terms of Reference of the Chair and the Vice-Chair are enclosed in Annex 1.

UN-Water Secretary

The UN DESA SPM serves as Secretary of UN-Water *ex officio*. The Terms of Reference of the Secretary are enclosed in Annex 1.

UN-Water Technical Advisory Unit

The Technical Advisory Unit of UN-Water has been established to provide substantive technical support, including accounting, budget and administrative support to the Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary, the SPMs, the JSG, and to UN-Water Members and Partners in their operations and activities on behalf of UN-Water. The Technical Advisory Unit backstops UN-Water activities as defined by the

UN-Water SPMs and as reflected in the approved UN-Water Work Programme. The Terms of Reference of the Technical Advisory Unit are enclosed in Annex 1.

Section III.4. UN-Water Meetings of Members and Partners

UN-Water Meetings are further addressed under ARTICLE IV.

Section III.5. UN-Water Work Programme, budget and reporting

The work of UN-Water is described in biennial result-based Work Programmes. The development of the Work Programme, including its budget and results matrix, is supported by the Management Team. The Work Programme is approved by the SPMs. The funding sources for UN-Water include donor contributions to the UN-Water IATF and resources provided through UN-Water Members and Partners, both in kind and in cash.

A narrative Annual Report of activities is prepared by the Management Team in accordance with the MoU of the IATF. The Annual Report is available through the UN-Water website. An annual financial report is prepared by UNOPS in accordance with the MoU of the IATF.

Section III.6. Cover of expenses

Each Member and Partner is expected to cover individual costs associated with the participation in UN-Water Meetings and other activities. Certain activities under UN-Water have separate budgets, and some support for specific activities and projects may be available through the IATF. The UN-Water entity hosting a UN-Water Meeting covers relevant logistical meeting costs.

Section III.7. Transparency and accountability

Transparency and accountability guide the operations of UN-Water. The reports and decisions from UN-Water Meetings as well as other documentation are made available to both Members and Partners. The biennial Work Programme and the Annual Report are widely available through the UN-Water web-site.

Section III.8. Recruitment of staff

Staff in the UN-Water Technical Advisory Unit is recruited by UNOPS following UNOPS policies and procedures. The selection panel for the Technical Advisory Unit's professional staff includes representatives of the Management Team (typically Chair or Vice-Chair, Secretary and Chief Technical Adviser) and of the SPMs.

Section III.9. Planning, clearance and branding of UN-Water documents

All UN-Water publications must comply with the UN-Water Publication Policy set out in Annex 3.

Section III.10. Reporting to the High Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP)

Reports on UN-Water progress and activities are submitted to the HLCP when requested. Once issued, the Work Programme and Annual Report are also shared with the Secretariat of the HLCP/CEB.

ARTICLE IV. MEETINGS OF MEMBERS AND PARTNERS

Section IV.1. Time and place of UN-Water Meetings

Under normal circumstances, two UN-Water Meetings are organised annually. Meetings are hosted by a UN-Water Member or Partner, following the principle of rotation, and are generally held in the first and third quarter each year.

UN-Water Members, Partners with Special Status and Partners are invited to all UN-Water Meetings, although parts of these Meetings can remain in camera sessions open only to Members and Partners with Special Status. To the extent possible, provisions are made to secure as wide a participation of Members as possible, if required through telephone or video conference facilities.

Section IV.2. Notice of UN-Water Meetings

At least two months prior to each Meeting, the Management Team circulates the draft agenda and the request for background documents. The final agenda and necessary background documentation are circulated no later than two weeks prior to the Meeting. The background documents for items to be included in the final agenda take into consideration the following aspects:

- a) Items listed on the agenda are supported by relevant material (if appropriate);
- b) Items requiring that specific decisions be made by the UN-Water Members include a list of potential draft decisions for SPMs to consider prior to the Meeting; and
- c) Supporting documents are as short as possible, normally not exceeding 1-2 pages, and contain all relevant information. Additional information can be included as annexes.

The Member or Partner hosting the Meeting sends logistical information to all Members and Partners (directly or through the Management Team) at least two months prior to the Meeting in order to facilitate travel arrangements.

The report from each Meeting includes a notice of the time and place of the next Meeting.

Section IV.3. Conditions of quorum and decision making at UN-Water Meetings

When specific decisions are required at a UN-Water Meeting, more than 50% of the designated SPMs (or their alternates or any other person empowered to act on behalf of a Member), attending in person or by video/phone connection, will constitute a quorum.

Decision-making by the SPMs is by consensus, and decisions made at UN-Water Meetings are adopted by the SPMs by the end of the Meeting.

When decisions are taken by correspondence, SPMs are given at least five working days to give their approval on a non-objection basis.

The draft reports of UN-Water Meetings are sent for comments to all Members within one month after each Meeting. These reports capture the key points from the discussions and clearly outline decisions and the responsibility to implement those decisions. The reports of UN-Water Meetings are finalised within two months after a Meeting.

Section IV.4. Observers in UN-Water Meetings

This section aims to ensure that UN-Water's procedure for inviting and welcoming observers is carried out in a consistent manner.

Definition of observer

Observers are representatives of entities that are neither Members nor Partners of UN-Water. The following observer groups are identified:

1. Member States
2. Resource persons

General principles

The following general principles guide the participation of observers in UN-Water Meetings:

- **Relevance:** Observers' participation in UN-Water Meetings needs to be relevant and add value to the items being discussed.
- **Openness and transparency:** The UN-Water Meetings are not public, but the open segments of the UN-Water Meetings may benefit from the additional views and perspectives offered by observers. The summaries of the open segments are made publicly available on the web.

Modalities

Depending on the items to be discussed and based on the principles of "relevance" and "openness and transparency", the UN-Water Management Team may invite observers to participate in the open segments of the UN-Water Meetings, with up to two representatives each per entity.

In the case of observers from countries in the OECD DAC's list of ODA recipients, and specifically from Least Developed Countries, their participation will follow the general principles stated above and may be supported through UN-Water funds, when needed, and indicatively up to USD 10,000 in total per UN-Water Meeting

(possibly corresponding to three or four participants, depending on the countries). One observer per ODA recipient country is eligible for funding.

The UN-Water Chair may invite observers to intervene during the UN-Water Meeting discussions depending on relevance to the items being discussed. A time limit may be applied to interventions as necessary.

ARTICLE V. WORKING MODALITIES

The SPMs decide on all working modalities of UN-Water, including the following:

Section V.1. Expert Groups

Expert Groups (EGs), each focusing on a cross-cutting issue in need of coordination, are established by the SPMs and gather technical experts from across the UN family and other international organisations. As such, they represent the UN's collective expertise on the given issue. Expert Groups further provide a platform to exchange information, knowledge and experience, to cross-fertilise activities of individual agencies and to avoid duplication. Expert Groups form a core activity of UN-Water's effort to increase cooperation and coherence within the UN system.

Section V.2. Task Forces

UN-Water activities are also carried out through Task Forces (TFs) established by the SPMs in order to draw on the varied expertise of the UN system and of UN-Water Partners. Task Forces are time-bound in nature and focus inter-agency collaboration on the delivery of a specific product (e.g. a report or an event). Therefore, Task Forces automatically end at the completion of their task. Task Forces form a core activity of UN-Water's effort to increase cooperation and coherence within the UN system.

Section V.3. General principles

The following general principles define the role and working arrangements of the Expert Groups and Task Forces:

- a) EGs and TFs are an integral part of UN-Water, they are not an entity in itself.
- b) EGs and TFs are created only to address those matters which are cross-cutting in nature and where a coordination mechanism does not already exist. A minimum of four UN-Water entities is required in order to create an EG or a TF.
- c) Each EG/TF proposal includes Terms of Reference and a work plan, considering the overall mandate and Terms of Reference of UN-Water. EG/TF proposals are submitted for approval to the SPMs at a UN-Water Meeting.

- d) Each EG/TF has one or more coordinators. These coordinators can be changed at any moment and could be changed periodically.
- e) EGs/TFs are formed by Members and Partners of UN-Water but may also invite other stakeholders or individuals if deemed useful.
- f) Only those Members and Partners which are interested in the subject and willing to contribute to the work of the EG/TF should become members of the EG/TF.
- g) In order to maintain a small size and at the same time satisfy Members' and Partners' need to be informed, an EG/TF may create a "core membership" for the actual work, while keeping a larger mailing list for information purposes.
- h) At every UN-Water Meeting there is a short report by the coordinator of the EG/TF, as those Meetings are the only occasion where the SPMs, who are not necessarily members of that EG/TF, are informed on its work progress.
- i) The individuals representing each Member/Partner in an EG/TF are not necessarily the SPMs but experts in the area in question.
- j) In accordance with the UN-Water Work Programme, an EG/TF may receive financial support from the IATF for specific activities, if so requested and approved by the SPMs.
- k) The coordinator of the EG/TF produces, no later than 1 February each year, a short annual report on the EG's/TF's activities, which will be included in the UN-Water Annual Report.
- l) EGs/TFs don't publish material independently or "on behalf of UN-Water". The authorship is by UN-Water. The EG/TF and its members may be mentioned in the acknowledgments, if necessary.
- m) Any UN-Water publication (e.g. report, policy brief, analytical brief) prepared by an EG/TF is subject to the publication clearance process by the SPMs as outlined in Section III.9.
- n) EGs are not necessarily more important than TFs, they just have different timelines related to their assignments.
- o) The EG/TF coordinators convene at least once a year to exchange information and improve the coordination among the EGs and TFs.

- p) Each coordinator must keep the EG/TF mailing list up-to-date, and each UN-Water Member/Partner must periodically review its representation in the different EGs/TFs and inform the coordinator of any change. A representative of the UN-Water Technical Advisory Unit must be in the mailing list of every EG/TF.

- Annex 1. [Terms of Reference, UN-Water](#) and [Annex](#)
Annex 2. [UN-Water Guidelines on UN-Water Partners](#)
Annex 3. [UN-Water Publications Policy](#)
Annex 4. [UN-Water Dos and Don'ts](#)