

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

EXTERNAL REVIEW 2018





1. INTRODUCTION

UN-Water is the coordination mechanism for the United Nations' (UN) action on water and sanitation. The mission of UN-Water is to enable the UN to 'deliver as one' on water-related issues by maximizing UN system-wide coordinated action and coherence. Through its Members and Partners, UN-Water ultimately works to strengthen Member States in their efforts to secure sustainable water and sanitation for all.

The External Review of UN-Water¹ was carried out during 2017-2018 to assess current structures and capacities of UN-Water and to enable the coordination mechanism to better organize itself to meet upcoming expectations from Members, Partners and Member States. It made 10 recommendations to enhance the visibility of UN-Water within the international landscape, strengthen UN-Water governance, and facilitate the coordination of UN entities and programmes.

Since the last External Review, carried out in 2009, the UN-Water mechanism has evolved in several ways, including through the appointment of the Chair at the highest level within the UN system. At the same time, the international landscape in which UN-Water operates has significantly changed, with many milestone agreements

having been introduced, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development.

Against this backdrop, the External Review was a timely way of providing UN-Water with necessary and up-to-date guidance on current opportunities and challenges. Following the External Review, UN-Water has been able to update its Terms of Reference to more accurately reflect current realities, as well as refine its strategy for how to increase engagement of non-UN stakeholders. Through its management response, UN-Water has also been able to inform negotiations for establishing UN high-level meetings on water and sanitation, develop an inventory of the collective work of the UN-Water 'family' in support of the 2030 Agenda and SDG 6, and initiate the development of a strategy for how UN-Water can add value at the country level.

The following section provides an overview of all External Review recommendations, UN-Water's management responses, progress to date and other next steps.

¹ UN-Water External Review 2018: <http://www.unwater.org/publications/un-water-external-review-2018/>

2. EXTERNAL REVIEW

RECOMMENDATIONS AND

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

RECOMMENDATION 1:

UN-Water to convene a meeting of Member States, including prospective donors, at a senior level to pursue the option for strengthening the global water architecture as set out in the UNSGAB-inspired paper along with establishing a UN Special Representative for Water.

Solving the water and sanitation crisis is an urgent global priority with consequences far beyond water and sanitation, impacting inter alia economic development, food security, health, peace and security, and gender equality. While the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other relevant global agreements provide a roadmap to address the water and sanitation-related challenges, Member States have expressed concern about their capacity to comprehensively review and accelerate progress towards SDG 6 and other relevant global targets. In response, and in the context of this and similar recommendations of the High-level Panel on Water and the Global High-level Panel on Water and Peace, UN-Water prepared technical advice on addressing global water challenges and accelerating progress on SDG 6 at the country level².

In this context, on 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”³. The resolution calls for two UN high-level meetings on water and sanitation:

- A one-day high-level meeting to promote the implementation of the water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda, convened by the President of the General Assembly in New York in 2021, and;
- A UN conference in New York on the midterm comprehensive review of the implementation of the objectives of the Decade on 22 to 24 March 2023, preceded by regional and global preparatory meetings, in order to help achieve internationally-agreed water-related goals and targets.

During the negotiations, UN-Water’s technical advice helped guide the discussions and many of its elements are reflected in the final format of the resolution. The adopted resolution now provides ample opportunity for UN-Water to ensure that the mandated meetings have maximum impact and accelerate progress on SDG 6 and other relevant global targets at the country level.

Regarding the recommendation on establishing a UN Special Representative for Water, UN-Water has for the moment decided to address the need for increased visibility through other activities. The recommendation can be revisited at a later stage if a specific need or opportunity occurs.

² Technical Advice Concept Note: Addressing Global Water Challenges and Accelerating Progress on SDG 6 at the Country Level. UN-Water (2018):

http://www.unwater.org/publications/un-water_technical_advice_concept_note_addressing_global_water_challenges_and_accelerating_progress_on_sdg-6_at_the_country_level/

³ Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 2018: https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/226

RECOMMENDATION 2:

The mandate of UN-Water to be updated and endorsed by the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) with revised Terms of Reference (TOR) drawn up to enable UN-Water to deliver on the updated mandate.

The revised UN-Water TOR were prepared for the 30th UN-Water Meeting in January 2019. The revised TOR reflect the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs, in particular SDG 6. The TOR were also restructured according to UN-Water's three main lines of work: Informing policies, monitoring and reporting, and inspiring action.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

UN-Water to establish a platform of a wider group of stakeholders including like-minded donors, NGOs and the private sector to assist UN-Water to identify the key challenges and opportunities facing the water sector.

Meaningful engagement of non-UN stakeholders including academia, the private sector and civil society is essential to channel and guide joint actions for UN-Water as part of the 2030 Agenda. It is recognised that UN-Water already provides a platform for international organizations representing civil society, professional associations and the private sector through UN-Water Partners' engagement in UN-Water Meetings, Expert Groups and Task Forces.

In response to the recommendation, feedback has been collected from UN-Water Partners on how existing structures and processes, in particular the UN-Water Meetings, can be adapted to better serve the needs of UN-Water Partners. The feedback was discussed and welcomed during the 30th UN-Water Meeting in January 2019 and will inform the planning of future UN-Water Meetings.

In addition and in response to UN-Water Partners' wish to engage more with UN-Water, the first UN-Water Open Space session was also organized during the 30th UN-Water Meeting, which provided opportunities for more substantive and inclusive interaction, more Partner interventions and more small-group discussions in line with Partners' feedback.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

UN-Water to review the TOR for the Management Team and the Joint Steering Group.

The revised TORs for the Management Team and the Joint Steering Group were prepared for the 30th UN-Water Meeting in January 2019 as part of the revision of the UN-Water TOR referred to in recommendation 2.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

UN-Water to improve its financial reporting so that funds can be more easily tracked.

Options for improving UN-Water's financial reporting have been developed during 2018 and will be implemented in 2019.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

UN-Water to consider permitting Partners to participate in the 'closed' sessions of UN-Water Meetings.

The 'closed' sessions of the UN-Water Meetings focus solely on internal, inter-agency governance issues and are open to UN-Water Members and Partners with Special Status to ensure an accountable decision-making process. The feedback collected from Partners will however guide the design of upcoming UN-Water Meetings to ensure that the Meetings cater as much as possible to the needs of the Partners. Please see also recommendation 3.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

UN-Water to map out the priorities, objectives and main activities of its Members and Partners, highlighting potential synergies between programmes or activities and duplication of efforts, and updating the exercise on a regular basis.

A UN-Water Inventory has been developed to provide an easy overview of 'who does what' within UN-Water. The Inventory includes information about the main engagement per water and sanitation-related SDG or SDG target of each organization. The Inventory will become a tool for increased coordination, collaboration and harnessing of synergies within the water and sanitation sector to accelerate progress on SDG 6.

While the Inventory provides an initial overview of current activities, the collected information is also being turned into a dynamic, online web tool on the UN-Water website that can be periodically updated to reflect new programmes while increasing collaboration between UN and non-UN entities. The web tool is due to be launched by July 2019.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

UN-Water to prepare a study to evaluate the impact of its different communications activities.

UN-Water's global campaigns include the annual World Water Day on 22 March and World Toilet Day on 19 November, with maximum potential reach on social media of around 2 billion and 1 billion people respectively. A study evaluating the impact of UN-Water's different communications activities is being prepared and will be presented at the 31st UN-Water Meeting in August 2019.

RECOMMENDATION 9:

UN-Water to prepare a strategy for engagement with countries that have water as a priority within their United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), setting out options for specific ways in which UN-Water can add value to the in-country work by the different UN entities, including monitoring and reporting of progress against SDG 6.

In response to the recommendation, a strategy for UN-Water's possible engagement at the country level is being developed. The strategy will outline how UN-Water might add value to and support water-related endeavours at the country level in view of the UN reform process.

Strategy options will be presented at the 31st UN-Water Meeting in August 2019 and the finalized strategy at the 32nd UN-Water Meeting in early 2020.

RECOMMENDATION 10:

UN-Water to assess the impact of the 13 country briefs with the aim of replicating the briefs in more countries if they are perceived as a successful tool for prioritizing water within the countries.

To provide integrated guidance on water issues to countries, UN-Water produced 13 country briefs in 2013. In the context of the 2030 Agenda and SDG 6, and in the light of the strategy development for UN-Water's engagement at the country level, an assessment of these 13 country briefs will guide how UN-Water can best inform and mobilize action at the country level more widely. The assessment will be presented at the 31st UN-Water Meeting in August 2019.

