

**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

Committee on Water Resources
Twelfth session
Amman, 22-24 March 2017

Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda

Water in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**The water-related Sustainable Development Goals****Summary**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which sets up 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, includes a dedicated water goal aimed at ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation (SDG 6). Several other SDGs are also water dependent, such as those related to food security, health, energy, human settlements, ecosystems and climate change, and include several priority targets for Arab countries. The identification and development of indicators to support the monitoring and reporting of these targets is well underway at the global level. Global and regional forums to be held in 2018 and 2019 are expected to focus on monitoring and reporting the achievement of water-related SDGs.

Member States are invited to consider regional work to prepare Arab countries for the implementation, monitoring and reporting on the water-related SDGs, and recommend ways forward in view of the recommendations and outcomes of recent global and regional meetings.

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Introduction

1. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by the General Assembly in September 2015. It includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, which are transformative, universal and people-centred. The process of preparing this new development agenda was extensive and inclusive, involving a series of consultations with Governments and civil society at the global, regional and national levels. In the Arab region, this included holding several consultative meetings and activities that contributed to the first and second sessions of the Arab High Level Forum on Sustainable Development in Amman (2-4 April 2014) and Manama (5-7 May 2015), respectively. The outcomes of these regional consultations convened by ESCWA, in partnership with the League of Arab States and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), contributed to global deliberations conducted under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council at the first and second sessions of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, which preceded the adoption of the 2030 Agenda.

2. The SDGs guide global action on the achievement of a common set of development objectives until 2030. They replaced the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), formulated based on the outcome of the Millennium Summit held in September 2000. They are integrated and indivisible, balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The 2030 Agenda calls for a new approach to development that is sustainable and inclusive, focusing on the needs of women, girls and vulnerable groups.

3. Each of the 17 SDGs is complemented by a series of targets for monitoring progress towards a Goal. The Agenda also sets out the means of implementation for each Goal. Goal 17 also presents an overall set of targets to strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize global partnerships for sustainable development. These means of implementation largely focus on ensuring adequate and appropriate access to finance, technology and capacity-building support, as well as fostering an enabling environment for implementation. Monitoring, reporting and action to realize the 2030 Agenda is being pursued at the national, regional and global levels.

I. SDG 6: ENSURE THE AVAILABILITY AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WATER AND SANITATION FOR ALL

4. The water sector is the focus of a dedicated, stand-alone goal (SDG 6), which aims to *ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all*. SDG 6 targets address access to water (6.1), access to sanitation and hygiene (6.2), wastewater treatment and reuse (6.3), water-use efficiency and water scarcity (6.4), integrated water resource management (6.5), and water-related ecosystems (6.6). The means of implementation of SDG 6 refer to international cooperation and capacity-building (6.a) and to the engagement of local communities (6.b). The six SDG 6 targets and two means of implementation, and their associated year of achievement, are set out in the table below.

SDG 6 TARGETS AND MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Target number	Target year	Target
6.1	2030	Achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all
6.2		Achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations
6.3		Improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally

Target number	Target year	Target
6.4	2030	Substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity
6.5		Implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate
6.6	2020	Protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes
Means of implementation		
6.a	2030	Expand international cooperation and capacity building support to developing countries in water and sanitation related activities and programmes, including water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse technologies
6.b	-	Support and strengthen the participation of local communities for improving water and sanitation management

II. WATER-RELATED SDGS

5. Water is a crosscutting issue that affects the achievement of nearly all of the other SDGs. As such, water is not only relevant to SDG 6 targets, but also to targets related to poverty (SDG 1), food security (SDG 2), health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), human settlements (SDG 11), sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12) and ecosystems (SDG 15). As climate change adaptation and impact reduction is largely a water issue in the Arab region, it can also be argued that the dedicated climate change goal (SDG 13) also relates to water.

6. The interlinkages between SDG 6 and many other SDG water-related targets are either explicit or implicit. Examples of some explicit water-related targets include the following:

(a) Poverty eradication target 1.4 seeks to ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, and access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance. Access to basic services includes safe drinking water and sanitation, addressed in targets 6.1 and 6.2. Integrated water resources management is the focus of target 6.4. The achievement of these three SDG 6 targets therefore supports the achievement of SDGs 1 and 6;

(b) Health targets 3.3 and 3.9 seek to end AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases; to combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases; and to substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination. Combating water borne diseases and illnesses from water pollution and contamination are explicitly related to targets 6.2 and 6.3. The achievement of these targets therefore support the achievement of targets 3.3 and 3.9;

(c) Human settlements targets 11.1 and 11.6 seek to ensure universal access to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services, upgrade slums, and reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by focusing on air quality and municipal and other waste management. Basic services relate explicitly to safe drinking water and sanitation addressed in targets 6.1 and 6.2, whereas reduction of cities' environmental impact relates explicitly to target 6.3 on protecting water quality and increasing wastewater treatment. These three SDG 6 targets therefore reinforce the achievement of targets 11.1 and 11.6;

(d) Sustainable consumption and production targets 12.2 and 12.4 seek to achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources and the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks; and to significantly reduce their release in air, water and soil to minimize their adverse impact on human health and

the environment. The efficient use of natural resources explicitly relates to target 6.4 on water-use efficiency. Reducing releases of water pollutants explicitly relates to targets 6.3 on reducing water pollution, and 6.6 on protecting water-related ecosystems. Achieving targets 12.2 and 12.4 therefore supports the achievement of SDG 6;

(e) Oceans target 14.1 seeks to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, especially from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution. This is explicitly related to target 6.3 on wastewater treatment. Achieving target 6.3 therefore supports the achievement of target 14.1;

(f) Ecosystems target 15.1 seeks to ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, especially forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements. This is explicitly related to target 6.6 on the restoration and protection of water-related ecosystems. Both targets are therefore mutually enforcing.

7. The crosscutting and integrated nature of water within the SDGs encourages efforts to monitor and achieve these Goals and targets through a nexus approach. Such an approach recognizes the interlinkages between SDGs and may highlight priority water issues in the water-scarce Arab region. Developing a nexus perspective when examining the SDGs also generates innovative approaches for pursuing and monitoring progress, given that a common methodology and means of implementation could be pursued for two or more targets.

III. SDG 6 INDICATORS

8. Significant efforts are underway to establish a harmonized monitoring and reporting framework for assessing progress towards the SDG targets at the global level. The United Nations Statistical Commission and its Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) prepared a set of proposed indicators for each of the SDGs and their related targets. Indicators are classified as Tier I, II or III, depending on whether there is sufficient data available at the global level to calculate the indicator based on the proposed indicator formulation and associated methodology.

9. IAEG-SDGs comprises a geographically diverse group of member States, informed by the United Nations system and associated experts. The forty-eighth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (New York, 7-10 March 2017) will review the updated list of proposed indicators prepared by IAEG-SDGs. However, many proposed indicators require further development and numerous additional indicators remain under consideration. IAEG-SDGs has identified one or more custodian agencies from the United Nations system for each indicator, to support their formulation, finalization, monitoring and reporting. IAEG-SDGs also set up working groups in 2016 to examine specific issues and challenges, such as the use of remote sensing and geospatial information tools to monitor and report on SDG targets based on satellite technologies rather than government-vetted statistical datasets.

10. Regarding the SDG 6 targets, UN-Water has provided to IAEG-SDGs the following substantive contributions on the formulation of indicators and their associated methodologies. The UNICEF-WHO Joint Monitoring Programme on Water Supply and Sanitation, which informed monitoring on the two indicators related to MDG target 7.C, has remained at the forefront of monitoring and reporting on drinking water and sanitation targets as now defined in SDG 6.1 and 6.2. Indicators and methodologies for monitoring the remaining SDG 6 targets are being formulated and tested under the UN-Water Integrated Framework for SDG 6 (GEMI) inter-agency initiative. For example, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has taken the lead with respect to SDG 6.4 on water use efficiency, given that a significant amount of water resources is used in agriculture. However, more than one agency can be engaged in several targets and indicators. For example, SDG 6.3 on water quality and wastewater treatment is coordinated among several agencies. The World Health Organization and UN-Habitat collaborate on indicator 6.3.1, which monitors the proportion of wastewater safely treated, while UNEP oversees indicator 6.3.2 that monitors the proportion of bodies of water with good ambient water quality.

11. The challenge facing member States is how to coordinate and follow up on the numerous goals and targets adopted under the 2030 Agenda, and benefit from the multitude of indicators and harmonized methodologies developed and adopted by specialized agencies to support global monitoring and reporting on progress towards these targets.

IV. PURSUING A REGIONAL APPROACH

12. Arab countries are well positioned to pursue monitoring, reporting and implementation of the water-related SDGs thanks to the work undertaken under the MDG+ Initiative, which established a regional mechanism for monitoring and reporting on water supply and sanitation in the Arab region. Mandated by the Arab Ministerial Water Council, the Initiative formulated a set of region-specific indicators that reflect Arab countries' concerns regarding the accessibility, affordability, quality and reliability of water supply services, as well as the need to monitor wastewater treatment and reuse as part of systems aimed at monitoring access to sanitation. These concerns are now largely incorporated into the SDG 6 targets, although gaps remain with respect to the indicators for monitoring and reporting on those targets at the global level. There is also a need to revisit the methodologies and units put forth for monitoring and reporting on those indicators, to further engage key stakeholder groups and inform decision-making on the SDGs at the regional and national levels.

13. The MDG+ Initiative developed a country-level institutional framework by supporting the formation of 18 national monitoring teams comprising water resource managers; water supply, sanitation and wastewater service providers; statistical offices; and related stakeholders. These national teams were supported at the regional level by the MDG+ Unit, based at the Arab Countries Water Utilities Association (ACWUA) and ESCWA, with financial support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). Regular consultations were also conducted with an Advisory Board consisting of regional organizations. Previous sessions of the ESCWA Committee on Water Resources endorsed the work undertaken.

14. The lessons learned and experiences gained from preparing the 2015 and 2016 reports of the MDG+ Initiative, which present the data collected from Arab countries on the MDG+ indicators, informed a series of regional consultations on the water-related SDGs. Within the framework of the MDG+ Initiative, the following four meetings organized in 2015 and 2016 focused on developing a regional approach to monitoring and reporting on water related goals, targets and indicators:

(a) Third Workshop of the MDG+ Initiative (Amman, 18-19 November 2015), attended by the chairs and vice-chairs of national monitoring teams;

(b) Expert Group Meeting on the Water-related Sustainable Development Goals (Beirut, 12-13 April 2016), attended by regional organizations, experts and the chairs of the ESCWA Committee on Water Resources and ESCWA Energy Committee to discuss which of the water-related SDG targets were of priority concern for the Arab region and possible mechanisms for follow-up on these targets;

(c) High Level Meeting on the Water-related Sustainable Development Goals (Amman, 1-2 November 2016), attended by the chairs and vice-chairs of the national monitoring teams, their statistical focal points, members of the ACWUA Board of Directors, and regulatory bodies in Arab States, as well as international and regional experts;

(d) Expert Consultation on the SDG 6 Indicators (Beirut, 21 December 2016), attended by the statistical representatives of Arab States serving on the IAEG-SDGs, and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

15. These regional meetings concluded with a series of findings, recommendations and priority issues for examination and action. Below are some of the key recommendations proposed at the operational level:

(a) Continue collecting data on the MDG+ indicators by national monitoring teams, for uploading to the regional data platform managed by the MDG+ Unit;

(b) Supporting country-level processes developed to support monitoring and reporting on the SDGs through cross-sectoral arrangements;

(c) Ensuring effective monitoring and reporting on wastewater treatment and reuse, and encouraging reporting on the types of wastewater reuse pursued at the country level under the SDGs, as pursued under the MDG+ Initiative;

(d) Building the statistical capacity of member States to collect, calculate and vet datasets related to the SDG indicators;

(e) Encouraging SDG monitoring at the subnational level, noting that efforts are underway to increase data reporting at the subnational level;

(f) Developing scenarios that include demographic projections could assist the assessment of efforts to achieve the SDGs.

16. In terms of monitoring and reporting on the SDG targets and indicators, the regional meetings concluded with a range of recommendations, including the following:

(a) Encourage the achievement of the SDG targets, even if there are insufficient indicators and data to monitor progress, e.g., on drinking water affordability and intermittency for measuring equitable access;

(b) Support discussions aimed at elaborating and adopting an additional indicator to monitor the number of people facing water scarcity under SDG 6.4, taking into account the applied water scarcity threshold;

(c) Consider the differences between measuring water quantity and quality at the source compared with the point of consumption (e.g., at the household level) when determining water availability;

(d) Clarify the definitional differences between water stress and water scarcity and consider how water budgets are calculated in Arab countries, i.e., consider whether to include renewable and non-renewable water resources and/or conventional and non-conventional water resources, such as desalinated water, brackish water used for desalination, treated wastewater for reuse, etc.;

(e) Pursue efforts to harmonize criteria and standards for defining secondary wastewater treatment, in view of efforts to encourage treated wastewater reuse;

(f) Encourage reporting on the purpose and type of treated wastewater reuse pursued at the national level;

(g) Consider the availability of data at the country level when prioritizing and classifying indicators to monitor and report upon at the global, regional and national levels, given that Tier I indicators may not be Tier I indicators for all countries;

(h) Support processes that draw upon administrative records and data from utilities to inform monitoring and reporting on the SDG 6 indicators, particularly those related to access to water services, water quality, wastewater treatment and reuse;

(i) Consider how advancements related to desalination, treated wastewater reuse and water harvesting in the region can be incorporated into monitoring and reporting on SDG 6, and review related efforts seeking to define and measure water scarcity and the economics of water scarcity.

17. Consultations on a nexus approach to implementing the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development are also informing a regional approach. At ESCWA, this nexus approach includes examining the interlinkages between the water, energy and food security goals and targets (SDGs 2, 6, and 7) with a view to considering the environmental challenges posed by climate change and the need to pursue a human rights-based approach to sustainable development. ESCWA has also identified other interlinkages for pursuing a nexus approach to the SDGs, while noting that all 17 SDGs are interdependent and universal.

18. Efforts to achieve the SDGs at the regional level should also be compatible with goals, mandates and commitments set out in related global platforms for action on climate change, disaster risk reduction and financing for development.

V. NEXT STEPS

19. The achievement of the 2030 Agenda requires action at the global, regional and national levels. Within the context of the water-related SDGs, this necessitates mainstreaming and prioritizing water in national and sectoral development plans, as well as considering water conditions and constraints when pursuing development plans in other sectors. Such efforts require integrated approaches to sustainable development and can be supported by ensuring coherence across regional and national plans and commitments related to the SDGs, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

20. At the regional level, the fourth session of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, planned for May 2017, will provide an opportunity for Arab member States to articulate their priorities and concerns for consideration by the High-level Political Forum at its next session (New York, 10-19 July 2017). The 2017 theme of the Arab Forum is in line with that of the High-level Forum: “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world”. Focus will be placed on SDGs 1, 2, 3, 5, 9 and 14. Preparations for the Arab Forum are undertaken by ESCWA, in collaboration with the members of the United Nations Regional Coordination Mechanism, which includes the League of Arab States.

21. The topic of the 2018 Arab Forum is also expected to be in line with the High-level Forum’s theme: “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies”. SDGs 6, 7, 11, 12 and 15 will be the focus areas. Deliberations in 2018 will cover the launch the International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development (2018-2028), mandated to support the advancement of the water-related SDGs at the global, regional and national levels.

22. The theme of the 2019 High-level Forum is “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”. This session will focus on SDGs 4, 8, 10, 13 and 16. Given that SDG 13 aims to combat climate change and since climate-change adaptation is largely a water challenge in the Arab Region, it is expected that the water sector will remain a focus during these deliberations.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

23. The following recommendations are submitted for consideration by the Committee. The Committee requests ESCWA member States to undertake the following:

(a) Continue collecting national data on the water supply, sanitation and wastewater indicators endorsed by the Arab Ministerial Water Council, and submit them to ACWUA and ESCWA;

(b) Encourage the incorporation of water-related goals, targets and indicators in national and sector development plans directly or indirectly related to the water sector;

(c) Inform ESCWA on the modalities carried out at the country level to implement, monitor and report on the water-related SDGs.

24. The Committee requests the secretariat to:

(a) Provide continued technical support to Arab countries on the collection and calculation of the water supply, sanitation and wastewater indicators endorsed by the Arab Ministerial Water Council, and continue collaborating with ACWUA on the review, reporting and dissemination of that data;

(b) Ensure that regional priorities on the water-related SDGs are reflected in global, regional and national follow-up on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in complementary efforts supporting the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda;

(c) Participate actively and engage member States in the preparations for the 2018 and 2019 cycles of the Arab Forum and the High-level political Forum, which will focus on SDG 6 and SDG 13, respectively;

(d) Support the International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development (2018-2028), and secure funding to engage member States in the work of the Decade and achieve progress on the water-related SDGs.
