

# UN-Water

## Terms of reference

### I. BACKGROUND

1. The High Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) in its meeting held on 18-19 September 2003 established “*UN-Water as the inter-agency mechanism for follow-up of the WSSD water-related decisions and the MDGs concerning water*’ and requested UN-Water to prepare, *‘its terms of reference and modalities of work, including arrangements for progressive participation of non-UN actors in the WSSD follow-up, bearing in mind the guiding principles and functions established by the High Level Committee on Programmes’*.”
2. The HLCP also requested UN-Water to “...*prepare a detailed plan, through its subgroup on sanitation, for an effective follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation in the field of water and sanitation linked to the work related to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the United Nations Millennium Declaration*”
3. The Chief Executive Board (CEB) endorsed these decisions at its Fall 2003 session in New York.

### II. UN-WATER

4. The scope of UN Water’s work encompasses all aspects of freshwater, including surface and groundwater resources and the interface between fresh and sea water. It includes freshwater resources, both in terms of their quality and quantity, their development, assessment, management, monitoring and use (including, for example, domestic uses, agriculture and ecosystems requirements). The scope of work of UN-Water also includes sanitation - encompassing both access to and use of sanitation by populations and the interactions between sanitation and freshwater. It further includes water-related disasters, emergencies and other extreme events and their impact on human security.
5. UN-Water is the inter-agency mechanism that promotes coherence in, and coordination of, UN system actions aimed at the implementation of the agenda defined by the Millennium Declaration and the World Summit on Sustainable Development as it relates to its scope of work.
6. UN-Water has grown out of many years of extensive collaboration and partnership among the UN Agencies. These efforts have contributed to the achievement of significant progress to date and have helped to bring water and water related issues to the top of the political agenda.
7. Advancing the implementation of this complex and ambitious international agenda is a collective responsibility and challenge which calls for coordinated action – beginning with the UN system but also progressively involving other concerned “non-traditional” partners and stakeholders, including among them organizations from public and private sectors, civil society and labour-towards a global, comprehensive effort.

8. The main purpose of UN-Water is thus to complement and add value to existing programmes and projects by facilitating synergies and joint efforts, so as to maximize system-wide coordinated action and coherence as well as effectiveness of the support provided to Member States in their efforts towards achieving the time-bound goals, targets and actions related to its scope of work as agreed by the international community, particularly those contained in the MDGs and the JPOI.

9. UN-Water will interface with other inter-agency mechanisms, including UN-Energy, UN-Oceans, EMG and others, on issues of common concern. It will also collaborate with other relevant initiatives, including the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation.

10. In carrying out its work, UN-Water will closely adhere to the generic objectives for inter-agency mechanisms established by HLCP<sup>1</sup> and annexed to this document for ready reference.

### **III. Terms of Reference**

11. UN-Water will seek to enhance the coherence, credibility and visibility of UN system actions related to its scope of work, and, in particular:

- a) Identify strategic issues and priorities for system-wide action, and facilitate timely, coordinated and effective responses by the UN System and its partners at global, regional and country levels in relation to both policy development and implementation.
- b) Promote the elaboration and facilitate the dissemination of system-wide positions shared by UN-Water members, in particular with regard to relevant MDG and JPOI targets and their achievement.
- c) Facilitate inter-agency information exchange, including sharing of experiences and lessons learned, and serve as a clearing house for policy-relevant information, assessment and advice on status and trends at global and regional levels, and for providing Member States with a collective point of entry to the system's initiatives and responses in areas within its purview.
- d) Promote effective communication and collaboration between the UN system and civil society and private sector partners
- e) Facilitate and support work being carried out at the regional and sub-regional levels, both within the UN system and with partners, to follow-up on relevant goals and targets of the Millennium Declaration and the JPOI, working through the Regional Commissions and relevant inter-agency mechanisms;
- f) Contribute to the coherence and impact of UN System actions at country level, in support of Resident Coordinators, country teams and theme groups, and working in close collaboration and coordination with UNDG.

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<sup>1</sup> Reference: CEB/2003/7, Report of the High Level Committee on Programmes at its sixth session

12. Management of UN-Water will be performed by a Chair and Vice-Chair, elected from among its members on a rotational basis and normally serving for 2 years. UNDESA will continue to provide secretariat support.
13. UN-Water plans of work will be updated every two years and will be set out in the reports of its meetings (see paragraph 14 below).
14. The above terms of reference will be periodically updated

#### **IV. Modalities of Work**

15. UN-Water seeks to add value to activities related to its scope of work at three levels:
  - at the level of the senior programme managers overseeing such activities in member organizations and agencies, by providing a forum for on-going contacts and periodic meetings among them;
  - at the regional level, by providing an instrument for effective exchange of information and facilitating mutual support between global and regional activities and developments, and encouraging regional inter-agency networking arrangements, supported by the Regional Commissions; and
  - at the country level, supporting, where appropriate and in close cooperation with UNDG, Resident Coordinators, country teams and theme groups by similarly encouraging and facilitating system-wide exchanges of information and dialogue on policy and operational issues.
16. Objectives and modalities for exercising the above roles are outlined below:

##### ***a ) Global level***

Added value to the sum of headquarters activities of the many UN system entities involved in water-related activities will focus on promoting greater system-wide coherence, based on more systematic exchange of information, more intensive policy dialogue, improved programme coordination, the adoption of common positions on policy and programme issues of common concern, and the promotion of stronger partnerships within the system and with relevant non-UN system actors.

To these ends:

- Networking among, and periodic meetings of senior programme officials will be organized;
- Coordinated actions and thematic joint initiatives - to be pursued, through result-oriented, time-bound task forces, with the participation, as appropriate, of non-UN system partners - will be identified and outcomes reviewed in UN-Water meetings; and
- A pool of information on relevant policy and programme issues and developments will be created, as a basis for promoting continuing information exchanges within the system, and providing relevant “clearing house” information services to the international community, particularly Member States in the central inter-governmental bodies.

Where major policy issues arise, or the need emerges, from the work of UN-Water or from new inter-governmental policy directives, for policy guidance and political and policy impetus, these will be brought to the attention of CEB, through HLCP. Provision may be made for *ad hoc* meetings/consultations of Executive Heads of concerned UN organizations and agencies to provide strategic guidance to UN-Water's work.

#### ***b) Regional Level***

The encouragement of effective system-wide action and inter-agency collaboration at the regional and sub-regional levels is an integral part of UN-Water's functions. This will be pursued by facilitating exchange of information, policy and programme dialogue, promoting mutual support between regional and headquarters levels, and supporting "regional UN-Water" arrangements, to be led by the UN Regional Commissions. Such networks will be encouraged to adopt Terms of Reference and Plans of Work that are coherent with those of UN-Water itself, and areas of work will be shared with them. To foster these linkages, some UN-Water meetings may be organized in conjunction with regional counterparts. Communication strategies of UN-Water will build on, and be coordinated with, relevant regional inter-agency initiatives.

#### ***c) Country Level***

Coherence of UN-system actions at the country level is equally crucial to achieving the overall objectives underlying the establishment of UN-Water. Although many of the UN entities that form UN-Water have country level operational activities, UN-Water is not a mechanism for direct implementation. UN-Water's contribution to country-level coherence will, thus, consist largely of "communication" actions targeted at both system agencies and external entities and will be pursued through the Resident Coordinator, country teams and theme groups and in close cooperation with UNDG. Emphasis will be given in cooperation with UNDG, to supporting Resident Coordinators, country teams and theme groups to ensure consistent approaches and methods in country reporting and assessment on issues related to its scope of work, particularly in relation to progress towards relevant MDG targets; and to encouraging an appropriate reflection of such issues in international support provided to Member States in pursuing internationally agreed targets, within the CCAs/UNDAF and PRSPs frameworks.

#### ***d) Involvement of non-UN System actors***

UN-Water will encourage the contribution of non-UN System actors in its thematic initiatives, including participation in relevant time-bound task forces, and in discussions at UN-Water meetings to monitor progress in relation to such initiatives.

Collaboration with non-UN System partners, including organization from public, and private sector, civil society and labor that are active in UN-Water's scope of work, will be facilitated by:

- Arranging for direct participation by partners in UN-Water thematic initiatives which should seek to assign specific and time bound tasks to each partner; and
- Facilitating the involvement of key partners in the inter-agency dialogue on major issues of common concern.