



# OECD Water Governance Initiative Strategy Paper

Key achievements 2019-21 and ways forward for 2022-24



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# Summary

## A changing global landscape

The world has faced unprecedented challenges over the past three years. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the critical importance of access to clean water and sanitation to contain the spread of the virus, especially for the 3 billion people lacking basic handwashing facilities and those in precarious living conditions ([UNICEF, 2020](#)). Recovery plans from the COVID-19 crisis offered an opportunity for investment in greater resilience to future shocks: as of April 2022, OECD member countries, the European Union (EU) and large economies (Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia and South Africa) spent over USD 1 billion in environmentally positive measures in sectors such as energy and transport ([OECD, 2022](#)). Nevertheless, just a fraction (around 5%) of this funding has been dedicated to water, despite the fact that building new infrastructure to achieve SDG 6 on water and sanitation will cost approximately USD 114 billion per year by 2030, excluding the cost of operating and maintaining infrastructure ([World Bank, 2016](#)).

Russia's war against Ukraine has shed further light on the critical importance of water for life in contexts of warfare and instability. Military attacks on dams and on water infrastructure left 1.4 million Ukrainians without running water and a further 4.6 million without adequate access to clean water, after just seven weeks of conflict ([UNICEF, 2022](#)). Across the world, the ripple effects of the war are being felt through material, food and energy scarcity, as well as fast-inflating prices. Overall, this raises the need of assessing the vulnerabilities of water systems and developing "resilience thinking" to secure water supplies and respond to multiple shocks (e.g. cyber-attacks and telemetry failures).

Climate change is compounding the impacts of economic, social and political crises on water. Disruptions to the water cycle are the most common manifestation of climate change, which has caused substantial damages – and increasingly irreversible losses (e.g. from retreating glaciers) – to global freshwater ecosystems ([IPCC, 2022](#)). Floods and droughts have affected an estimated 3 billion people worldwide in the past two decades ([World Bank, 2021](#)). Between 2019 and 2021 alone, an estimated 314 million people were affected by floods, droughts and landslides caused by heavy rains ([EM-DAT, 2022](#)). Over the past few months, floods in Australia, Brazil, Pakistan and the United States as well as extreme heats and severe droughts in France, Chile, Mexico, and the Horn of Africa have monopolised news headlines. Even traditionally temperate regions are far from exempt from water scarcity challenges, in July 2022, nearly half of the EU and United Kingdom (UK) was exposed to alarming levels of drought ([EU JRC, 2022](#)).

The water community has put forward solutions to face these challenges and better fit for the future. In the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic, reflections on "building back better" or "building forward better" accelerated interest in the uptake of nature-based solutions (NbS) as a cost-effective complement or alternative to traditional "grey" infrastructure. Growing water scarcity has re-ignited discussions on water reuse as part of a circular economy approach in the EU and beyond. Water has increasingly been included in debates on climate adaptation (e.g. through the first-ever Water Pavilion at COP 26 in Glasgow, UK, November 2021) and as a connector across Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 2 (Zero Hunger); 5 (Gender Equality); 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy); 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities); 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production); 13 (Climate Action); 14 (Life Below Water); and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

## A close-knit water community

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the WGI has demonstrated its strength and its capacity to adapt to new circumstances. Despite the shift to fully online meetings, the postponement of the 9<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum and the disruption to everyday life brought about by the pandemic, WGI members remained eager to exchange, learn from each other and collaborate. In fact, 84% of WGI members took part in the three fully online meetings ([14th](#), [15th](#) and [16th meeting](#)) organised during the 2018-2021 triennium, and 93% of them highlighted the potential of hybrid meetings for the future of the WGI in the 2022 Satisfaction Survey<sup>1</sup>.

Between 2019 and 2022, the WGI pursued its agenda for the implementation of the [OECD Principles on Water Governance](#). It did so by promoting pioneering research on the impacts of water governance (e.g. [Special Issue](#) of the Journal Water International); by designing supporting material and guidance for different levels of government in improving water governance (OECD Guide [How to Assess Water Governance](#)); and by devising user-friendly materials to further spread the Principles (e.g. a three-minute [video](#) on the Principles).

As in past years, the WGI continued to offer a dynamic, multi-stakeholder platform to advise governments on policy reform and share experience and knowledge on best practices. Amongst others, countries such as [Argentina](#) (2019), [Peru](#) (2021) and [Brazil](#) (2022) largely benefitted from the input and peer review of WGI members to guide their public debate and decision-making, respectively to: strengthen the co-ordination between national and provincial water policies; improve the use of economic instruments to protect and sustainably use water resources; and identify a modern approach to water security, balancing supply and demand management, grey and green infrastructure, and risk management and resilience.

At the same time, the WGI expanded its regional reach to Asia-Pacific and Africa, and fostered multi-level governance with a focus on local players. Jointly with the Asian Development Bank, it spearheaded the first-ever policy paper assessing the state of play of water governance in the 48 countries of the [Asia-Pacific](#) region (2021), as part of the Asian Water Development Outlook (AWDO); it also collected and analysed data and practices on water governance in 36 [African cities](#) of all sizes (2021) with UCGL-Africa; and last but not least, it carried out a multi-stakeholder policy dialogue and review on water governance in [Cape Town, South Africa](#) (2021). Lessons learned from the work on water governance in Africa culminated in the launch of the [OECD / UCLG-Africa Roundtable of African Mayors for Water Security](#) at the 9<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum (March 2022, Dakar, Senegal) and the adoption of an [Action Plan of Mayors, Local and Regional Governments for Water Security](#), which, to date, has been signed by 80+ local authorities and national associations of local governments.

## Looking ahead

Over the next two years of work towards the 10<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum (June 2024, Bali, Indonesia), the WGI will continue to champion good water governance as a means to achieve water security for all. A number of priorities in terms of thematic areas, geographical areas, actors and OECD Principles to focus on for the next triennium also emerged from the above-mentioned survey. All respondents agreed that climate change was one of the most relevant factors affecting water governance, and 68% identified climate resilience and adaptation as the highest priority for the future. Africa (64%), the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) (55%) and Asia-Pacific (48%) were pointed out as the highest-priority geographic areas, while local and national governments (64% and 62% respectively) were seen as the highest-priority

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<sup>1</sup> A Satisfaction and Forward-Looking Survey was carried out among members of the WGI in May-June 2022 to assess the 2019-21 Programme of Work and gather feedback to shape the 2022-24 Programme of Work. In total, 73 member institutions accounting for 70% of WGI members responded to the survey.

players. The most relevant Principles to be applied as a lens for these priorities were deemed to be Principle 3 on policy coherence (selected as the highest priority for 25% of respondents), followed by Principle 1 on roles and responsibilities, Principle 4 on capacity and Principle 2 on appropriate scale(s). As such, a forward-looking strategy reflecting changes in the water governance landscape is required. The fourth phase of the WGI 2022-24 could put particular emphasis on “*local*”, following the *vision* (1<sup>st</sup> phase, 2013-15), the *action* (2<sup>nd</sup> phase, 2015-18) and the *implementation* phases (3<sup>rd</sup> phase, 2019-21) (Figure 3). A local (or territorial) approach is one that moves from a traditional, sectoral, top-down approach to policy making to a multi-sectoral, context-specific, and bottom-up one. A local zoom can help concretely demonstrate how the OECD Principles on Water Governance help achieve water security; shed light on interactions across urban areas and basins, as part of a functional approach; and highlight solutions towards more effective, efficient and inclusive water governance, building on local knowledge and stakeholders’ action.

It is herein proposed that the WGI focuses on two main priorities and related activities over the period 2022-24 (Figure 7):

- **Ensuring continuity and implementation** of the OECD Principles on Water Governance, by applying existing tools (Indicator Framework and Guide) on the ground, with a focus on the local level as an engine for concrete action.
- **Building innovative knowledge** and collecting good practices on water governance for the climate and just transition by focusing on the implementation of specific Principles. A just transition implies greening the economy in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible to everyone concerned, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no one behind.

A **communication strategy to enhance WGI visibility and leadership** will help *re-connect* members after the COVID-19 pandemic; *think and share* outside the box, and *re-juvenate* practices and narratives, by making the most of the lessons learnt during the past challenging years and leveraging the pioneering work carried out to date by the WGI, which will proudly celebrate its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023.

# How the WGI worked in 2019-21

## Objectives

The [OECD Water Governance Initiative](#) (WGI), created in 2013, is a multi-stakeholder network that addresses water governance issues in a systematic, comprehensive and participative way. It provides a consultation mechanism and stakeholder platform, where mutual learning and experience-sharing can take place and where useful water governance practices can be identified with a view to being scaled up.

Following its four key objectives at the core of its mission to improve water governance, in 2019-22, the WGI provided:

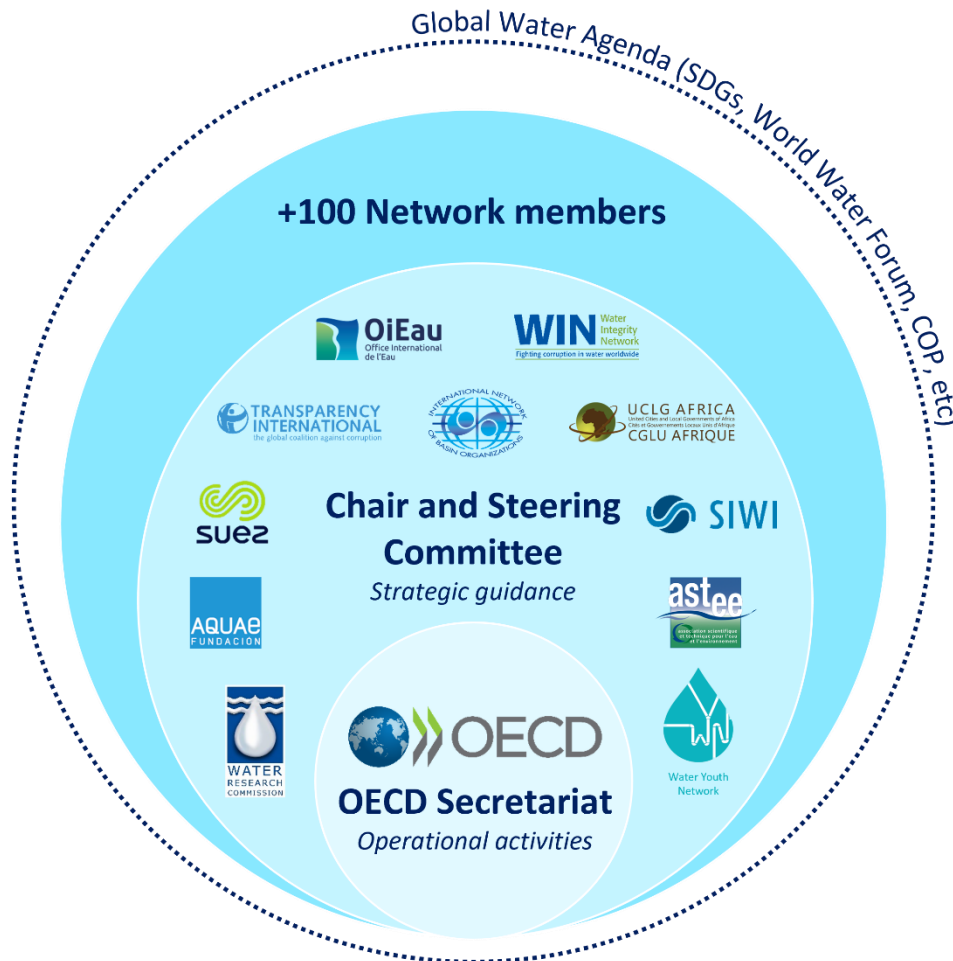
1. **Policy advice**, advising governments and other public authorities at all levels in taking the needed steps for effective water reforms through peer-to-peer dialogue and stakeholder engagement across public, private and non-profit sectors.
2. **Knowledge exchange** on water governance across levels of government, and discussions on key water governance research and analyses produced by the OECD Secretariat and WGI members.
3. **Policy standards and implementation**, by promoting the uptake of the OECD Principles on Water Governance and the Indicator Framework by governments and stakeholders in cities, basins and countries.
4. **A consultation mechanism to raise the profile of water governance in the global agenda** such as Climate COPs and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to foster continuity on water governance discussions between World Water Fora.

Within the OECD's architecture and intergovernmental setting, the WGI has a consultative role to the OECD Regional Development Policy Committee, which oversees OECD's work on regional, urban and rural development; it is not an OECD subsidiary body per se and has no decision-making prerogatives vis-à-vis OECD processes. In 2019-21, the WGI Chair reported on WGI outcomes during three RDPC sessions, and the Secretariat also conveyed WGI-related information to the OECD Committees for Agriculture and Environmental Policy.

## Internal governance

The WGI operates through a three-tier approach: the Secretariat, the Chair and the Steering Committee (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The three-tier approach of the OECD WGI



The Secretariat is supported by the OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities (CFE). It is responsible for the day-to-day operational activities of the WGI, the drafting of the material discussed at the meetings, the analytical work subject to consultations within the platform, the co-ordination of partner institutions, and the organisation of WGI meetings.

The independent Chair spearheads the strategic orientations and presides over biannual WGI meetings and quarterly Steering Committee Meetings. The Chair ensures the recognition of the multi-stakeholder network and strives to raise the profile of the WGI. Peter C.G. Glas, Delta Commissioner for the Netherlands, served as the Chair of the WGI from 2013 to 2022, with the support of the Ministry for Infrastructure and Water Management and the Association of Regional Water Authorities of the Netherlands. Barbara Pompili, former Minister of the Ecological Transition of France and currently member of the National Assembly of France, was appointed as the new Chair of the WGI for 2022-24.

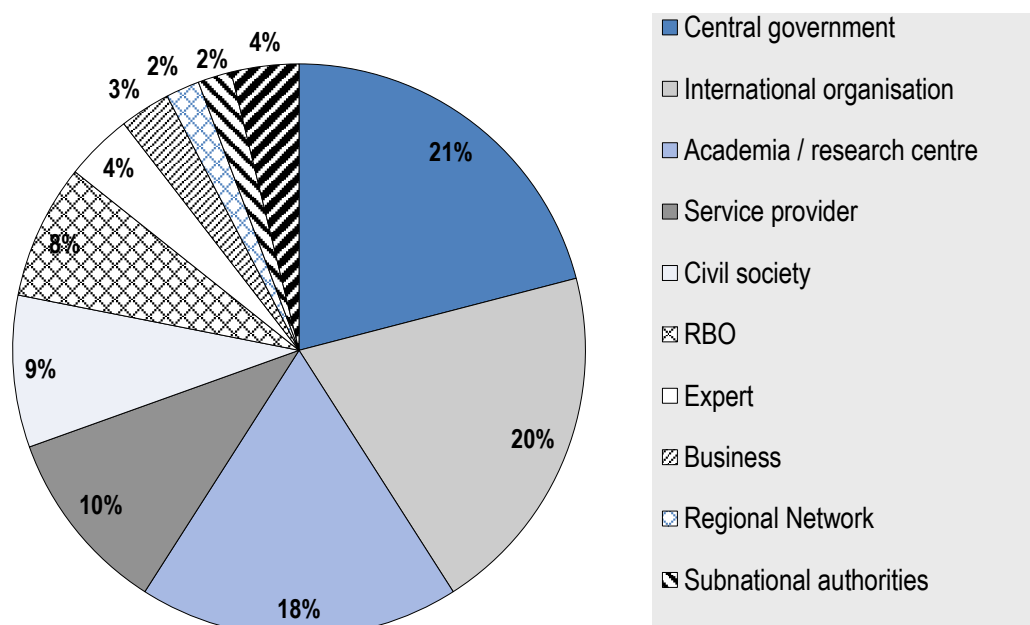
The Steering Committee supports the implementation of the strategic goals of the WGI and contributes to fundraising efforts. It is composed of co-founding institutions, namely the International Network of Basin Organisations (INBO), the International Office for Water (OIEau), Transparency International (TI), the French Scientific and Technical Association for Water and the Environment (*Association Scientifique et Technique pour l'Eau et l'Environnement*, ASTEE), Suez, the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) and the Water Integrity Network (WIN). The Spanish Association of Water Supply and Sanitation (AEAS) joined the Steering Committee in 2016 after a call for applications among WGI members and stepped down in 2022. Following a new call for applications, four new members joined the Steering

Committee: Fundación Aquae, United Cities and Local Governments Africa (UCLG Africa) and the Water Research Commission of South Africa. A special seat for a youth representative from the Water Youth Network (WYN) was also created on a two-year rotating basis.

## Composition of WGI members

Over the 2019-21 period, the WGI brought together 110 members from over 30 countries, of which 78% are OECD countries. WGI members comprise a range of decision-makers, practitioners and experts from national governments, basin and local authorities (and their networks), regulators (and their networks), donors and international financial institutions, NGOs, international organisations and institutions, water service providers, as well as academics and independent experts. Membership is renewed every three years. According to the 2022 Satisfaction Survey, most members of the WGI (53%) have been members since the inception of the WGI in 2013. An additional 18% of current WGI members joined in 2015, and the remaining members (29%) joined after 2018 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Composition of OECD WGI membership, 2019-21



## Approach

The WGI meets in plenary meetings twice a year, while striving to keep the communication flow between meetings through webinars, document sharing and online meetings. Over the past programme of work (2019-21), three out of five meetings of the WGI were held virtually ([14th](#), [15th](#) and [16th](#) meeting) to comply with COVID-19 restrictions. The 12<sup>th</sup> meeting was hosted by GLS Campus, Berlin, Germany and the [13th](#) meeting was hosted by the OECD at its Headquarters in Paris, France.

The WGI works through the following approaches:

**A co-production approach:** WGI members produce common outputs over each programme of work. During the 2019-21 triennium, two Working Groups, respectively on indicators and capacity development, contributed to developing the implementation strategy of the OECD Principles on Water Governance. Two-



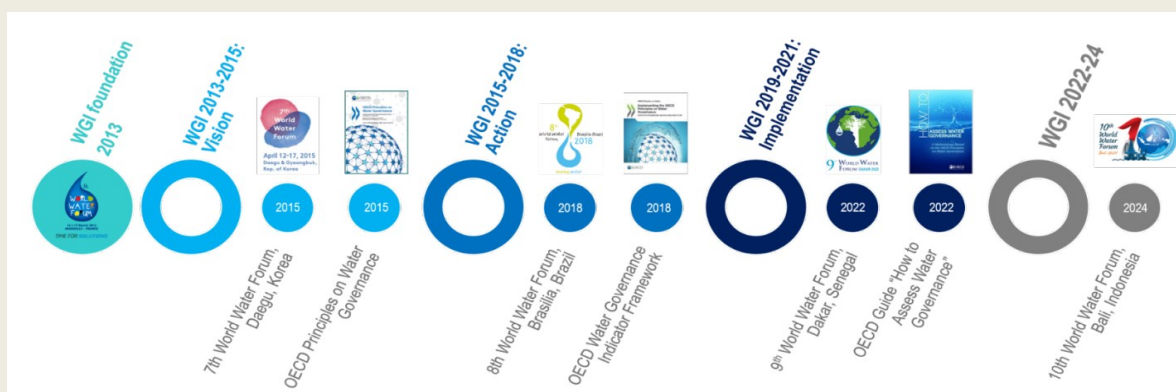
thirds of WGI members were involved in the working groups on indicators and/or capacity development, with similar participation rates for both (26% in indicators, 23% in capacity development, and 17% in both simultaneously). However, as a consequence of the shift to fully virtual meetings during the pandemic, members contributed to working group discussions without being divided in groups. The two tangible outcomes of this work were the Special Issue of Water International on [Measuring the Impacts of Water Governance](#) (Volume 47, Issue 2, 2022) and the OECD Guide [How to Assess Water Governance](#). See the following section on

- Achievements of the WGI in 2019-21 for a full account, and Box 1 for a summary of the outcomes of the WGI co-production approach.
- **A participatory and consultative approach:** WGI members provide valuable contributions in the form of policy reviews, survey responses, network mobilisation, dissemination of findings and event organisation. According to the 2022 Satisfaction Survey, 89% of members “always” or “sometimes” disseminated the results of WGI work. Members also contributed by commenting on WGI documents and reports (80%), mobilising internal resources (59%) and presenting research, reports and analysis at WGI meetings (44%). In addition, members took part in surveys, notably the Survey on capacity development tools and the 2022 Satisfaction Survey.
- **A self-funded approach:** The WGI’s funding model relies on in-kind contributions or financial support from WGI members, governments or other stakeholders. The estimated Secretariat costs for hosting and co-ordinating the WGI and carrying out the related analytical work as well as outreach and communications is estimated at approximately EUR 500 000 per year. To date, government funding has proven insufficient to carry out the full range of activities planned. Steps towards a fundraising strategy are proposed at the end of this strategy paper.

### Box 1. Results of the WGI co-production approach from 2013 to 2022

The strength of the WGI lies in the great diversity of its members and their willingness to contribute to the creation of “common goods”. The co-production approach adopted by the WGI since its creation in 2013 produced the following outcomes during the three consecutive phases of its programme of work, respectively in 2013-15 (vision); 2015-18 (action); and 2019-21 (implementation) (Figure 3). Such outcomes were presented at the World Water Fora.

Figure 3. From Vision to implementation



- **First phase of WGI activity (2013-15):** The WGI co-produced the [OECD Principles on Water Governance](#), launched at the 7<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum (2015, Daegu, Korea). They aim to

enhance water governance systems that help manage “too much”, “too little” and “too polluted” water in a sustainable, integrated and inclusive way, at an acceptable cost, and in a reasonable time frame. The Principles were adopted by the OECD Regional Development Policy Committee and endorsed at ministerial level, before being embodied verbatim in the OECD’s legal Acquis as part of the [OECD Council Recommendation on Water \(2016\)](#) adopted by all OECD member countries. To date, the Principles have been endorsed by 170+ stakeholders forming the [Global Coalition on Water Governance](#) and translated into 17 languages.

- **Second phase of WGI activity (2015-18):** The WGI developed the [OECD Water Governance Indicator Framework](#) to support multi-stakeholder dialogues and self-assessments of water governance in interested cities, basins and countries, and peer-reviewed 54 water governance stories from across the globe. These findings and indicators were summarised in the report [Implementing the OECD Principles on Water Governance](#), as well as in an [online map](#), both of which were released at the 8<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum (2018, Brasilia, Brazil). The OECD Principles on Water Governance were further endorsed at the Forum through the [Brasilia Multi-stakeholder Pledge](#) to Implement the OECD Principles on Water Governance, which was signed by 140 stakeholders.
- **Third phase of WGI activity (2019-21):** The WGI co-produced the OECD Guide [How to Assess Water Governance](#), intended as a one-stop-shop for conducting assessments of water governance systems, and advanced the measurement of water governance impacts through a [Special Issue](#) of the Water International journal. It also produced a three-minute [video](#) on the OECD Principles on Water Governance for non-expert audiences, explaining what the Principles are and how they can be used. These outcomes were launched at the 9<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum (2022, Dakar, Senegal).

# Achievements of the WGI in 2019-21

The following section provides a stocktaking on the outcomes achieved within the 2019-21 period, based on the four WGI goals described in the previous section.

## Policy advice

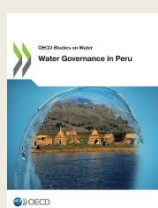
In 2019-21, the WGI contributed to 4 policy dialogues at national ([Argentina](#), [Brazil](#) and [Peru](#)) and local level ([Cape Town, South Africa](#)), as well as analytical work on water governance in 36 African cities ([Water Governance in African Cities](#)) and in 48 Asia-Pacific countries ([Water Governance in Asia-Pacific](#)). These policy dialogues and analytical work benefitted from written inputs by WGI members and peer-review discussions at plenary meetings of the WGI. They were launched at high-level sessions involving ministers, senior government officials and mayors at the [OECD Water Days 2021](#) (Peru; Cape Town, South Africa; Water Governance in African Cities; Water Governance in Asia-Pacific) and national launch events (Argentina and Brazil). The reports on Argentina and Peru were translated into Spanish; the report on Brazil into Portuguese; and the report on Water Governance in African Cities into French. In addition, to capture ten years of collaboration on water governance between the National Water and Basic Sanitation Agency of Brazil (ANA) and the OECD, a policy [brochure](#) was prepared and launched at the 9<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum (Box 2).

## Box 2. WGI outcomes on policy advice on water governance



### [Water Governance in Argentina \(2019\)](#)

This report (also available in [Spanish](#)) assesses water governance in Argentina, identifies several key challenges to effective, efficient and inclusive water policies, and provides a set of policy recommendations to enhance water governance as a means to address relevant societal challenges, both within the scope of water management and beyond. In particular, ways forward for Argentina include strengthening coordination between national and provincial water policies, setting up a multi-level water planning and investment framework, improving basin management practices, and enhancing economic regulation for water services.



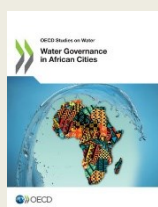
### [Water Governance in Peru \(2021\)](#)

The report (also available in [Spanish](#)) provides an analysis of water governance in the country and policy recommendations to: strengthen the multi-sectoral approach to water; improve the use of economic instruments to protect and sustainably use water resources, its sources and related ecosystem services; and strengthen regulatory conditions to improve access to safe drinking water and sanitation in urban and rural areas.



### [Water Governance in Cape Town, South Africa \(2021\)](#)

The report assesses key water risks and governance challenges in Cape Town, and calls for strengthening integrated basin governance, transparency, integrity, stakeholder engagement, capacities at all levels of government, financial sustainability and for advancing the water allocation reform to better manage trade-offs across multiple users.



### [Water Governance in African Cities \(2021\)](#)

Building on a Survey on Water Governance across 36 cities of all sizes in Africa, this report (also available in [French](#)) provides a regional overview of the allocation of roles and responsibilities for water management, the implementation of existing institutional, policy and regulatory frameworks, as well as the critical governance gaps that need to be bridged in order to boost city government capacity to drive water security in the continent.



### [Water Governance in Asia-Pacific \(2021\)](#)

This paper uses the OECD Principles on Water Governance as an assessment framework to provide a regional analysis of the state of play of water governance in 48 countries of the Asia–Pacific region, as a contribution of the Asian Development Bank to the Asian Water Development Outlook (AWDO). It draws observations on the extent to which effective water governance correlates with tangible water security outcomes in surveyed countries.



### [Fostering Water Resilience in Brazil \(2022\)](#)

Water security challenges in Brazil will be aggravated by megatrends such as climate change, population growth, urbanisation, and the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. This report (also available in [Portuguese](#)) provides an action plan to support the country to: (1) shift from a risk-based approach to a resilience approach to understand vulnerabilities and minimise the duration and magnitude of failures; (2) help river basin organisations deliver and use economic instruments to tackle water risks; and (3) accompany infrastructure development with regulatory oversight and monitoring.



### [Building Water Resilience in Brazil Brochure \(2022\)](#)

The brochure (also available in [Portuguese](#)) builds on ten years (2012-2022) of collaboration between the OECD and ANA on Water Governance, Finance and Regulation.

## Knowledge exchange

In addition to peer reviewing the recommendations of policy dialogues and analytical publications, WGI members discussed thematic work (Box 3). At the [12th meeting](#), the Secretariat launched the OECD report [Applying the OECD Principles on Water Governance to Floods: A Checklist for Action](#). Delegates also discussed the preliminary findings of the OECD/Women for Water Partnership literature review on “Women and Water decision-making” and provided guidance on the proposed survey and methodology to build further evidence. The [13th meeting](#) proposed future avenues of action for possible work on Indigenous Peoples and water governance, both within ongoing and future National Water Governance Policy Dialogues, and as a specific subject of research. At the [15th meeting](#), WGI members shared views and expertise on how cities can foster a blue economy that is resilient, inclusive, sustainable and circular. As a follow-up to these thematic discussions, a publication on women and water and a scoping note on the blue economy were circulated among WGI members.

To keep members up-to-date on their respective activities on water governance, facilitate the exchange of information, knowledge, experience between members during and in between meetings, the Secretariat produced three Activity Reports centralising members’ latest publications, events and news before the [14th meeting](#), the [15th meeting](#) and the [16th meeting](#). After each meeting, “Highlights” summarising the content of discussions were shared with members and published on the [webpage](#) of the OECD Water Governance Programme.

### Box 3. WGI outcomes on thematic work and knowledge exchange



#### [Applying the OECD Principles on Water Governance to Floods: A Checklist for Action \(2019\)](#)

Flooding is the most common of all natural disasters, and there is growing consensus that their frequency and the number of people at risk from floods will increase. This report uses the OECD Principles on Water Governance as a tool for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue and practical assessment of the performance of flood governance systems. It proposes a checklist as a self-assessment tool for stakeholders in flood management, based on lessons learned from 27 case studies that feature practical experiences and highlight common features and key challenges in flood governance.



#### [Women in Water Decision-Making \(2019\)](#)

Women and girls are the primary providers, managers, and users of water. However, women make up less than 17% of the water, sanitation, and hygiene labour force in developing economies and a fraction of the policymakers, regulators, management, and technical experts. The OECD, the Women for Water Partnership (WfWP) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Development Cooperation (BMZ) are joining forces to develop women-inclusive governance guidelines for water.



#### [Cities and Regions for a Blue Economy \(2021\)](#)

The blue economy is a major driver of urban and regional development, providing millions of local jobs. However, cities are facing growing water risks: urban property damage from flooding already costs USD 120 billion per year, and a drought can reduce a city's economic growth by up to 12%. This project supports cities, regions and basins to tackle these risks and foster a resilient, inclusive, sustainable and circular approach to the blue economy that contributes to economic growth, social well-being and ecosystem preservation. The flyer is available in [English](#), [French](#), [Portuguese](#) and [Spanish](#).

## Policy standards and implementation

According to the 2022 Satisfaction Survey, 74% of WGI members have used the [OECD Principles on Water Governance and Indicator Framework](#) as a reference framework in a variety of fields, including:

- **Capacity development activities and research**, as in the case of the Water Research Commission of South Africa, University of Dundee, University of Utrecht, Open University, University of Lisbon, University of Paris Pantheon-Sorbonne, BGR/GIZ/BMZ, Turkish Water Institute (SUEN), ANEW, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, SUEZ, TU Dortmund, AgroParisTech and IHE Delft.
- **Policy discussions and the assessment and development of national, local and river basin water governance strategies**, as in the case of INBO, OiEau, the Hungarian Energy and Public Utility Regulatory Authority, UNSW Global Water Institute, Norwegian Environment Agency, Water Policy International, Spanish Association of Water Supply and Sanitation (AEAS), CIRED-CNRS, Delta Programme for the Netherlands, V-Del for Vlakwa/VITO, the government of Scotland, and the German association of energy and water industries.

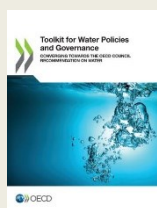
- **Monitoring of SDG 6** “means of implementation” relating to target 6.b, led by the World Health Organization.

As part of the implementation of the Principles, in 2019-21, the WGI developed the [OECD Guide How to Assess Water Governance](#) (Box 4). In addition, members of the WGI contributed to a [Special Issue of Water International on Measuring the Impacts of Water Governance](#) (Volume 47, Issue 2, 2022) to pursue the work on the OECD Water Governance Indicator Framework and provided inputs for and a short [video](#) on the Principles.

The WGI contributed to the chapter on governance in the [OECD Toolkit for Water Policies and Governance](#). The aim of the toolkit is to support the implementation of the OECD Council Recommendation on Water, which includes the OECD Principles verbatim. Within the Toolkit, the chapter on Ensuring good water governance takes stock of adherents’ progress towards good water governance and presents a range of water governance practices and arrangements in adherent countries.

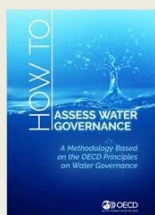
With the aim of fostering the implementation of the Principles at local level, within the framework of the [OECD / UCLG-Africa Roundtable of African Mayors for Water Security](#), an [Action Plan of Mayors, Local and Regional Governments for Water Security](#) was launched at the Cities, Local and Regional Governments Day for Water Security organised within the 9<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum. To date, the Action Plan has been signed by 80+ mayors and associations of local authorities, mostly in Africa. This Action Plan will pave the way for further work on implementing the Principles at subnational level in 2022-24.

## Box 4. WGI outcomes on policy standards and implementation



### **Chapter on Ensuring Good Governance in the [Toolkit for Water Policies and Governance: Converging Towards the OECD Council Recommendation on Water](#) (2021)**

The chapter presents progress made by Adherents with water governance, in line with the [OECD Council Recommendation on Water](#). The chapter focuses on promoting stakeholders engagement, managing governance complexity and trade-offs. Finally, it describes monitoring and evaluating mechanisms for water policy and governance.



### **[OECD Guide: How to Assess Water Governance](#) (2022)**

The Guide, launched at the 9<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum, provides a one-stop-shop for conducting effective, efficient, and inclusive assessments of water governance systems in a shared responsibility with the broad range of stakeholders engaged in water-related policy or decision-making. It includes a background section on the OECD Indicators on Water Governance and a section dedicated to the Ten-Step Methodology to undertake the assessment of water governance systems through a multi-stakeholder consultation process.



### **[Video on the OECD Principles on Water Governance](#) (2022)**

With the aim of raising awareness on the OECD Principles on Water Governance, this video produced by [Let's Talk About Water](#) explains what the Principles are and how they can be used to a non-expert audience.



### **[Special Issue of Water International: Measuring Water Governance Impacts](#) (2022)**

This special issue was launched during the 9<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum, in collaboration with the IWRA. A total of 9 papers and an introductory article were published to help understand the extent to which good governance (as a means) contributes to good outcomes for people, planet and places (as an end), and how to measure such impacts. The special issue leverages the OECD Principles on Water Governance as a common thread across the papers to describe and analyse the state of play and main challenges related to measuring water governance impacts in different geographical and institutional contexts.



### **[Action Plan of Mayors, Local and Regional Governments for Water Security](#) (2022)**

During the “Cities, Local and Regional Governments Day” (23 March 2022) at the 9<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum, the OECD and UCLG-Africa launched the [Roundtable of African Mayors for Water Security](#). The Day gathered 130+ participants and concluded with the signature of the Action Plan of Mayors, Local and Regional Governments for Water Security (also available in [French](#)), with a view to improving water governance in the continent towards better water security. It proposes 12 concrete actions based on the Principles for local and regional governments to improve water security. It builds on commitments and declarations from past editions of the World Water Forum such as the [Brasilia Multi-stakeholder Pledge](#) to Implement the OECD Principles on Water Governance.



## Consultation mechanism and global agenda

A primary function of the WGI is to foster continuity on water governance discussions between World Water Fora. In 2019-21, the WGI dedicated four sessions of plenary meetings to the preparation of the 9<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum (March 2022, Dakar, Senegal), organised around the theme of *Water Security for Peace and Sustainable Development*. These sessions included high-level representatives from the World Water Council and the Executive Director of the Forum.

Given that the 9<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum was postponed from 2021 to 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Secretariat organised the OECD Water Days in 2021, in which the Chair and several members took part as speakers. WGI members contributed to four sessions on water governance in Africa, Asia- Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as on water governance for a stronger recovery. Members also contributed to two side-events on “Film as a water science communication tool in African cities” (organised by Let’s Talk About Water) and on “Water governance for peace” (co-organised with the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, Vatican).

The Secretariat led the preparation of the 9<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum as co-chair of Priority 4 on the “Means and Tools of Implementation”, in which many members of the WGI were involved. The Secretariat and members of the WGI took part in the Stakeholders Meeting on 14-15 October 2022 in Dakar. At the Forum in March 2022, [20+ sessions](#) were co-organised by WGI members and the Secretariat, including a High-Level Roundtable on Means and Tools of Implementation and a Cities, Local and Regional Governments Day.

The Secretariat, alongside some WGI members, also participated in COP 25 (2019, Madrid, Spain) and contributed to the COP 26 Water Pavilion (2021, Glasgow, UK). The conclusions of these meetings and events were discussed in four plenary meetings throughout the triennium. In addition, the contribution of the WGI to raising the profile of water governance in the global water agenda was acknowledged in the OECD brochure on the [OECD Water Legacy 2006-2021](#) (2021). Finally, the OECD continued to be a co-custodian of UN SDG target 6.b on local participation, which aims for the participation of local communities in water and sanitation planning and management.

In 2019-21, members of the WGI and the Secretariat took part in and (co-)organised a wide range of events or sessions on water governance within international water events, including the [2nd International UNESCO Conference on Water, Megacities and Global Change](#) (11-14 January 2022, online); the [XVII IWRA World Water Congress](#) (29 November-3 December 2021, Daegu, Korea); the [IWA Water and Development Congress & Exhibition](#) (1-5 December 2019, Colombo, Sri Lanka); and the [11th INBO World General Assembly](#) (30 September-3 October 2019, Marrakech, Morocco).

# Key lessons learned from the 2019-2021 period

## SWOT analysis

This section presents the results of the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis of the WGI in 2019-21. It builds on key findings of the 2022 Satisfaction Survey (Box 5).

### Box 5. Summary of the key takeaways from the 2022 Satisfaction Survey

The Satisfaction and Forward-Looking Survey of the 2019-2021 Programme of Work of the OECD WGI was carried out in May-June 2022 to assess the results of this period and obtain feedback to shape the next triennium. In total, 73 member institutions accounting for 70% of WGI members responded to the survey.

#### Contribution, engagement and satisfaction of WGI members in 2019-21

- 53% of respondents joined the WGI since its inception.
- 95% of respondents are satisfied with the WGI overall.
- 86% of respondents consider that the WGI should continue its activities.
- 80% of respondents indicated a high or medium level of satisfaction with the virtual meetings due to COVID-19.
- The two main benefits of being part of the WGI are learning from countries' policy reforms and experiences and using OECD Principles on Water Governance as a guide.
- 74% of respondents used the OECD Water Governance Indicator Framework.
- 80% of respondents contributed to the WGI by commenting on documents, and 59% by mobilising internal resources.
- 66% of respondents would like to play a more active role in disseminating and communicating WGI results.
- 18% of respondents are willing to host meetings of the WGI and 6% help with fundraising.

#### Priorities for the content, outreach and ways forward for the 2022-24 Programme of Work

- The most relevant global factors affecting water governance are climate change (100%), global agendas (99%), increasing inequalities (97%) and digitalisation (86%).
- 68% of respondents identify climate resilience and adaptation as the highest priority to focus on.
- Principle 3 on policy coherence is the highest priority for 25% of respondents, followed by Principle 1 on roles and responsibilities, Principle 4 on capacity and Principle 2 on appropriate scale(s).
- The highest priority geographic areas are Africa (64%), followed by MENA (55%) and Asia-Pacific (48%).
- Local and national governments (64% and 62% respectively) are identified as being the highest-priority players.

#### Priorities for the administration of the 2022-24 Programme of Work

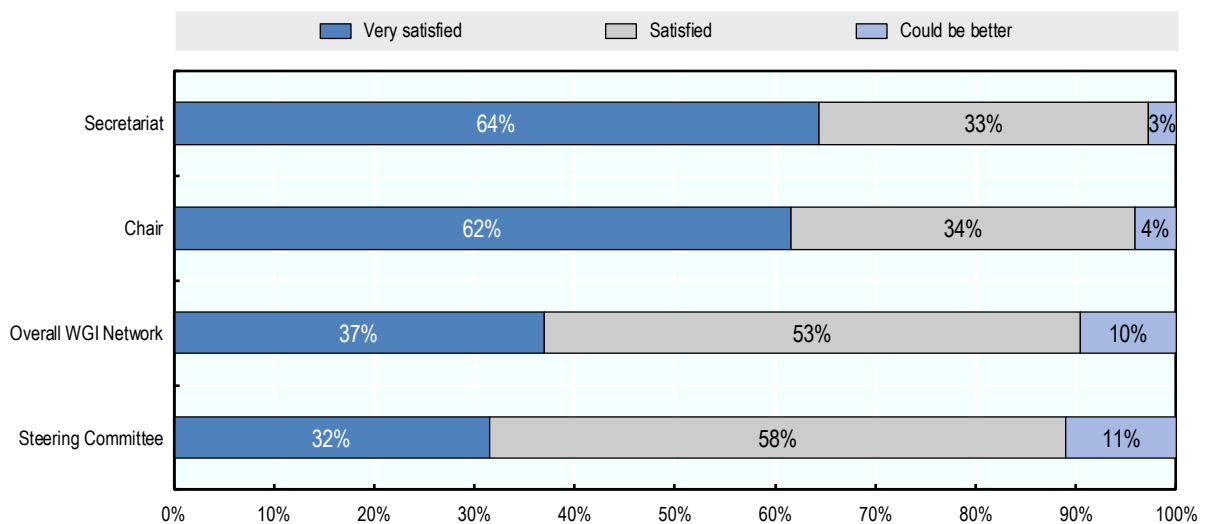
- Respondents have split preferences between hybrid meetings (36%), alternate in-person & hybrid meetings (33%) and in-person meetings (26%).
- The most relevant opportunities for the WGI arising from digitalisation are the hybrid format of the meetings (93%), more online interaction (85%), opening up to observers beyond official membership (79%) and more digital content (78%).
- 51% of respondents reported that they would be unsure about their participation in the WGI if fees were introduced, while 20% would continue to participate.

### Strengths

Despite the disruptions to meetings, events and everyday lives caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the WGI demonstrated its strength and its capacity to adapt to changing circumstances. Thanks to the cohesiveness of the multi-stakeholder network, the WGI continued to deliver high-quality technical documents and reports, to take part in international meetings and events (e.g. World Water Forum, OECD Water Days, COPs) and contribute to global agendas (e.g. Paris Agreement, Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development). Despite the shift to virtual plenary meetings, participation from members continued to be strong, with 100 participants on average joining the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> meetings. The new meeting format also allowed for the use of new dynamic tools such as quick surveys (e.g. Zoom polls and Mentimeters) whose results were displayed in real time.

According to the 2022 Satisfaction Survey, members remain satisfied or very satisfied with the network, with a level of satisfaction above 95% for the Secretariat and the Chair, 90% for the overall network, and 89% for the Steering Committee (Figure 4). Compared to the results of the previous Programme of Work (2015-2018), the level of satisfaction has remained stable, with variations of less than 5%. Similarly, the results show a high degree of satisfaction of the participants of the working groups, with 84% for the working group on indicators and 79% for the working group on capacity development.

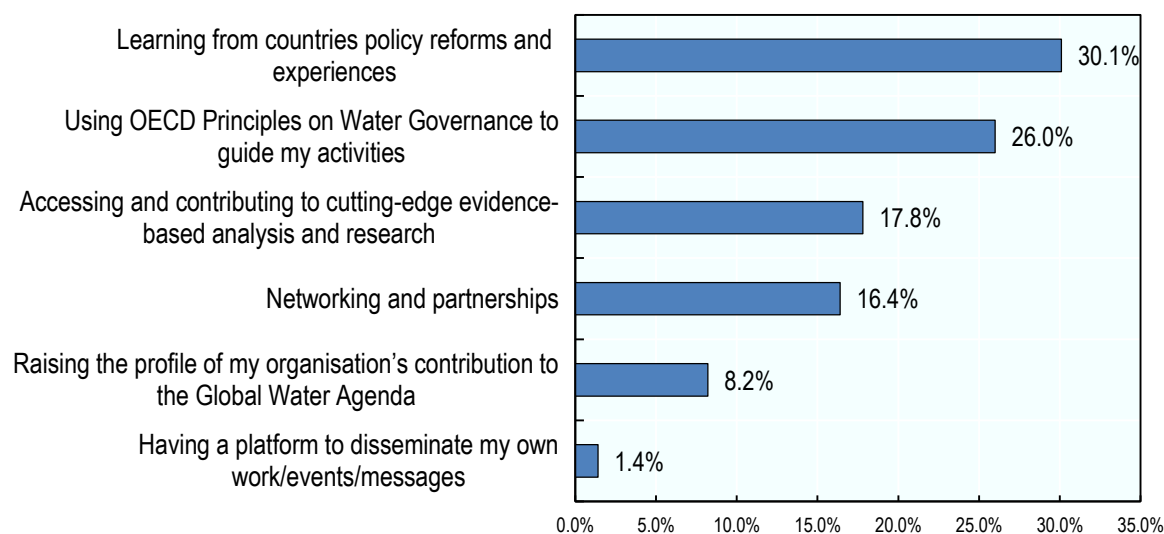
Figure 4. Overall satisfaction of OECD WGI members with the WGI



Responses to the multiple choice question "What is your degree of satisfaction with the WGI?"  
 Source: 2022 Satisfaction Survey of the OECD WGI.

Members see two main benefits of being part of the WGI: learning from countries' policy reforms and experiences (30%) and using OECD Principles on Water Governance as a guide (26%). Other key benefits include accessing and contributing to cutting-edge evidence-based analysis and research (18%) and engaging in networking and partnerships (16%) (Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Most important benefits of being part of the OECD WGI**



Responses to the ranking question "What are the main benefits of being part of the WGI?" The graph only shows the answers prioritised in the first position of the ranking (most important).

Source: 2022 Satisfaction Survey of the OECD WGI.

### **Weaknesses**

Some of the weaknesses identified in the previous triennium (see [Strategy Paper for 2018-21](#)) are still valid. In particular, the lack of a stable source of funding may undermine the full potential of the WGI and the dissemination of its outputs. The WGI does not charge membership fees, enabling a certain level of inclusiveness and diversity among WGI members, and is essential to the WGI's multi-stakeholder approach. Nevertheless, several WGI members suggested establishing a variable membership fee based on members' resources and types of organisations. While 20% of WGI members reported that they would continue to participate if membership fees were implemented, around half said that they would be unsure. Some members said that they would be willing to contribute between EUR 50 and EUR 5 000 per year, with a median of EUR 500 and an average of EUR 1 690. Active fundraising is thus required to ensure that the WGI delivers on its broad range of objectives. Under the leadership of the Chair, the Secretariat will reach out to OECD member and non-member countries, foundations, bilateral and multilateral organisations and other potential funding partners working on water governance to raise awareness about the WGI and explore their interest in funding its activities.

Another weakness is the lack of participation of certain OECD member countries in the WGI, the limited representation of non-OECD members and sectors outside the water box, and the limited participation of under-represented groups (e.g. youth, indigenous peoples, etc.). The shift to online meetings has also reduced the time available for discussions on documents, has not allowed for the informal discussions that usually characterise meetings of the WGI, and has challenged continuity between meetings as well as members' capacity to concretely contribute to the Working Groups beyond plenary meetings.

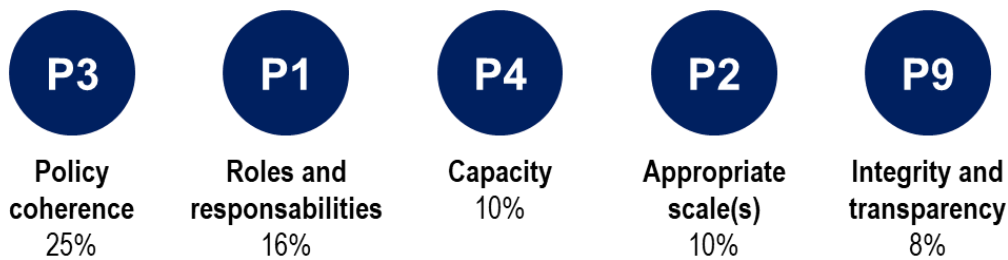
### **Opportunities**

The WGI has multiple opportunities to build on its strengths and address weaknesses in 2022-24, in line with the main priorities established by members of the WGI in the 2022 Satisfaction Survey:

- Africa (64%), MENA (55%) and Asia-Pacific (48%) are the highest priority geographic areas.
- Local and national governments (64% and 62% respectively) are the highest-priority players.

- Climate resilience and adaptation is identified by 68% of respondents as being the highest priority thematic area for analytical work.
- In terms of the OECD Principles on Water Governance (Figure 6), Principle 3 on policy coherence comes first, followed by Principle 1 on roles and responsibilities, Principle 4 on capacity and Principle 2 on appropriate scale(s), and Principle 9 on integrity and transparency.

**Figure 6. Top 5 priority OECD Principles on Water Governance for 2022-24**



Note: Responses to the ranking question "What are the governance dimensions corresponding to the OECD Principles that should be prioritised to respond to future challenges?". The graph shows the answers prioritised in the first position of the ranking.

Source: 2022 Satisfaction Survey of the OECD WGI.

Within a regional approach that seeks to expand the work of the WGI to non-OECD member countries and notably with Africa and Asia-Pacific, the WGI could further engage with national, local governments and stakeholders to promote good water governance through the implementation of the Principles. In addition, new and ongoing thematic work (e.g. on the blue economy and circular economy) can create opportunities to connect with sectors outside the water box (e.g. ocean, agriculture, energy, etc.) by digging further into specific Principles (see Proposals for the 2022-24 Programme of Work). For the 2022-24 programme of work, the Secretariat has invited organisations outside the water box and representatives of youth and local governments to join, which should facilitate the focus on P3 on policy coherence and P2 on appropriate scale(s). The WGI can also enhance the impact of its work by tying key deliverables to the global water agenda and events, including the 2023 UN Water Conference and Climate COPs.

In addition, hybrid meetings and the use of digital tools (e.g. webinars, website and online surveys) can enable a stronger engagement of WGI members in decision-making and delivering outputs. In fact, hybrid meetings and increased online interactions are seen as the most relevant opportunities for the WGI arising from digitalisation (93% and 85% respectively). The possibility of online participation is a significant opportunity to attract more diverse representation, especially from under-represented groups with fewer resources to take part in fully in-person meetings (e.g. youth). The satisfaction survey highlighted that members would like to play a more active role in disseminating and communicating WGI results (66%), and some members are willing to host meetings of the WGI (18%) and help with fundraising (6%). Several members also expressed their wish to be more engaged in decision making (e.g. meetings content and format, definition of working groups, etc.). Proposals considering these suggestions are made in the following section.

### **Threats**

The WGI faces enduring threats, some of which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. First, the WGI operates within a very crowded environment, making its high visibility increasingly challenging to maintain. The opportunities provided by global webinars, events and workshops on water governance during the pandemic are likely to create an even more fragmented landscape, within which the WGI would need to revisit its value proposition, niche and utility function in order to increase its visibility and reputation as the leading water governance multi-stakeholder platform. Furthermore, while online meetings

guaranteed the continuity of WGI activities despite COVID-19 restrictions and constraints, the 2020-21 period saw a proliferation of online events, which generated fatigue amongst some members.

In terms of the impact of the WGI's work, respondents pointed to the OECD Principles on Water Governance and the Water Governance Indicator Framework as being most relevant. Nevertheless, their use on the ground requires resources, time and competences that are not always available in national and subnational administrations, impeding the concrete uptake of such guidance and tools.

# Where should the WGI be heading?

## Proposals for the 2022-24 Programme of Work

### **Strategic content**

The WGI has championed good water governance as a means to achieve sustainable development for a decade. It has successfully developed a normative framework – the Principles – as well as policy tools – an Indicator Framework and a Guide – to support governments and stakeholders in improving water governance. While the water governance landscape has changed significantly over the past ten years, the wealth of knowledge and experience accumulated by the WGI can support governments and stakeholders in addressing new and pressing water governance challenges.

The results of the 2022 Satisfaction Survey underscore a strong commitment to the Principles and its tools (e.g. 74% of members have used the indicator framework since its publication) and a desire to foster continuity in their implementation (86% of members believe that the WGI should continue its activities). Moreover, there is a broad consensus among WGI members on new actors to involve (e.g. local governments), new regions to focus on (e.g. Africa) and new thematic priorities to explore (climate resilience and adaptation) in the next programme of work.

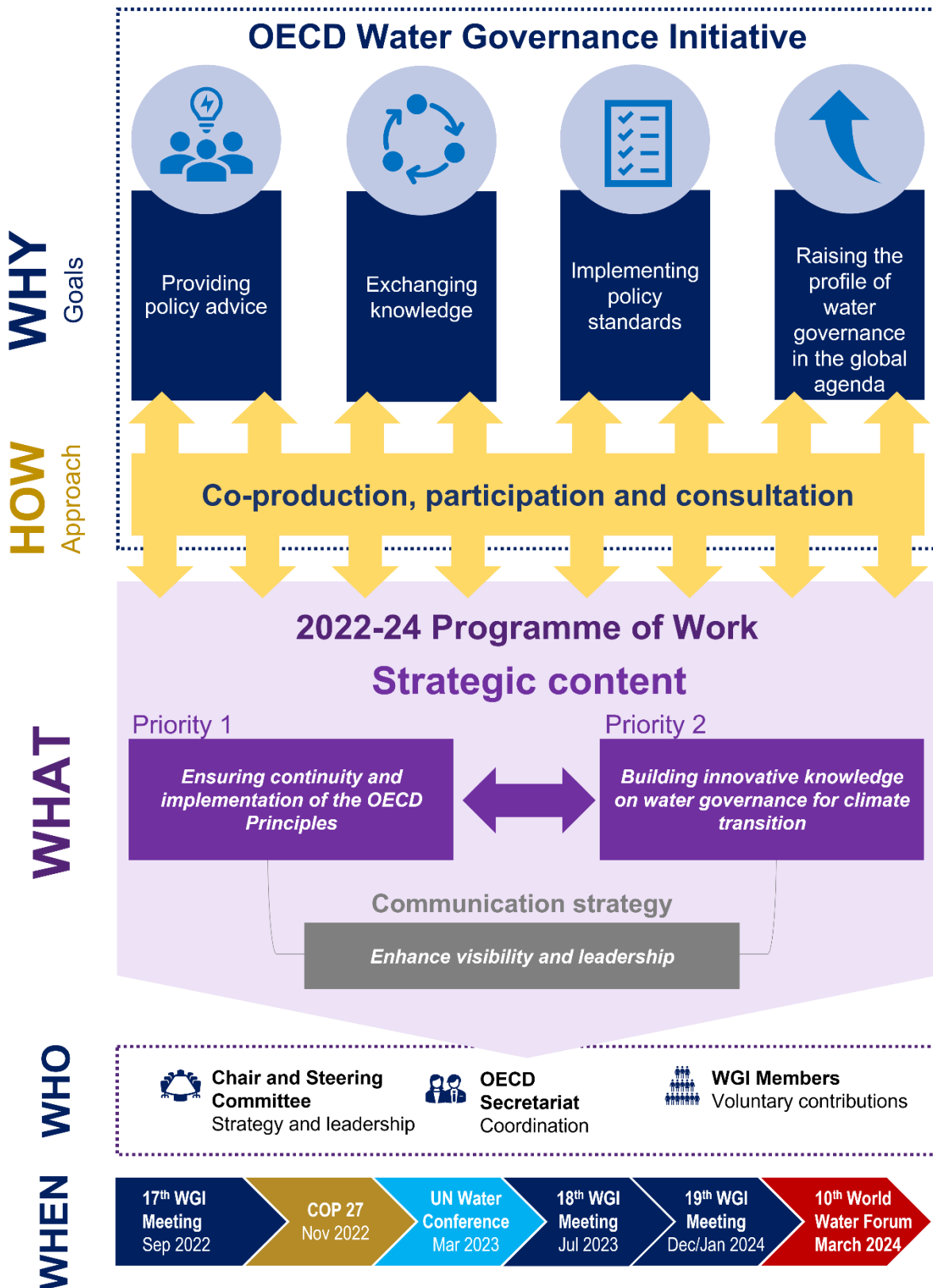
As such, a forward-looking strategy reflecting changes in the water governance landscape is required. The fourth phase of the WGI (2022-24) could focus on “*localisation*”, following the *vision* (1<sup>st</sup> phase, 2013-15), the *action* (2<sup>nd</sup> phase, 2015-18) and the *implementation* phases (3<sup>rd</sup> phase, 2019-21) (Figure 7). “*Localisation*” implies applying a territorial lens to water governance that would allow to concretely demonstrate how the OECD Principles on Water Governance can contribute to achieving water security at local, regional and basin levels, through co-ordinated action across levels of governments; shed light on interactions across places (e.g. urban, rural areas and basins) as part of a functional approach; and identify solutions towards more effective, efficient and inclusive water governance, building on local knowledge and stakeholders’ action.

Building on the work carried out by the WGI to date, the results of the 2022 Satisfaction Survey, the consultation with the Steering Committee and WGI members during the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting (The Hague, The Netherlands, 19-20 September 2022), the following programme of work is proposed for the 2022-24 period, with a focus on two main priorities and related activities (Figure 7):

- **Ensuring continuity and implementation** of the OECD Principles on Water Governance, by applying existing tools (Indicator Framework and Guide) on the ground, with a focus on the local level as an engine for concrete action.
- **Building innovative knowledge** and collecting good practices on water governance for the climate and the just transition by focusing on the implementation of specific Principles. A just transition implies greening the economy in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible to everyone concerned, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no one behind.



Figure 7. Proposed priorities for the 2022-24 Programme of Work of the WGI



*Ensuring continuity and implementation of the OECD Principles on Water Governance*

The WGI will continue to foster the implementation of the Principles through the uptake of tools, namely the Indicator Framework and the How To Guide to assess water governance. Members agreed to pay particular attention to the local, regional and basin level, fostering national-local dialogues on water governance; building data and evidence; and supporting local governments through capacity building. Subject to voluntary contributions, the WGI will aim to:

- **Foster national-local dialogues on water policies.** It is proposed to pursue demand-driven **Policy Dialogues** on water governance at different levels of government both in OECD and in non-OECD countries. Policy Dialogues will use the Principles, Indicators and How To Guide to analyse the water governance framework in place and provide ad hoc guidance. Particular attention could be paid to “National-Local Water Policy Dialogues” assessing the implementation of national policies at subnational level; identifying multi-level governance gaps; and providing recommendations. Preliminary results of Policy Dialogues will be shared during WGI meetings in dedicated technical sessions, enabling the identification of good practices, and will continue to foresee the involvement of peer reviewers, possibly among WGI members. The OECD Secretariat will be in charge of carrying out policy dialogues, which will conclude with a report containing policy recommendations. OECD WGI members could either suggest specific cities, basins or countries where to carry out such policy dialogues, or, according to their expertise, take part in the process as peer reviewers during WGI meetings and / or during fact-finding missions, if need be.
- **Assess water governance at various levels of government.** It is suggested to carry out **self-assessments** of water governance systems on a voluntary basis across cities, basins, regions or countries, and share evidence with the WGI and the wider water community. The Indicator Framework and the How to Guide can help interested cities, basins, regions and countries assess whether their water governance systems are performing optimally and make adjustments where needed. WGI members are keen to foster the continuity of this work: several members have expressed their intention to lead a self-assessment exercise in their respective cities, basins, regions or countries. Dedicated sessions to share experiences from case studies with other members of the WGI will be maintained in plenary meetings. The OECD Secretariat will stand ready to support interested cities, basins, regions or countries with their self-assessment, by providing material, information and ad hoc guidance, upon request. Some WGI members, very experienced with the principles and indicators, could contribute as trainers or facilitators of such assessment processes, where appropriate.
- **Build evidence and data.** It is suggested to continue research on the **impacts of good water governance** from a quantitative and qualitative point of view, in collaboration with WGI members (e.g. in connection with on-going and planned works by members, such as the Water Integrity Network’s [Water Integrity Global Outlook](#)) and contribute to filling the data gap at local level, making the case for good water governance. In this sense, the OECD Secretariat will facilitate exchanges between WGI members and the OECD/UCLG-Africa Roundtable of African Mayors for Water Security, which foresees the creation of an online platform/observatory compiling scientific data and knowledge on water security in African cities, especially in relation to their distance to SDGs 6 and 11.
- **Foster implementation of good water governance at local level** by supporting cities and regions in implementing the **Action Plan of Mayors, Local and Regional Governments for Water Security** endorsed at the 9<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum (Dakar, Senegal), through a **Toolkit for implementing the Action Plan**, featuring more granular and concrete actions that local governments can take to implement the Action Plan. National-level actions to support the implementation of the Action Plan could also be included, in addition to concrete examples from local authorities. The OECD Secretariat will be in charge of drafting the content of the Toolkit,

collecting inputs from WGI members and Mayors, Local and Regional Governments, with a focus on African constituencies.

### *Building innovative knowledge on water governance*

The new priorities expressed by WGI members in terms of actors, regions and themes call for a focus on climate resilience and adaptation through the lens of specific Principles. Climate change and increased inequalities are two of the most important changing factors that WGI members see in the water governance landscape today, with 100% and 97% of surveyed members respectively deeming them important. This reflects growing convergence between the water and climate community to meet the targets of global agendas (e.g. UN SDGs, Paris Agreement) while leaving no one behind. WGI members also see local governments and Africa as priorities going forward.

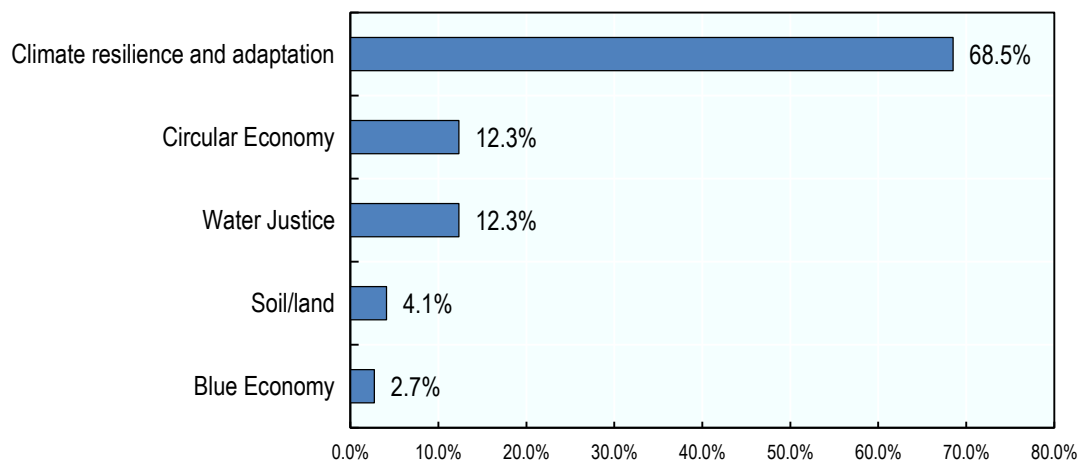
To reflect these priorities, the programme of work of the WGI could advance dedicated thematic workstreams under the overarching theme of “**water governance for the climate and just transition**”, by digging into specific Principles deemed most relevant by WGI members, namely, in order of preference: Principle 3 on policy coherence, Principle 1 on roles and responsibilities, and Principle 2 on appropriate scale(s). Regarding Principle 3, WGI members emphasised the need to connect the dots between water and climate change, but also food, biodiversity, energy, waste and other sectors. Within this framework, systems thinking for water decision-making will be required. Principle 2 calls for promoting water governance at the appropriate scale, namely across urban and rural areas and basins, as part of a functional approach. This would involve reflecting on how to apply nature-based solutions and foster innovation; linking freshwater resources management with coastal and marine ecosystems, waste and plastic pollution; and identifying economic and financial models for fighting pollution, among others. Principle 1 highlights the need for multi-level governance and the implementation of water policies as a shared responsibility across governments and stakeholders.

Subject to voluntary contributions, the WGI will therefore:

- **Provide guidance on how water governance can foster climate adaptation and protect biodiversity, with impacts on the blue economy.** This will be part of the [OECD project on Cities and Regions for a Blue Economy](#). The project starts from the recognition that cities have a key role to play in unlocking the potential of the blue economy while preserving the marine, coastal and freshwater ecosystems that sustain it. Acknowledging that economic resilience requires water resilience, the project will support cities in developing a Resilient, Inclusive, Sustainable and Circular (RISC-proof) approach to the blue economy, connecting them to their river basin(s) and setting the right enabling conditions. As part of this project, the WGI could contribute to build evidence on the importance of the functional “city-basin” approach to water resources management. The basin is usually the scale at which it is recommended to integrate physical, environmental, social and economic aspects of water resources management, but city-basin dialogues seeking to prevent risks, plan integrated water resources management and share data are often lacking. Importantly, sustainable water management in basins can protect and improve ecosystem services, enhance the value of natural capital to the benefit of urban dwellers and halt and reverse the decline in biodiversity. The OECD Secretariat will be in charge of carrying out the project. OECD WGI members from governments are welcome to suggest deep dive case studies at national and subnational levels. Other WGI members will peer review the findings during WGI meetings and / or fact-finding missions.
- **Build capacity on systems thinking for the climate and the just transition.** Local authorities could benefit from guidance on how to adopt a holistic vision of water policies, to avoid overlooking the links between water and related sectors such as waste and urban planning. WGI members suggested to put forward their own programmes that could help with this purpose, for other members or governments.

- **Focus on the “just” dimension of the climate transition in relation to water.** As part of the [OECD project on Cities for a Blue Economy](#), the WGI could contribute to the identification of tools for : i) reducing inequalities and enhancing well-being by creating job opportunities from marine and freshwater-dependent economic activities; ii) protecting the most vulnerable from water-related risks; and iii) engaging stakeholders in the water decision-making. Opportunities for sharing knowledge and practices in this sense can be explored in connection with the [OECD / UCLG-Africa Roundtable of African Mayors for Water Security](#). Moreover, the WGI could further explore the role of certain stakeholder groups within water-related decision making, such as **women** and **indigenous peoples**.
- **Advocate good water governance for climate adaptation.** The WGI will contribute to major international events on climate to reiterate the importance of water as part of climate adaptation. This will be done, among others, through participation in climate COPs, in continuity with participation in the Water Pavilion and Resilience Hub at COP 26.

**Figure 8. Most important thematic areas for the 2022-24 Programme of Work**



Note: Responses to the ranking question “What are the thematic areas that should be more closely analysed in connection to water?” The graph shows the answers prioritised in the first position of the ranking, as most important.

Source: 2022 Satisfaction Survey of the OECD WGI.

### ***Communication strategy: Enhancing visibility and leadership***

In relation to the WGI’s communication and the dissemination of its work, members expect making meetings more participatory and inclusive, and keeping the momentum between plenary meetings. WGI members also suggested making the work of the WGI accessible to a wider audience, emphasising the importance of the science-policy interface. Writing blog articles and opinion pieces (90%) and using social media (81%) are the two most relevant options to raise awareness of WGI work according to WGI members, in addition to organising high-level meetings (97%). The survey also highlighted that members would like to take a more active role in disseminating and communicating WGI results (66%). In this vein:

- The Secretariat has overhauled the webpage of the OECD Water Governance Programme, including a **dedicated WGI webpage** featuring the names of all members for greater visibility. Moreover, to make meetings more participatory and inclusive, the Secretariat will invite members to present suggestions on work that they would like to peer-review during the plenary meetings. A [welcome package for new members](#) is also available online.
- The Secretariat will produce a brochure on the WGI in addition to the [flyer](#).

- To keep the ball rolling between plenary meetings, it is suggested that champion water governance institutions, i.e. government institutions willing to bring discussions on water governance forward, co-organise with the Secretariat **online workshops** between meetings of the WGI. Participation of new constituencies (e.g. insurance companies and donors) should be encouraged.
- WGI member countries are invited to update WGI members on national water governance developments and activities.
- WGI members are invited to volunteer to publish thematic **blog articles or opinion pieces** related to the programme of work or to global agendas and events (e.g. climate and biodiversity COPs, UN 2023 Water Conference, etc.). Articles could be published in different languages and platforms to reach audiences from different regions and backgrounds/sectors. For instance, the OECD can facilitate the publication of relevant blog articles on its [Cogito platform](#).
- All members and the Secretariat should continue promoting the Principles, the Indicator Framework, the Guide and other WGI material through **social media, videos** (e.g. for individual Principles), **storytelling** and **webpages**.
- All members are invited to flag global events in which WGI members can participate to disseminate work and contribute to global agendas. Members organising **strategic events** are invited to involve and engage the Chair, the Steering Committee, the Secretariat and other members to strengthen synergies and identify opportunities for collaboration.
- Members are invited to volunteer to translate the OECD Water Governance Indicator Framework into various languages (already available in [English](#), [French](#), [Japanese](#), [Korean](#), [Portuguese](#) and [Spanish](#)) and the Guide on How to Assess Water Governance.

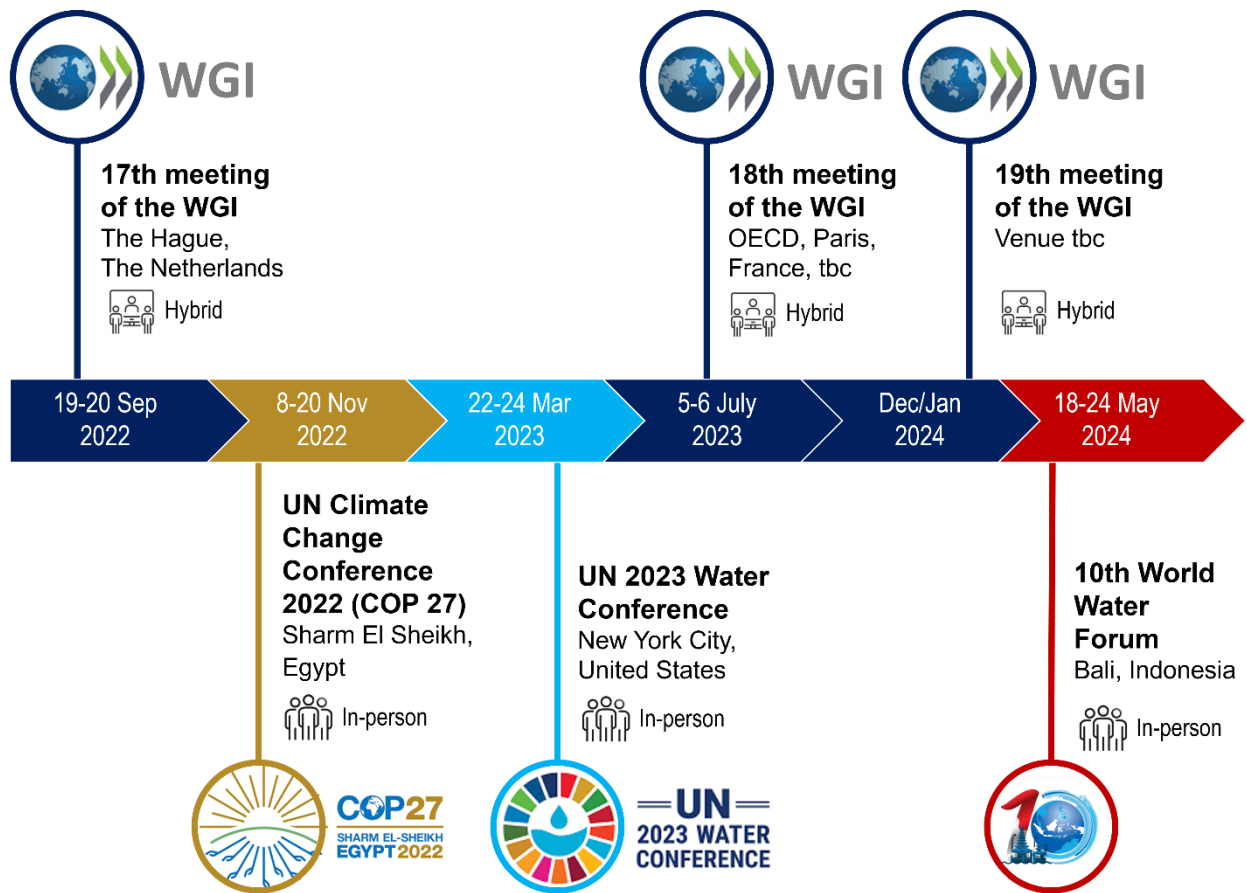
Ultimately, it is time to make the WGI more visible and to enhance its leadership on water governance by contributing, as a community of practice, to high-level events, declarations and international commitments. In particular, COP 27 and 28, COP 15, the UN 2023 Water Decade Conference and the 10<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum will provide high-profile opportunities for WGI members to speak as a single voice.

### ***Format and timeline***

Following the shift to fully online meetings as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, most WGI members are keen to continue using digital tools to ensure a high level of participation and to keep the momentum between plenary meetings. Indeed, 80% indicated a high or medium level of satisfaction with online meetings, and hybrid meetings (36%) or alternate in-person and hybrid meetings (33%) are the most popular options for 2022-24. Hybrid meetings and online interactions are seen as the most relevant opportunities for the WGI arising from digitalisation (93% and 85% respectively).

Reflecting these preferences, it is suggested to organise hybrid plenary meetings whenever possible to allow members to join in-person or remotely. Figure 9 presents a tentative timeline of plenary meetings and key international events towards the 10<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum.

Figure 9. Next steps of the OECD WGI towards the 10<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum



### Fundraising and in-kind contributions

The OECD Secretariat will continue to pursue fundraising opportunities for the overall activities of the Initiative under the guidance of the Chair and the members of the Steering Committee. The WGI will continue to count on voluntary in-kind contributions. Several members have expressed their interest in contributing to the WGI by volunteering to carry out a self-assessment exercise in their city, basin, region or country; to organise a workshop or webinar on a specific theme; and/or to host a meeting of the WGI.