



17th MEETING OF THE OECD WATER GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE

19-20 September 2022, The Hague, Netherlands

HIGHLIGHTS



The [OECD Water Governance Initiative \(WGI\)](#) is an international multi-stakeholder network of 100+ members from the public, private and non-profit sectors gathering twice a year in a Policy Forum to share on-going policy reforms, projects, lessons and good practices in support of better governance in the water sector. Sixteen meetings have been held since its creation: 7–28 March 2013, Paris, France; 7–8 November 2013, Paris, France; 28–29 April 2014, Madrid, Spain; 24–25 November 2014, Paris, France; 26 May 2015, Edinburgh, United Kingdom; 2–3 November 2015, Paris, France; 23–24 June 2016, The Hague, The Netherlands; 12–13 January, Rabat, Morocco; 3–4 July 2017, Paris, France; 20–21 November 2017, Vienna, Austria; 12–13 November 2018, Zaragoza, Spain; 20–21 June 2019, Berlin, Germany; 9–10 January 2020, Paris, France; 2–3 November 2020, online; 27–28 September 2021, online; 20 January 2022, online; and 19-20 September 2022, The Hague, Netherlands.

The OECD WGI aims to:

- Provide a **multi-stakeholder technical platform** to share knowledge, experience, and best practices on water governance across levels of government;
- **Advise governments** in taking the needed steps for effective water reforms through peer-to-peer dialogue and stakeholder engagement across public, private, and non-profit sectors;
- Provide a **consultation mechanism** to raise the profile of governance in the Global Water Agenda (Sustainable Development Goals, World Water Forum, Habitat III, COP, etc.);
- Support the **implementation** of the [OECD Principles on Water Governance](#) in member and non-member countries; and
- **Foster continuity** on governance discussions between two World Water Fora (every 3 years), currently between the 9th World Water Forum (Senegal, March 2022) and the 10th World Water Forum (Bali, May 2024).

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Summary of outcomes

On 19-20 September 2022, the [OECD Water Governance Initiative \(WGI\)](#) held its [17th meeting in The Hague](#), Netherlands, hosted by the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management. The meeting gathered 70 on-site and 40 online practitioners, policymakers and representatives from major stakeholder groups (see the [agenda](#) and [list of participants](#)). The meeting had the following objectives:

- Discuss the WGI's contribution to global agendas
- Share knowledge and experience on the latest water governance research and policy reforms
- Shape the 2022-2024 WGI Strategy and Programme of Work
- Plan the WGI's contribution to the UN 2023 Water Conference, by implementing good water governance in cities

Delegates bid farewell to the **outgoing Chair of the WGI, Peter Glas**, who has served the Initiative since November 2013. The OECD Secretariat, the Steering Committee and delegates thanked him for his work, leadership, and remarkable dedication. As Chair, he championed, amongst others, the design and adoption of the [OECD Principles on Water Governance \(2015\)](#) and their [Indicator framework \(2018\)](#) alongside a dedicated OECD review on [Water Governance in the Netherlands \(2014\)](#).

Delegates welcomed and congratulated the new **Chair, Barbara Pompili**, Member of Parliament and former Minister for the Ecological Transition of France. She paid a tribute to **Peter Glas** for his legacy and introduced her new mandate by highlighting her achievements in relation to water during her career and her commitment to work with WGI members towards better and more inclusive water governance.

On 19 September, the first session updated delegates the WGI's contribution to global agendas since the [16th meeting](#) in January. Members of the Steering Committee and Secretariat shared information on the outcomes of the [9th World Water Forum](#) (21-26 March 2022, Dakar, Senegal) during which the OECD and UCLG-Africa launched the [Roundtable of African Mayors for Water Security](#); the [Stockholm World Water Week](#) (23 August-1 September 2022, Stockholm, Sweden) held under the theme "Seeing the unseen: the value of water" with a focus on groundwater, biodiversity, ecosystems, the water cycle, and sustainable water management; the [2nd International High-Level Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development"](#) (6-9 June 2022, Dushanbe, Tajikistan), which led to the [Dushanbe Declaration](#) promoting good water governance through "institutions, policies, regulations, investments, human resources and tailored approaches"; and [COP26](#) (31 October-13 November 2021, Glasgow, United Kingdom), which hosted the first Water and Climate Pavilion dedicated to water in relation to climate adaptation, mitigation, and resilience infrastructure.

During the second session, delegates discussed and broadly supported the proposed 2022-2024 Strategy and Programme of Work, focused on: i) a territorial approach to the implementation of the OECD Principles on Water Governance; and ii) water governance for the climate transition. The Secretariat presented the SWOT analysis of the previous triennium and the results of the satisfaction survey carried out among members over the period May-June 2022. Respondents identified climate resilience and adaptation as the main priority for the future of water governance. Africa, MENA, and Asia-Pacific were pointed out as the highest-priority geographic areas, and local and national governments as the highest-priority players.

Delegates joined the breakout group discussion to advance proposals and observations on the 2022-24 Programme of Work towards the [10th World Water Forum](#) to be held in May 2024 in Bali, Indonesia. Delegates agreed to continue the implementation of the Principles, enhance connections across policies and sectors to improve water security, and work with cities, regions, and basins within a territorial approach to water governance.

On 20 September, the first session, a high-level panel, was devoted to the preparation and contribution of the WGI to the [UN 2023 Water Conference](#) (22-24 March 2022, New York City). **Mathilda Buijtendijk, Director for Climate Adaptation at Water International, Netherlands**, explained the preparatory process and [vision statement](#) towards the UN 2023 Water Conference, co-hosted by the governments of the Netherlands and Tajikistan. The conference will provide the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action (2018-2028) on “Water for Sustainable Development”.

Aziza Akhmouch, Head of Division, Cities, Urban Policies and Sustainable Development, CFE, OECD provided an overview of the work carried out by the OECD and WGI in a presentation entitled "[15 Years of Water Wisdom: insights for the UN 2023 Water Conference](#)" as a basis for the WGI to make substantive contributions to the conference. She highlighted three major outcomes of the water work: i) a paradigm shift for water from a resource challenge to an economic challenge; ii) a recognition that multilevel governance and finance are essential to policy success; iii) a pledge to engage local and regional governments for water security.

The high-level panel on “The WGI for the United Nations 2023 Water Conference” benefitted from interventions from city umbrella organisations and local government representatives to highlight the relevance of local authorities in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular SDG 6 (water and sanitation) in connection to SDG 11 on cities. **Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi, Secretary-General, UCLG-Africa**, advocated for better inclusion of subnational governments, cities, and rural areas to ensure water security and facilitate access to sanitation services in Africa. He urged to raise the profile of local authorities in defining and implementing policy prerogatives on drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene, to scale up innovative solutions, and improve governance frameworks. **Ed Anker, Chair, Climate Adaptation, Association of Dutch Municipalities**, presented spatial planning initiatives undertaken by Dutch municipalities for climate adaptation and mitigation. He stressed the central role of local governments in transforming urban landscapes with green and blue infrastructure and raising public awareness on water-related risks.

During the second session, delegates discussed the WGI's contribution to the UN 2023 Water Conference and shared recent examples of good water governance projects, initiatives, or research. Finally, delegates brainstormed in break-out groups to reach a consensus on the WGI's contribution to the Conference. Delegates proposed to:

- Encourage UN Member States to take up the **OECD Principles on Water Governance**, at national and local levels;
- Promote **dialogues between Mayors and Ministers** towards national urban water policies, fostering the link between SDGs and OECD Principles on Water Governance;
- Promote a **systemic approach** moving out of the water box to foster cross-sectoral consistency (climate change adaptation, energy, health, agriculture, etc.);
- Link **oceans and freshwater** for sustainable development, while distinguishing both oceans and freshwater issues to avoid overemphasising one to the detriment of the other;
- Foster a **territorial approach to water policy** to build greater cooperation across scales through enhanced integrated water resource management (IWRM).

Delegates proposed to collaborate on the organisation of a series of side events and agreed to hold events outside the official programme to engage broadly with civil society.

Next steps

- Based on comments and suggestions received, the OECD Secretariat will revise the WGI Strategy Paper and Programme of Work 2022-24.
- The OECD WGI will coordinate with UN agencies and partners towards the UN 2023 Water Conference. In particular, the WGI aims to contribute to the governance accelerator framework, special and side events and celebrate the 10 years of the WGI during the OECD Water days in March 2023.
- The 18th meeting of the WGI will take place on 5-6 July at the OECD Headquarters in Paris.

Day 1: 19 September 2022

Opening remarks

Peter Glas, outgoing Chair of the OECD Water Governance Initiative and Delta Programme Commissioner of the Netherlands, opened the 17th meeting of the WGI and announced the official end of his mandate. Peter Glas has presided 15 WGI meetings since November 2013. As Chair, he championed amongst others the design and adoption of the OECD Principles on Water Governance (2015) and the [OECD Water Governance Indicator Framework \(2018\)](#) alongside a dedicated OECD review on [Water Governance in the Netherlands \(2014\)](#). He acknowledged the contributions of members, the dedication of the Steering Committee and of the Secretariat. The outgoing Chair thanked countries, cities and regions actively engaged in WGI activities, policy dialogues, publications, and case studies. He also expressed his gratitude to the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management of the Netherlands, and to the Association of Regional Water Authority for their support during his mandate.

Niels Vlaanderen, Coordinator of International Water Affairs, Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, Netherlands, welcomed delegates on behalf of the government of the Netherlands co-hosting the 17th meeting of the WGI. He thanked Peter Glas for the journey, his openness, and unwavering dedication to the Initiative. He recounted the creation of the WGI back in 2013, and its initial objective to create a space open to a diversity of stakeholders to discuss water governance and find sustainable solutions in the face of mounting water challenges due to climate change. Niels Vlaanderen stated that the UN 2023 Water Conference represents an opportunity to advance towards better water governance, building strong commitments across countries and stakeholders.

Aziza Akhmouch, Head of Division, Cities, Urban Policies and Sustainable Development, CFE, OECD, thanked Peter Glas for his leadership and commitment to the WGI and welcomed the new Chair, **Barbara Pompili**. She started her intervention by providing an update on the [9th World Water Forum](#) (21-26 March, Dakar). The WGI held over 24 thematic sessions, including panels on governance, finance, and science. These activities included a dedicated day on local and regional governments, which concluded with the [Action Plan of Mayors, Local and Regional Governments for Water Security](#) launched as part the [OECD/UCLG-Africa Roundtable of African Mayors for Water Security](#). She mentioned the launch of three specific outputs co-produced by WGI members over the last three years:

- The [OECD Guidance on How to Assess Water Governance](#), providing insights on how to apply the 10-step methodology of the [OECD Water Governance Indicator Framework](#).
- The Special Issue of the Water International Journal on [Measuring the Impacts of Water Governance](#), which collects 9 essays from academics from around the world to discuss the extent to which good water governance contributes to good outcomes for people, the planet and places, and how to measure such impacts.
- A [video](#) on the OECD Principles on Water Governance, produced with the support of **Let's Talk About Water**.

Aziza Akhmouch highlighted that the new WGI programme of work is starting during challenging times. The COVID-19 pandemic followed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine are having major political, economic, and social consequences for citizens across the globe. The [OECD Economic Outlook](#) (September 2022) shows the global impacts of the war on inflation, commodity markets, food, energy security, and supply chains. The OECD projects global GDP growth to slow to around 3% in 2022 and remain at a similar pace in 2023. She also provided updates on OECD's relevant work such as the [OECD Hub on Ukraine](#), which brings together latest insights, analysis, and data on the policy challenges ahead.

Aziza Akhmouch informed members on the OECD broader work relevant for the WGI members:

- The OECD opened accession discussions for membership to the OECD with Brazil, Bulgaria, Croatia, Peru, and Romania;
- The OECD's [International Programme for Action on Climate \(IPAC\)](#) launched in May 2021 aims to identify a preliminary set of indicators to evaluate countries' progress, and policy recommendations in support of achieving climate goals;
- The [G20-OECD Policy Toolkit to Mobilise Funding and Financing for Inclusive and Quality Infrastructure Investment in Regions and Cities](#) (November 2022) provides an overarching framework that can be of relevance to water supply and sanitation (WSS) infrastructure;
- The ongoing development of the OECD Council Recommendation on Regional Development, where the acquis/principles on water governance will be reflected.

Aziza Akhmouch also mentioned broader OECD work on oceans and the blue economy, which links SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation) and SDG 14 (Life below water), recalling that ocean health starts with freshwater health. She added that the [Special Event on Localising Action for the Ocean of the United Nations Ocean Conference](#) (co-organised by the OECD) held at the [UN Ocean Conference](#) (Lisbon, Portugal; 27 June – 1 July 2022) allowed for the first time local, regional governments and their networks to voice their role and practices in the ocean and blue economy. The OECD carried out a Global survey on [Cities and Regions for a Blue Economy](#) and shared preliminary results at the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference ([COP27](#)).

She concluded by notifying members on the launch of a [Global Commission on the Economics of Water](#) sponsored by the Netherlands and listed latest OECD reports on water, including :

- [Managing and Financing Water for Growth in Thailand: Highlights of a National Dialogue on Water \(2022\)](#), launched in Bangkok (Thailand), on 4 July 2022;
- [Towards Sustainable Water Services in Estonia: Analyses and Action Plan \(2022\)](#), launched in September 2022 in collaboration the European Commission DG Reform;
- [Reform of Water Supply and Wastewater Treatment in Lithuania: Practical Options to Foster Consolidation of Utilities \(2022\)](#), launched in September 2022 in collaboration the European Commission DG Reform;
- [Financing a Water Secure Future \(2022\)](#) released in March 2022.

Barbara Pompili, Chair of the OECD Water Governance Initiative, thanked Peter Glas for chairing the WGI for a decade and acknowledged his important legacy. The new Chair expressed her enthusiasm for taking over the Chairmanship of the WGI and her determination to start the next Programme of Work. She officially welcomed 70 members in presence and 40 members online. She highlighted that this was the first in-presence meeting since the [14th meeting](#) and the first hybrid meeting of the WGI after the COVID-19 pandemic.

She opened her mandate as the new Chair of the OECD Water Governance Initiative by tracing back her professional background. Born in Picardie, a county (*département*) located in the Hauts-de-France region of France, around the Somme River, Barbara Pompili worked on water-related issues as Secretary of State for biodiversity of France (February 2016 - May 2017) and as Minister for the Ecological Transition (July 2020 - May 2022). She contributed to the [Law for the regeneration of biodiversity, nature and landscapes](#),

which changed the composition of river basin committees and Water Agency boards by increasing the representation of non-economic water users. During her mandate as Minister for the Ecological Transition, she contributed to set new ambitions for adaptation and resilience to climate change in river basins management by supporting nature-based solutions. During the pandemic, the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) of the French government, [France Relance](#), facilitated access to funding for the renewal of water and sanitation infrastructure. The Chair expressed her appreciation of the work carried out by the WGI so far, highlighting the diversity of its representation and its ability to tackle essential water-related issues. Finally, she expressed her willingness, together with WGI members, to raise the profile of good water governance for sustainable development over the coming two years.

The Chair continued by thanking the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management for their support in preparing and co-hosting the meeting and for their warm welcome. She then welcomed and introduced 21 new members, namely: Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS); Arup; French Water Partnership; Geological and Mining Research office (BRGM); International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre (IGRAC); Let's Talk About Water (LTAW); Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI); Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration, Romania; Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests, Romania; Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, Colombia; Ministry of Environment, Finland; Nordic Innovation; Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, Romania; The Global Centre on Adaptation (GCA); United Cities and Local Governments Africa (UCLG Africa); UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO); University of California Davis, Centre for Watershed Sciences, United States; University of Dortmund, Department of Spatial Planning, Research Group Land Policy and Land Management, Germany; University of Glasgow, Centre for Water Policy, Initiative for Environment and Sustainability (IES), United Kingdom; Water and Energy of Porto, Portugal; the World Bank.

The Chair reminded delegates of background documents disseminated prior to the meeting such as [the agenda](#), the [list of participants](#), the Strategy and Programme of Work (2022-2024), the revised scoping note of the [OECD project Cities and Regions for a Blue Economy](#), and the Action Plan of Mayors, Local and Regional Governments for Water Security.

The Chair provided an overview of the agenda for the two days. The first day would focus on providing updates on the WGI's contribution to global agendas since the [16th meeting](#) in January, and on establishing a consensus on the proposed WGI Strategy and Programme of Work (2022-2024). The second day would focus on the WGI's contribution to the [UN 2023 Water Conference](#), to be held in March 2023 in New York City, United States.

Update on WGI contributions to global agendas and water governance research

This session provided updates on key WGI contributions to global agendas and research work related to water governance. **The Chair** gave the floor to members of the WGI Steering Committee to share the outcomes of major water events occurred in 2022.

Pierre-Alain Roche, Honorary President, Technical and Scientific Association for Water and the Environment of France (ASTEE), presented major outcomes of the 9th World Water Forum (21-26 March, Dakar, Senegal), such as the UNESCO campaign on [Groundwater: Making the invisible visible](#) and the launch of the [International High-Level Panel on Water Investments for Africa](#). Pierre-Alain underscored the increasing support for innovative financing models in the water sector, including the financing of nature-based solutions. He recalled that the WGI launched the Guidance on [How to Assess Water Governance](#) and the Special Issue of Water International on [Measuring the Impacts of Water Governance](#). The OECD and UCLG-Africa launched the Roundtable of African Mayors for Water Security to raise the profile and boost the capacity of local leaders in driving water security for sustainable development, and the Action Plan of Mayors, Local and Regional Governments for Water Security, which provides 12 concrete actions

based on the OECD Principles on Water Governance to support local and regional governments towards water security.

Alejandro Jiménez, Water Lead, Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), recalled that [Stockholm World Water Week](#) (23 August–1 September, Stockholm, Sweden) was held under the theme “Seeing the unseen: the value of water”, welcoming over 5 400 participants from 150 countries (2 000 people on site and 3 200 online). Alejandro expressed his satisfaction with the participation of youth, as around 30% of participants were aged under 35, against 1% of participants in 2016. The event hosted around 300 sessions, addressing amongst others water and climate, financing strategies, and resilience. Several sessions drew special attention to the role of cities, sustainable water management and groundwater. He stressed the need to turn these efforts into transformative changes for water governance.

Eric Tardieu, Secretary General, International Network of Basin Organisations (INBO), reported on the outcomes of the [2nd International High-Level Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” \(2018-2028\)](#) (6-9 June, Dushanbe, Tajikistan). The event was co-hosted by the governments of the Netherlands and Tajikistan. Eric Tardieu highlighted that water governance was a central theme and many topics were related to the OECD Principles on Water Governance. For example, the panel “*Promoting Integrated Water Resources Management*”, co-organised by The Netherlands, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Global Water Partnership (GWP) and other WGI member organisations concluded with the need to address water management at the appropriate scale within basin systems. During the plenary session “*Catalysing Water Action and Partnership at the Local, National, Regional and Global Levels*”, panellists pointed out the need to advance transboundary water cooperation, foster inter-sectoral partnerships, and raise public awareness on shared benefits from such cooperation. He announced the European Union [Team Europe Initiative](#) to address governance issues and go beyond infrastructural projects. Eric Tardieu concluded by sharing the [Final Declaration from Dushanbe 2022 to New York 2023](#) and the [list of commitments](#) issued after the conference.

Oriana Romano, Head of Unit, Water Governance and Circular Economy, OECD, reported on the outcomes of the COP26 (31 October-13 November 2021, Glasgow, United Kingdom). For the first time, a [Water Pavilion](#) raised the profile of water in the climate adaptation and mitigation agenda, with more than 100 sessions on water across 11 themes. In particular, the [OECD Water Governance Programme](#) contributed to the session [A net-zero circular water future for cities](#) to discuss the role of urban water and wastewater utilities in reducing GHG emissions and increasing cost recovery. The session was organised with Arup, the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) GmbH, Nature Conservation, the Federal Ministry of the Environment (BMU), Germany and the 50L Home Coalition. In collaboration with UCLG-Africa and the African Development Bank, the OECD held a session on [Aligning Practice, Policy, and Priorities through an Urban Water Resilience Agenda for Africa](#). The aim of this session was to accelerate urban water resilience and raise cities and region’s key role in safeguarding local populations from water risks and securing access to well-managed water resources. A session on [Women in Water Decision-Making](#) was held as a part of a side event of COP26.

Tour de table on WGI members’ events and research

The Chair stressed the importance for WGI members to attend COP27 to raise water-related issues in climate dialogues. The Chair thanked speakers and invited delegates to take the floor to provide updates on past and forthcoming events, as well as to share information on recent publications.

Lesha Witmer, Member of the Steering Committee, Women for Water Partnership (WfWP), and Butterfly Effect, presented the recent report [With women, better results in water management](#), which involved a collaboration with the OECD Water Governance Programme. The report shows that the women participation in decision-making processes improves performances within and beyond the water sector.

Angie Saleh, Partnerships Specialist, Sanitation and Water for All (SWA), informed delegates that during the 9th World Water Forum, SWA launched the [Water & Sanitation: Realizing Human Rights and Achieving Sustainable Development Goals, A Handbook for Parliamentarians](#) in partnership with the Water Integrity Network (WIN). The Handbook aims to help parliamentarians ensure effective water and sanitation services for the communities they serve. SWA also organised the [2022 Sector Ministers' Meeting \(SMM\)](#) hosted by the government of Indonesia (18-19 May 2022, Jakarta) welcoming 53 ministers, 57 government delegations, 3 vice-presidents, with more than 350 people attending in person. It provided a space for leaders around the world to meet and find innovative ways to work together to increase the political prioritisation of water, sanitation, and hygiene. It also aims at ensuring the integration of these services in national climate, health, and economic policies and strategies. This event was set up as one of the preparatory events for the UN 2023 Water Conference and addressed several issues such as financing the water sector. On 15 September 2022, SWA launched the report [Developing Water, Sanitation and Hygiene \(WASH\) Finance Strategies: A Guide](#) together with UNICEF, the French Agency for Development (AFD) and IRC Water and Sanitation Centre. Moreover, at the Stockholm World Water Week, SWA launched the [Justice Begins Here](#) campaign based on a global study inquiring about external perceptions of individuals outside the WASH sector and their perspectives on the water and sanitation sectors. SWA organised water, sanitation, and hygiene sessions at COP 27 to deliver cutting edge water solutions for effective climate action.

Conchita Marcuello, Coordinator of International Issues, Directorate General of Water, Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge, Spain, shared that the Spanish government organised water governance-related sessions at the 9th World Water Forum. Spain also contributed to the 2nd International High-Level Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development" (2018-2028) highlighting the importance of improving inclusiveness in water governance as part of the Secretariat of the Ibero-American Water Directors (CODIA). Conchita Marcuello also mentioned the [V InterCodia Meeting](#), the Conference of Ibero-American Water Directors, held on 27-29 July in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, to address issues related to water management in the region. In addition, the Ministry co-organised the [Mediterranean Water Week](#) (23 September, Valencia, Spain) with the Júcar Hydrographic Confederation, the Department of the Integral Water Cycle of the City Council of Valencia and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation, to boost the integration of non-conventional water resources in the Mediterranean and Sahel region.

Filipe Sampaio, General Director, National Water and Sanitation Agency of Brazil (ANA), shared that the recent collaboration between the OECD and the ANA during 2020-22 led to the publication of the OECD report [Fostering Water Resilience in Brazil: Turning Strategy into Action](#), available both in English and [Portuguese](#). The report builds on capacity-building workshops that engaged more than 200 stakeholders and international experts on water infrastructure, governance, and sanitation. Following the OECD recommendations, Filipe Sampaio detailed some of the agency's priority tasks to foster resilience thinking, integrate data collection planning and enhance multi-level governance. He concluded by informing delegates that the ANA is now responsible for sanitation regulatory oversight, which will require to establish a better coordination with subnational authorities to deliver reference standards for the sector, to rethink skills settings, and the funding strategy.

Dominique Darmendrail, Waters and Global Changes Scientific Programme Director, Office of Geological and Mining Research (BRGM), informed WGI members of the two research funding programmes undertaken by BRGM: [OneWater - Water as a Common Good](#) funded by the French government and the [Water4All-Water Security for the Planet](#) programme. The latter started in June 2022 and is co-funded by 32 EU and non-EU countries, and the European Commission. Both programmes address the question of current water resources management models in face of global change. Dominique Darmendrail also drew attention on the need to address governance at the basin level, beyond the municipal level. As a member of Water Europe, a network of water experts, she mentioned that a new

white paper on how to build effective water dialogues and international cooperation in water innovation will be issued.

Sasha Koo-Oshima, Deputy Director of the Land and Water Division, UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), updated members on the work undertaken by FAO on water tenure. In particular, the report on [Water and agriculture. An issues note produced for the G20 Presidency of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia](#) published in 2021, provides recommendations on how G20 countries can improve water governance and practices in agriculture, bolster the resilience of farmers facing water-related risks and reduce the impact of agriculture on water quality. The FAO held various meetings at the Stockholm World Week, highlighting the importance of enhancing dialogues with indigenous populations and most disadvantaged groups. In addition, the [Rome Water Dialogue](#) (29 November 2022, hybrid) aimed at strengthening the inter-sectoral coordination on sustainable water resources management and accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In the context of COP27, Sasha Koo-Oshima announced that the FAO would continue to work to enhance drought mitigation preparation and financing.

Joep Verhagen, Program Lead for Water and Urban, Global Centre on Adaptation (GCA) shared that the GCA organised the [Africa Adaptation Summit 2022](#) (5 September 2022), which was attended by African leaders at the national level and the Dutch Prime Minister to call for adaptation action in Africa. While the African continent emits 3% of total greenhouse gases, it is hardly hit by the impacts of climate change. The Summit also called on the international community to conclude on commitments made to finance adaptation and climate action in Africa. Joep Verhagen finally emphasised that GCA is actively carrying out projects in Chad, Liberia, and Senegal.

Dani Gaillard-Picher, Senior Specialist, Global Water Partnership (GWP), introduced the [Integrated Water Management Action Hub](#) launched at the 9th World Water Forum. The Hub is a global knowledge platform, supporting national governments and various stakeholders to implement IWRM by sharing good practices, knowledge, and expertise. This adds to the [SDG 6 IWRM Support Programme](#) coordinated by the GWP in collaboration with the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), UNEP-DHI Centre and Cap-Net, which conducts integrated water security diagnosis and identifies IWRM responses via SDG 6.5. This Programme has supported 72 countries to date. Dani Gaillard-Picher recalled that at COP26, GWP co-hosted an event with the International Management Water Institute (IMWI) at the Water Pavilion on “*Securing a good harvest: gender, climate, and food in Cameroon*”, in line with the GWP’s strategy on gender transformational processes. On that matter, the GWP has produced a report called [Understanding and advancing towards gender mainstreaming in Integrated Water Resources Management](#), along with online courses on [Gender and IWRM](#) offered in collaboration with [Cap-Net UNDP](#) and the Gender and Water Alliance (GWA). Dani Gaillard-Picher concluded by mentioning three initiatives:

1. [The Water Tracker for National Climate Planning](#), a tool elaborated to help enhance policy coherence across climate, water, and other sectoral policies, conducted through the Adaptation Action Coalition in cooperation with AGWA.
2. The [Glasgow Declaration on Fair Water footprints](#), addressing how water is used in developing countries considering impacts in terms of production chains and the export of those products to water rich countries from water poor countries.
3. The [Resilient Water Accelerator](#), a coalition formed to accelerate financial flows and ensure water security for at least 50 million people most impacted by climate change, which is born from the [Sustainable Markets initiative](#).

Yumiko Asayama, Manager, Japan Water Forum, shared the outcomes of the [4th Asia-Pacific Water Summit](#). The summit aimed at sharing forward-looking solutions and practices with 18 heads of states and 30+ countries towards a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable water management. As such, the [Kumamoto Initiative for Water](#) resulted from the Japan Prime Minister’s decision to address climate change adaptation and mitigation for better quality growth in the Asia-Pacific area. The Summit led to the adoption of the

[Kumamoto Declaration](#), which is expected to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the 9th World Water Forum, the [Japan Water Forum](#) focused on localising multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable, resilient and inclusive water resources management in Asia.

Elisabeth Lictevout, Director, International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre (IGRAC), recalled that in recognition of “groundwater” being the theme of the 2022 [World Water Day](#), UN-Water, UNESCO and IGRAC will hold the [Groundwater Summit](#) in Paris on 7-8 December 2022. Plenary sessions of this high-level event aim to boost the SDG 6 acceleration framework and shed light on the topic. The Summit will conclude with a statement, which will be brought to the UN 2023 Water Conference to trigger commitments and improve groundwater management.

Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi, Secretary General, United Cities and Local Governments Africa (UCLG Africa), stressed the need to organise a forum of cities and territories for climate and resilience in the framework of COP27 and expressed his wish for WGI delegates to support this idea. Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi reminded that there should be a space in every water meeting for local and regional governance, as it was the case at the 9th World Water Forum in Dakar. He also expressed his satisfaction with the launch of the OECD-UCLG-Africa Roundtable of African Mayors for Water Security. Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi also announced that UCLG Africa had become a new member of the Steering Committee for the [Africa Adaptation Summit](#).

Ignacio Deregibus, Deputy Executive Director, International Water Resources Association (IWRA), announced that the [XVIII edition of the World Water Congress](#) will be held on 11-15 September 2023 in Beijing, People's Republic of China, in partnership with the General Institute of Water Resources (GIW). The Congress will be held under the theme “Water for all: harmony between humans and nature” and address 6 main topics: Water-Human-Economy-Ecology Nexus under a Changing Environment; Promoting Water Efficiency, Productivity and Service; Building Resilience for Disaster Prevention and Mitigation; Supporting Aquatic Ecosystem Health and Functions; Establishing Sustainable Water Infrastructures; Innovation for Water Governance and Management. Ignacio Deregibus added that IWRA's latest special issue on [Measuring the Impacts of Water Governance](#) was published in February 2022.

Kate Strachan, Manager of Climate Change Resilience, Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) Africa, shared that ICLEI water projects have grown 40% in the last year, and that work on coastal cities and the blue economy has also expanded. ICLEI carries out its water agenda through advocacy and capacity development through the [CitiesWithNature](#) initiative. She additionally mentioned the [Urban Natural Assets for Africa \(UNA\)](#) community of practice led by [ICLEI's Cities Biodiversity Centre](#). Regarding upcoming events, ICLEI will hold a session on water resilience with Bloomberg Philanthropies during [Climate Week NYC](#) (18-24 September, New-York, 2023). ICLEI also organises its own flagship event, [Daring Cities](#), with a strong focus on building resilience and looking at the water agenda. Kate Strachan provided information on ICLEI sessions at COP27: [Building urban water Resilience in Africa: Accelerating investment and catalysing for Impact](#), [Building urban resilience in Africa: Harnessing nature-based solutions](#) and [Urban Africa in Action at COP27](#). In addition, ICLEI will hold a special two-day event as part of the [Biodiversity COP 15](#) focusing on nature-based solutions related to water.

Barbara Schreiner, Executive Director, Water Integrity Network (WIN), shared information on the [Utility Integrity Scan](#) to assess the level of integrity practices in utilities. In the water and sanitation sector specifically, integrity management can support improved service delivery, build trust with users, and reduce costly risks of corruption or unethical behaviour. She also mentioned the paper “[What is sextortion and what does it have to do with water and sanitation?](#)”. Sextortion is still an under-recognised form of corruption in the water sector where women are essentially forced to pay for water with their bodies. Finally, she announced that the Water Integrity Global Outlook planned for 2024 will focus on integrity in financing water and sanitation. She asked if WGI members would be keen to make contributions to the Outlook and/or share ideas on practices to improve integrity and reduce corruption.

Letizia Zuliani, Project Assistant on Water Management, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) explained that OSCE activities focus on water security and transboundary water cooperation, mostly in Central Asia, South Caucasus, Eastern Europe, and South-Eastern Europe. For instance, the OSCE supported the establishment of the River Basin Commission between Ukraine and Moldova and helped develop a strategic action plan, although both initiatives are now on hold due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The OSCE started assessing environmental impacts of the war to support the government of Ukraine, with specific attention to water impacts such as water access in critical infrastructure (e.g., nuclear power plants). She also introduced two recent initiatives: the report [Regional Factsheets on Women in Water Management in Central Asia - Transboundary Water Resources](#) and the co-organisation of a session during the Stockholm World Water Week with SIWI (Stockholm International Water Institute) on [Water co-operation for strengthening peace, security and sustainability](#).

Antti Rautavaaran, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland, first clarified his role as a special envoy for water of the Finnish Foreign Service and as a representative of six ministries in Finland with a water mandate in the international fields. He shared the [Finnish Water Way – International Water Strategy](#) elaborated to advance on the SDG6 at the global scale. He reminded that Finland co-authored with Egypt a cross-regional statement on water at the [UN High-level Meeting on Water](#) (18 March 2021, New York, United States) signed by 176 countries.

Adrian Sym, Chief Executive, Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS), introduced the AWS, a network gathering around 170 organisations from private, public, and non-profit sectors. The network held the [AWS Global Water Stewardship Forum](#) (17-19 May 2022, Edinburgh) to share experiences from major water users who are implementing the [International Water Stewardship Standard](#) (AWS Standards) to assess their water use and impacts. He added that good water governance was one of the outcomes of the AWS Standards. The AWS aims at fostering connections between partners across levels of government and sectors, in line with the WGI's strategic focus.

Kevin Collins, Senior Lecturer, Environment & Systems, Open University, highlighted two publications on systemic approaches to water governance: i) [Living Labs as an Approach to Strengthen Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems](#); ii) [Characterising water sensitive cities through inquiry-based learning systems](#). Kevin Collin will also take part in a research project on climate-smart farming in Europe. His role will consist in developing the monitoring and evaluation framework for assessing the effectiveness of that approach and boost innovative practices within farming communities.

Dirk Halet, Strategic Coordinator, Flanders Knowledge Centre Water (Vlakwa), VITO, updated members on the outcomes of the [IWA World Water Congress](#) held in September 2022. Participants concluded that technology could tackle many challenges but could not address alone climate change and microbial resistance related risks. For instance, the Chief Climate Officer of the City of New York shared insights on how the city plans to speed up procurement procedures to ramp up investment. Regarding financing and business models, concrete evolutions in digitalisation were observed but associated with a risk of "surveillance capitalism". Dirk Halet added that discussions on capacity and knowledge focused on social resilience. The next IWA World Water Congress will be held in Toronto, Canada on 11-15 August 2024.

Gustavo Saltiel, Lead Water and Sanitation Specialist, World Bank, mentioned that the World Bank has a water portfolio of USD 30 billion. These resources allow the Bank to undertake initiatives and draw valuable lessons resulting from the implementation process of these endeavours. The World Bank has recently undertaken the [Policies, Institutions and Regulation](#) (PIR) initiative, which aims to help governments amid growing shocks and stresses in the water sector. In addition, the [Country Climate and Development Report \(CCDR\)](#), is a diagnostic report identifying the main pathways to towards a low-carbon and resilient transition. Gustavo Saltiel shared information on a forthcoming global report entitled "Water security, climate change jobs, trade and economic transformation" that will assess the impacts of water scarcity compounded by climate change. The report will be launched at the COP28.

Audrey Legat, Advisor/Consultant on Water and Marine Governance, Deltares, shared that Deltares launched a report on [Guiding Principles for Drought Risk Management under a Changing Climate](#) at the 9th World Water Forum on behalf of the High-level Experts and Leaders Panel on Water and Disasters (HELP), and of the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water management. At the Stockholm World Water Week, Deltares launched together with the [Water, Peace and Security \(WPS\) partnership](#) an integrated approach to address water related security risks. Deltares is also increasingly developing activities around the blue economy at local and national levels. Audrey invited members to work collectively and explore possibilities of raising the profile of this topic, which links SDG 6 and SDG 14.

WGI Strategy and Programme of Work 2022-24

The objective of this session was to discuss the main proposals for the 2022-24 WGI Strategy and Programme of Work.

Oriana Romano, Head of Unit, Water Governance and Circular Economy, OECD summarised key elements from the Strategy and Programme of Work and provided inputs for the discussion with members. She first highlighted the changing factors affecting water management, from climate change, demographic growth, and urbanisation to the COVID-19 pandemic, and more recently Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which have raised awareness on the importance of access to safe water and sanitation services, as well as the role of water for food and energy. According to the results of the Satisfaction Survey, carried out in May-June 2022, WGI members pointed out *climate resilience* and *adaptation* as the highest priority for water governance in the future. Respondents also highlighted the need to extend the WGI's geographical scope to areas such as Africa (64%), MENA (55%) Asia-Pacific (48%) and to give more attention to local governments.

She pointed out that the Secretariat had already started work in Africa and at the local level and keeps on enlarging the WGI membership to city umbrella organisations. She highlighted the role of the WGI as a platform fostering dialogue across levels of governments.

Oriana Romano presented the main proposals contained in the Strategy Paper 2022-24. As a priority, the document proposes to ensure the continuity and implementation of the OECD Principles on Water Governance through policy dialogues, self-assessments, and a global compendium of good water governance practices at the local level. The second priority is to build cutting-edge knowledge on water governance for climate transition, including through the blue economy and circular economy, coherently with Paris Agreement targets and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These two priorities are to be supported by a communication strategy, aiming also to increase the visibility of WGI activities and outcomes.

Oriana Romano concluded by providing an overview of the evolution of the previous programmes of work of the WGI, from vision (1st phase, 2013-15) to action (2nd phase, 2015-18) and implementation (3rd phase, 2019-21). The fourth phase of the WGI (2022-24) could focus on the "localisation" of water governance. This territorial lens would allow to demonstrate how the OECD Principles can help achieve water security; highlight the interaction across urban areas and basins within a functional approach; and find solutions to more effective, efficient and inclusive water governance, building on local knowledge and stakeholders' actions towards the [10th World Water Forum](#) (May 2024, Bali, Indonesia).

The Chair congratulated the Secretariat and the Steering Committee for the work on the paper and gave the floor to WGI members for reactions on the draft Strategy and Programme of Work (PoW).

Erik van Lith, Manager, Water & Energy, HaskoningDHV Nederland B.V., agreed with the proposals and with the main objectives of the 2022-24 PoW focusing on "localisation". Given the lack of data at the local level, he suggested to use Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) models to cope with data challenges and monitor the progress.

Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi, Secretary General, United Cities and Local Governments Africa (UCLG-Africa), agreed with the focus on “localisation”. He urged the WGI to embed localisation within a basin approach, as this is a major concern in Africa.

Colin Herron, Global Coordinator, Water Solutions for the SDGs, Global Water Partnership (GWP), underlined the great dependency of the local level on the national level. He reminded that national governments are responsible for reporting and advancing on the SDG agenda, and he highlighted the need to make connection to the SDG framework beyond SDG 6, as well as to create synergies with a broader set of UN partners.

Susana Neto, Professor, University of Lisbon, Civil Engineering Research for Innovation and Sustainability (CERIS), Portugal, suggested that the WGI should step into another level of influence by building realistic assessments of policy effectiveness, and explaining why initiatives do not translate into concrete results. At the national level, she conveyed the idea that all members could act as agents of change by raising Ministers and policy-makers awareness on available solutions for water management.

Linda Lilienfeld, Founder and Director, Let’s Talk About Water, mentioned that the “localisation” lens could benefit from simplifying the language used to reach local populations. She also suggested to produce 12 short videos for each [OECD Principle](#) on Water Governance as a follow-up to the [video](#) presenting the Principles.

Dirk Halet, Strategic Coordinator, Flanders Knowledge Centre Water (Vlakwa), VITO, confirmed the need to improve the communication strategy through storytelling to ensure that ideas properly trickle down to society, making people eager to act upon them.

Michael Eichholz, Water Policy Expert, Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR) expressed his support of the Strategy and PoW, especially on the localisation aspect. Regarding policy coherence, he proposed to adopt new approaches to climate change, adaptation, and water by thinking across sectors. He further stretched on the importance of water resources management for cities and agriculture since agricultural water use is expected to increase in the face of climate change.

Marie-Hélène Aubert, Chair of the Working Group on Biodiversity and Nature-based Solutions, French Water Partnership (FWP), mentioned the important link between small and large water cycles that could be better reflected in the Strategy and PoW. She also recalled the need to provide tools to increase local actors’ capacity to face severe droughts or floods in large cities, most of them located near deltas or estuaries. Marie-Hélène Aubert flagged the lack of human and financial means to support the implementation of good management practices. She stressed the need for more investments, including from the private sector, to generate financial stability and allow efficient operation and maintenance of local infrastructure.

Laura Tanco Ballesteros, Head of Technical Service, Jucar River Basin Authority, Spain, agreed on the need for a strengthened focus on river basins, not just cities. She also endorsed the idea of paying particular attention to agriculture and its impacts on water resources.

Dominique Darmendrail, Waters and Global Changes Scientific Programme Director, Office of Geological and Mining Research (BRGM), France, supported previous observations on the need for a holistic approach linking river basins, and territories at the local level. Dominique also raised the question of how to identify the innovation or the knowledge that could be useful at different levels of government. Finally, she pointed out that delivering relevant data to decision-makers is indispensable for local actors’ acceptance when implementing new policies.

Sasha Koo-Oshima, Deputy Director of the Land and Water Division, UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), suggested to monitor the link between cities and urban territorial development by interconnecting all SDGs through the lens of the IWRM. She provided an update on FAO’s most recent activities. The FAO attempts to address agricultural water consumption by monitoring evapotranspiration,

since agriculture globally extracts about 72% of the freshwater resources worldwide. In collaboration with the Dutch government, the FAO opened [WaPOR](#), a water portal on remotely sensed information, linking satellite data with weather data and biomass. The portal gives access to valuable data allowing the identification of water-intensive crops. This analytical process is called “water accounting” or “water audits”, referring to water governance and tenure processes.

Marina Takane, Technical Officer of Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Health Unit, World Health Organization (WHO), recalled that the monitoring dimension should not be ignored, especially since it can be challenging to supervise operations at local level. She also announced the launch of the UN-Water GLAAS report in December 2022, providing latest data on SDG 6.b. Finally, Marina Takane asked how the WGI and the [OECD Roundtable on Financing Water](#) link up.

Peter Gammeltoft, Independent Water Expert, expressed his satisfaction to see Principle 3 on Policy coherence and Principle 4 on Capacity remaining priorities for the WGI. He regretted that, very often, the lack of policy coherence and lack of technical, administrative, and financial capacity are important barriers for good water management. Nevertheless, basin, regional and urban water authorities are under great pressure due to legal and macroeconomic constraints. To comply with the SDGs and adapt to climate change, Peter Gammeltoft suggested to put forward the creation of macroeconomic and legal frameworks that are compatible with this priority, and to make this more explicit in the PoW priorities.

Yumiko Asayama, Japan Water Forum, Japan, agreed with the focus on the localisation and basin scale approach for water governance. However, she argued that local activities are also strongly connected to the national institutional framework, hence the importance of continuing to deliver policy recommendations at the national level. She suggested it may be useful to review what OECD member countries are doing for localising institutional policymaking for water management and for addressing climate adaptation and mitigation.

Elisabeth Lictevout, Director, International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre (IGRAC), first explained that groundwater boundaries do not always match basins areas, reflecting the need to involve several stakeholders, especially when groundwater bodies are transboundary. Second, she noted that many water stakeholders acknowledged the gap between science and policy and asked how science could better inform policymaking.

Katrin Bruebach, Global Director, Programs, Innovation and Impact, Resilient Cities Network, suggested to investigate the just transition alongside the climate one. She expressed her appreciation for the localisation aspect of the PoW, stressing that cities are not only looking at service provision in the context of water and sanitation but are also aware of their dependence on basins to secure adequate water resources. Cities are in urgent need of tools and strategic approaches that can help them design solutions in the face of multiple challenges. Katrin Bruebach further elaborated on the importance of taking transformative action in a systemic manner and help cities connect to their rural neighbours and hinterlands. She concluded by expressing satisfaction with the work done on the OECD-UCLG-Africa Roundtable of African Mayors for Water Security.

Caroline Figueres, Strategic Advisor Water, Figueres Consultancy, first stressed that everyone is an agent of change, adding that water governance is not just a water issue, but also a management issue. Second, recalling her work activities in Africa, she alerted on the huge lack of data and recalled that local authorities are also important data and information providers. She suggested that the WGI could explore this aspect further.

Herman Havekes, Strategic Advisor, Dutch Water Authorities (UWV), congratulated the OECD Secretariat for the concise and clear Strategy Paper and Programme of Work. He mentioned that the Dutch Water Authorities' [Blue Deal](#) will allow 20 million people around the world to have safe and secure waters by 2030. The Programme relies on long-term partnerships, mostly with national and regional authorities responsible for water management. The Dutch Water Authorities collaborates on knowledge and expertise,

organisational management, and collaboration with stakeholders. Herman Havekes added that the Dutch Water Authorities works peer-to-peer with water authorities at the regional level and will rely on the OECD Principles on Water Governance to assess the programme every two years.

John Dini, Water Governance Research Manager, South African Water Research Commission (WRC), suggested to put a stronger focus on developing countries. Regarding “localisation”, John Dini stated that it would imply looking within but also between scales.

Kate Strachan, Manager of Climate Change Resilience, Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), raised the importance of ensuring that national and local strategies are aligned, as they condition financing flows from national governments to local ones. She also pinpointed the need to support the preparation phase of projects, before implementation, to help attract climate finance.

Lesha Witmer, Member of the Steering Committee, Women for Water Partnership (WfWP), suggested to clarify the definition of “localisation”. She suggested to explicitly refer to “citizen science” and data collection, considering the need for data and better data accessibility. Regarding the communication strategy, she suggested to investigate methods that would allow those without web access to be informed about activities and outputs. She concluded by underlining difficulties to leverage fundings and monitor investments at the local level.

Breakout group discussion on the WGI 2022-24 Strategy and Programme of Work

The Chair introduced the next session in which delegates gathered in 6 parallel breakout groups (one of which online) facilitated by their respective moderators. Groups 1 – 3 – 5 focused on “Implementation of the OECD Principles on Water Governance”. Groups 2 – 4 – 6 focused on “Water governance and Climate change” for 2019-2021. Each group discussed: 1) objectives and priorities; 2) methodology; and 3) expected outcomes towards the 10th World Water Forum.

The Chair invited rapporteurs to provide a summary of discussions and outcomes of their respective group.

Group 1 (Audrey Legat, Deltares) reported that the intrinsic value of the WGI is largely recognised. However, the level of implementation of the objectives by members and the monitoring could be clarified. In particular, the reason for choosing the priority and the targets should be clarified. Members asked further questions: what to work on and how? More precisely, how to put the strategy into practice and go beyond the assessment? Regarding the methodology, it was suggested to highlight the importance of water across sectors. Regarding the communication strategy, the group suggested: i) to make illustrations and short videos for each of the Principles; ii) to develop a more specific communication strategy, and iii) to better update WGI members on countries’ activities for them to disseminate the information.

Group 2 (Martin Shouler, Arup) expressed the need for members to better define the concept of “just transition” and to better understand their role in that transition, as well as to clarify the definition of “localisation”, including all levels of government, from the national level to local communities. One of the main challenges is to ensure members’ alignments on a clear vision, clear objectives, and a clear agenda. It was proposed to reach new constituencies (e.g. insurance companies and donors) who might be interested in joining the conversation on water governance.

Group 3 (Zaki Shubber, AIDA) conveyed the importance of facilitating self-assessment exercises as a tool to support policy dialogues. The group questioned how to strengthen capacities to undertake this process for volunteers unfamiliar with this exercise and suggested creating a community of practitioners that would share experience and guidance to that end. As such, it will be necessary to leverage more fundings to increase the level of capacity of practitioners to undertake these exercises. Towards the 10th World Water Forum, the group asked how the WGI could increase connections with other OECD teams

working on water-related issues. The Global Compendium could be leveraged to gather contributions from different OECD teams.

Group 4 (Kevin Collins, Open University) agreed on the importance of adopting systems thinking to promote policy coherence, addressing themes such as droughts, floods, and water quality. The discussion also raised the need to develop a stronger business case for water governance, identify data gaps and strengthen the capacity of excluded communities due to a lack of governance structures. Moreover, the term “cutting-edge” used in the Strategy was considered too technical. Simpler terms such as “innovation” and “solutions” were suggested.

Group 5 (Herman Havekes, Dutch Water Authority) recommended to raise awareness on water issues by targeting specific groups of individuals. It would be then useful to present the OECD Principles on Water Governance and demonstrate how they can be applied in practice. Group members also recommended looking for “champion” institutions, i.e. government institutions capable of bringing discussions on water governance forward. The power of peer-to-peer engagement and networks was recognised as an effective tool to share common concerns and stimulate dialogue. Towards the 10th World Water Forum, it was recommended to facilitate bottom-up conversations between multi-level governance structures and to use the Principles as an entry point of these discussions.

Group 6 (Susana Neto, University of Lisbon) emphasised the need to demonstrate and measure the impacts of water governance and achieving SDG6 at national and local levels. It was suggested to highlight the link between good water governance and good water management by collecting examples from local experiences. Regarding priorities, the group raised the need to pay more attention to sanitation and related institutions. To transform the Principles into political commitments, it was suggested that WGI members adopt a common charter, such as an endorsement letter, to advocate for good water governance.

The Chair gave the floor to members of the Steering Committee.

Pierre-Alain Roche, ASTEE, advised to reflect on needed tools for the implementation of the Strategy and PoW. These tools will need to be adapted to different contexts and audiences. He proposed to undertake new case studies to better understand “who is implementing” water policies and to analyse results from the implementation process. As a follow up on group discussions, he retrieved two main directions: to pursue the proposed “territorialisation” approach at urban-basin-national scales for water management; to integrate of water issues into the global urban sustainability agenda. For the communication strategy, Pierre-Alain Roche recommended identifying target audiences and to define the strategy based on these audiences. He commented on the relevance of breakout group discussions and the need to find new ways for collaborative work within the WGI to face the growth of the network.

Gari Villa-Landa Sokolova, AEAS, proposed that members having already used the Indicator Framework become “guides” for others and encouraged members to pursue reflections on how to further promote the use of existing tools.

Joannie Leclerc, SUEZ, noted the importance of giving room and time for new members of the WGI to assimilate the content developed over the past 10 years. She supported the proposal to have a common charter to better engage with constituencies and promote the OECD Principles. She also echoed a previous remark on the importance of using simpler language to reach a broader diversity of people.

Oriana Romano shared three take-away messages from the discussion, which all converge on the idea of interconnectedness. First, the WGI should continue “going beyond” the water community, as many delegates (e.g. ministries, universities, and city umbrella organisations) work on issues or with communities of practice that go beyond water. Second, the WGI will continue to foster policy coherence by highlighting the link between water, climate, biodiversity, waste, and economic growth, as it is already the case through the work on the blue economy and the circular economy. Oriana Romano invited delegates to submit any further suggestions on how to link water with other policies to revise the strategy paper. Third, on the connection between the local and national scale, the OECD is well-placed to foster dialogues and

synergies between these scales to improve water governance. Finally, Oriana Romano asked national representatives from Brazil, Spain, France, Hungary, Romania, and Estonia how they could contribute as new members, and how they could improve synergies with the local level. She added that conducting self-assessments of water governance systems could be a source of inspiration for governments to advance on their respective water policies.

The Chair informed that the Secretariat will work on a revised version of the 2022-24 Strategy Paper and Programme of Work to be shared with members for comments within the two weeks following the meeting. The final version of the paper will be submitted for comments to the OECD Regional Development Policy Committee. The Secretariat will also produce a brochure to synthesise the content of the Strategy and PoW.

Day 2: 20 September 2022

High-level panel: WGI for the United Nations 2023 Water Conference

Barbara Pompili, Chair of the OECD WGI, introduced the agenda of Day 2, focused on the road to the [UN 2023 Water Conference](#) (New York City, United States, March 2023). The Chair introduced the panellists of the high-level panel: **Mathilda Buijtendijk**, Director, Climate Adaptation and Water International (KAWI), Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management; **Aziza Akhmouch**, Head of Division, Cities, Urban Policies and Sustainable Development, OECD CFE; **Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi**, Secretary-General of UCLG-Africa; **Ed Anker**, Chair of Climate Adaptation, Association of Dutch Municipalities.

Mathilda Buijtendijk, Director, Climate Adaptation and Water International (KAWI), Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, Netherlands, thanked the Chair for having the opportunity to share information on the preparation of the UN 2023 Water Conference. She informed that the governments of the Netherlands and Tajikistan will co-host the conference with the support of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and UN-Water as Secretary of the conference. The approach towards the conference is based on three guiding principles:

- **Inclusive:** both in terms of the conference process (ensuring vertical and horizontal inclusiveness) and in terms of the results (leaving no-one behind).
- **Action-oriented:** the conference aims to lead to concrete results through effective actions and plans on the ground.
- **Cross-sectoral:** the conference should mobilise all sectors beyond water to improve the management of water resources. All related sectors need to bring their plans and actions to the conference.

Mathilda Buijtendijk highlighted that a key aim is to make commitments based on the [Water Action Agenda](#). She presented the themes for the interactive dialogues (Water for Health; Water for Development; Water for Climate; Water for Cooperation; Water Action Decade) building on the [Global Acceleration Framework to reach SDG 6](#). She concluded by expressing her confidence in WGI members' capacity to make the best use of this momentum and put water at the top of the global agenda.

The Chair thanked Mathilda Buijtendijk and congratulated the Dutch government for the impressive co-leadership of this conference along with the government of Tajikistan. She recalled the crucial role of water governance in this action-oriented conference and the need for "acceleration" since there are only eight years left until 2030 to achieve SDG 6.

Aziza Akhmouch, Head of Division, Cities, Urban Policies and Sustainable Development, CFE, OECD Secretariat, provided an overview of the three main lessons learned from almost a decade of OECD water work to identify potential contributions to the conference.

1. *Water is a driver for sustainable growth and development*, as water issues affect energy, security, food, health, etc. OECD work with countries such as [Mexico](#), [the Netherlands](#), [Korea](#) and [Brazil](#) showed that water is an economic concern both for developed and developing countries.

Megatrends linked to climate change, demographic pressures, ageing populations, migration, and urbanisation and digitalisation are compounding water risks. The distance of OECD member countries to the achievement of SDG 6 remains high, especially for targets related to water use efficiency, and water resource management.

2. *Solutions exist and are well-known; the real challenge is implementation.* The first lever towards implementation is good governance to regulate this highly fragmented and capital-intensive sector, tackle corruption issues, fix mismatches between scales, improve data collection, and increase funding capacity. In fact, financial flows remain way below needed levels to achieve water security. At the global scale, 2 billion people still lack access to safely managed drinking water services, over 3.6 billion lack access to sanitation services and floods generate over USD 120 billion in economic losses from urban property per year. In addition, global financing needs are estimated at over USD 1 trillion to achieve SDG 6 which is over 1.20% of global GDP. The [OECD Roundtable on Financing Water](#) draws upon political leadership and technical expertise to facilitate investments that contribute to water resilience and sustainable growth. It engages a diversity of stakeholders from developed, emerging, and developing economies (e.g. institutional investors, commercial banks, asset managers, impact investors) to design innovative financing solutions.
3. *Local and regional governments are game changers* as 65% of the 169 targets of [the 17 SDGs](#) cannot be achieved without local and regional governments. Reaching these goals requires finding place-based solutions outside the “water-box” and driving collective action across national, regional, and local governments. It also requires integrating energy, territorial development, housing policies, and solid waste management parameters. A concrete territorial approach is one that moves from a traditional, sectoral, top-down approach to a multi-sectoral, context-specific, and bottom-up approach.

Aziza Akhmouch concluded by addressing the cornerstone of the Strategy and Programme of work 2022-24: bridging local, regional, and national action, through the [Mayors, Local and Regional Governments' Action Plan for Water Security](#) that was adopted by 80+ Mayors and local leaders at the 9th World Water Forum, and specifically in Africa through the Roundtable of African Mayors for Water Security.

The Chair thanked Aziza Akhmouch for recalling the central role of the Action Plan of Mayors, Local and Regional Governments for Water Security and expressed her appreciation for the concept of place-based solutions to refer to “localisation”.

Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi, United Cities and Local Governments Africa, UCLG Africa, reflected on the meaning of a “territorial approach”. He mentioned that the OECD survey on [Water Governance in African Cities \(2021\)](#) undertaken across 36 cities of all sizes in Africa showed that local governments are not always effectively involved in water and sanitation policies. Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi advocated for cities and local government to be given more opportunities to intervene legally to guarantee access to water and sanitation services, especially to the most vulnerable. He reminded members that the OECD-UCLG-Africa Roundtable of African Mayors for Water Security will contribute to this endeavour by building capacities, fostering knowledge exchange, and collecting disaggregated data for decision-making.

Ed Anker, Chair, Climate Adaptation, Association of Dutch Municipalities, stated that although the Netherlands is well-known for its water management and has a long tradition of working with water, Dutch municipalities are new in this field. He shared a local initiative: the High-Water Brigade, in the city of Kampen, located in the north-west of the province of Overijssel. This city benefits from water wealth but is also confronted to water threats. Citizens volunteer for training sessions in the High-Water Brigade to help with dikes inspection and build walls to protect streets and squares from cloudbursts or heavy rainfall. To address these issues, the government of the Netherlands elaborated the [Delta Plan on Spatial Adaptation](#) in collaboration with Dutch municipalities. This programme makes it mandatory for municipalities to perform stress tests (rainfall, heatwaves) as an incentive for local governments to build more “blue-green” cities. It also helps municipalities to engage dialogue with citizens and industries on local vulnerabilities. Ed Anker

underscored that relying on large-scale engineering was no longer the only option to cope with the lack of housing and adapt houses to climate hazards and advocated instead for climate-resilient built infrastructure. For example, in the city of Zwolle, a new bicycle parking square doubles up as a water storage area in case of extreme rainfall or floods. The imminent priority at local level is to improve skills for on water safety management and climate adaptation within the urban fabric of cities.

Tour de table on WGI members' relevant work for the UN 2023 Water Conference

The Chair introduced the next session, a tour de table on WGI members' relevant work for the UN 2023 Water Conference to share recent examples of good water governance projects, initiatives, or research.

Dirk Halet, Strategic Coordinator, Flanders Knowledge Centre Water (Vlakwa), VITO, introduced [Transition Arena Water](#), a process elaborated in collaboration with partners from the region of Flanders and Belgium and the Netherlands. The aim of this arena is to understand how water, energy, food, and mobility systems interact, and to understand behavioural models (beliefs, opinions, cultural habits) that affect the water system. The Flanders Knowledge Centre Water works on art projects with artists and local experts in the city of Ghent (Belgium) and countries such as Croatia, Greece, and Netherlands to find creative solutions on how to tackle water issues. He added that culture is a communicative tool which can challenge the *status quo* and impact a broader spectrum of individuals.

Katrin Bruebach, Global Director, Programs, Innovation and Impact, Resilient Cities Network is willing to further explore how to bring city voices to the UN 2023 Water Conference.

Marina Takane, Technical Officer of Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Health Unit, World Health Organization (WHO), reiterated that the UN-Water GLAAS 2022 report will be launched in December 2022. It aims to provide insights into WASH systems and inputs into the preparation process for the UN 2023 Water Conference. The WHO will also publish GLAAS Country Highlights showcasing each country's investments and enabling environment for WASH on the [GLAAS data portal](#). Marina Takane added that the GLAAS data portal, an online interactive platform for visualising data, can be a useful resource for all stakeholders.

Michela Miletto, Coordinator/Director, UNESCO World Water Assessment Programme, introduced the two pillars of the [World Water Assessment Programme](#); i) the [United Nation World Water Development Report 2022 \(WWDR\)](#), the UN-Water flagship report on water and sanitation; ii) the [Toolkit of sex-disaggregated water data](#), including methodology, indicators, questionnaires, and the comprehensive regional capacity development for each subregion. For the UN 2023 Water Conference, UNESCO will launch the UN 2023 World Water Development Report, with water partnerships and cooperation as the main topics. The launch will occur on the first day of the conference during World Water Day. Second, UNESCO will raise awareness on water and gender topics through [Accelerating Gender Equality in the Water Domain: A Call for Action](#), an advocacy initiative that WAAP started in 2021 together with a large water and gender working group. The call is based on an assessment of progress on gender equality in the water sector over the past 25 years and on a set of concrete actions that need to be promptly implemented to achieve the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). These recommendations are fully supported by a global multi-stakeholder coalition consisting of 15 champion countries (such as Argentina, Costa Rica, Indonesia, Italy, Korea, Mexico, Netherlands, Nigeria, Slovenia, Spain, and Tajikistan), international and regional organisations, NGOs, academic research centres, and local women's associations. More than 150 members form this coalition and Michela invited interested WGI members to join it as well.

Joep Verhagen, Program Lead for Water and Urban, Global Centre on Adaptation (GCA), stated the past is no longer a predictor of the future because of the irregular impacts of climate change, referring to the presentation made by Ed Anker, Chair, as an example. For the UN 2023 Water Conference, GCA will

work with the [International Panel on Deltas and Coastal Areas \(IPDC\)](#), in collaboration with Deltares, Delta Airlines and the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management. The International Delta Panel provides countries with an understanding and supportive recommendations for climate adaptation on demand. The GCA will also host a series of online events gathering the water adaptation community, to enhance cross-sector connections between waterscapes (deltas, islands, coastal areas, cities in deltas).

Vera Eiró President of the Board of Directors, Water and Waste Services Regulation Authority (ERSAR), Portugal, informed of ERSAR's participation in the conference as an independent authority in the Portuguese delegation. She suggested two topics to feed into the conference discussion. First, the multi-scale connection in the water sector from a governance perspective (as regulatory entities should seek balance between central governments and local authorities), and second, the creation of a condominium, i.e. a space where stakeholders from different sectors can connect on water issues. In fact, improving urban water use requires to strengthen connections with other sectors such as agriculture and energy.

Kate Strachan, Manager of Climate Change Resilience, Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) Africa, called on members to raise the voice of cities in the conference. She recalled that during the [UN Ocean Conference](#), ICLEI together with the Resilient Cities Network and UCLG co-convened a [special event](#) for local cities and regional governments. ICLEI would be ready to reiterate the experience with the UN 2023 Water Conference by first exploring special events that could be possibly organised.

Sasha Koo-Oshima, Deputy Director of the Land and Water Division, UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), shared activities planned by FAO and UN-Water relevant for the UN 2023 Water Conference. FAO published a report on [the State of Land and Water for Food and Agriculture](#) and launched it at the [UN Convention for Combating Desertification \(UNCD\)](#) on 11 May 2022. The report provided an overview of the scale of land loss to agriculture and other land uses, mainly urban. Results show that nearly 319 million hectares of arable land globally have been eroded in the past ten years. In addition, FAO is developing drought management partnerships, such as the [Integrated Drought Management Programme \(IDMP\)](#) on drought monitoring and financing. In addition, FAO is working with financing institutions, notably the Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Funds to spur action on the ground.

Dirk Halet, Strategic Coordinator, Flanders Knowledge Centre Water (Vlakwa), VITO, highlighted implementation as the main barrier to good water governance and agreed with the importance of adopting a systems approach. He added that “too much”, “too little” and “too polluted water” should not overlook “too expensive water” as a major concern. Many countries are not able to implement available solutions for water security due to their cost. He raised the need to work on co-designing affordable solutions and expressed his willingness to increase the visibility of these solutions during the conference.

Eric Tardieu, General Director, International Network of Basin Organisations (INBO), agreed with Ed Anker that current challenges require both engineering solutions and cultural changes in water management practices.

Conchita Marcuello, Coordinator of International Issues, Directorate General of Water, Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge, Spain, explained that Spain works extensively on incorporating adaptation solutions (e.g. nature-based solutions) within integrated water management frameworks. Spain also wishes to exchange more experiences in the integration of non-conventional resources (e.g. desalination, water reuse). The government of Spain aims at leading increasing experiences on downscaling scenarios for modelling impacts of climate change on water resources. Spain is working on projects in Latin America to analyse SDG 6 indicators and find opportunities for improvements in institutional arrangements. The government also held a high-level event on water security at 9th World Water Forum, and one of the main conclusions of this meeting reflected on the lack of political regulations at national levels to face water security. Thus, capacity development can operate as a key accelerator to face challenges such as water scarcity and draughts.

Lesha Witmer, Member of the Steering Committee, WfWP, first presented the [Butterfly Effect](#), a global network gathering civil society and NGOs around the globe, which introduced a [policy position paper](#) at the 9th World Water Forum. She also mentioned the [Local Water Forum](#) organised in the city of Konstanz, Germany (28-30 November 2022) through the Stakeholder and Engagement Platform (SEP), a workstream of the World Water Quality Alliance (WWQA), dedicated to water quality issues and involving a wide range of stakeholders (e.g. chamber of commerce, local women organisations and local businesses) to share knowledge and experiences on water quality challenges. The WfWP aims to present, before 2023, recommendations on financing mechanisms to reach local women's groups, local youth, and local women's organisations, as financing often fails to reach groups that may need it most. Lesha Witmer informed members that the WfWP will hold a high-level event with women's organisations on water and sanitation during the [Commission on the Status of Women](#), a week before the UN 2023 Water Conference. The main objective of this high-level event is to raise awareness of water's key role in women's empowerment.

Linda Lilienfeld, Founder and Director, Let's Talk About Water, notified that she would be willing to host film programmes in New York City during the conference, and invited interested members to gather before the conference. She also suggested using Times Square's digital billboard to showcase the [OECD Principles on Water Governance \(2015\)](#), as James S. Famiglietti has done in the past to talk about groundwater depletion. Linda invited members to submit compelling film ideas before wishing everyone good luck with the conference.

Kevin Collins, Senior Lecturer, Environment & Systems, Open University, argued that building capacities on systemic thinking is key to reframe the dynamics of water governance. He suggested that the conference could be an opportunity to share a common message on this topic and proposed to offer online teaching courses as a way of exploring, with the Secretariat, possibilities to develop capacity for systems thinking linked to water governance.

Marie-Hélène Aubert, Chair of the Working Group on Biodiversity and Nature-based Solutions, French Water Partnership (FWP), confirmed that the FWP will actively participate in projects and initiatives coming from its 200 members towards the conference. She nevertheless argued that the conference should not be a "mega exhibition of all water initiatives" worldwide and suggested to reflect on the conference's expected deliverables and on priorities outlined by delegates. She suggested that the minimum demand should focus on strengthening the multilateral governance of water issues, at the UN level at least, through a Special Envoy on Water or better coordination between UN programmes. Finally, she urged members to focus on promoting a strong message, which is currently lacking.

Alejandro Jiménez, Water Lead, Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), asked the Netherlands and other country delegations how transformative commitments can potentially translate into concrete action and become inspiring for a majority of members.

Michael Eichholz, Water Policy Expert, Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR), Germany, added to the need to set clear expectations for the conference to generate concrete deliverables. He then introduced a study on groundwater finance carried out by BGR under the auspices of the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) with the pan-African Groundwater Program (APAGroP). Within the framework of this programme, BGR supports planning and financing strategies to make groundwater usable in African countries for securing water supplies. He mentioned that the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) together with Makerere University from Kampala, Uganda, have built a framework to analyse financing ecosystems for groundwater development at the local level in Africa. Three countries (Namibia, Senegal, Uganda) applied this tool and results are expected to contribute to discussions in New York. He concluded by mentioning that Germany remains open to new partnerships on this fields.

Herman Havekes, Strategic Advisor, Dutch Water Authorities (UWV), underlined the recent efforts of the Netherlands to put water management as a guiding principle for spatial planning. The Dutch Water

Authorities have evolved accordingly on spatial development and increased collaboration with regional and local authorities. He recalled that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management and the Dutch Water Authorities will work together on the implementation of the [Blue Deal Programme](#).

Pierre-Alain Roche, Steering Committee member, Honorary President, ASTEE, agreed with Marie-Hélène Aubert on the need for the conference to provide tangible results. He suggested to appeal for a permanent body or permanent organisations of the UN to conduct a high-level survey on water, as bodies dedicated to health and agriculture exist but not on water. He emphasised that the WGI's focus on subnational scales made it well-placed to provide input on what is needed at the international level to facilitate the involvement of local stakeholders.

Susana Neto, Professor, University of Lisbon, suggested to emphasise on the importance of capacity at the conference. WGI members could elaborate a set of showcases on how empowerment is possible at the local level and include different institutional capacities and functions.

Federico Properzi, Chief Technical Adviser, UN-Water, highlighted that the conference is not an end but a milestone in a broader process towards the [High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development \(HLPF\)](#) held on 10-19 July 2023. He recalled that as a member-state conference, collective efforts should attempt to inform policymakers and politicians with the support of national delegations. He shared two key points to accelerate change: public awareness and political leadership. He finally emphasised the importance of making the voice of civil society, indigenous people, youth, and business partners heard during this conference, which will mark a “watershed moment”.

Angie Saleh, Partnerships Specialist, Sanitation and Water for All, raised questions on i) the ambition of the conference in terms of political leadership; ii) the level of representation at the conference (e.g. Heads of State, Heads of government and Ministers); and iii) the representatives of member states.

Antti Rautavaara, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland, responding to Angie Saleh, expressed Finland firm intention to have the Head of State as a representative of Finland at the conference. He recommended that every national government in the room attempt to do the same.

Oriana Romano asked Mathilda Buijtendijk to clarify the aim the Acceleration Framework for SDG and how the WGI could contribute, especially on the governance dimension.

Mathilda Buijtendijk specified that the UN 2023 Water Conference is not a UN conference but a Member State conference. The aim of having a UN Water Conference – almost 50 years after the last one – is to gather heads of State to acknowledge the importance of water. It represents an opportunity for members of the WGI to deliver a strong message and use their own network to resonate it. Other political leaders will be involved in special sessions and side events around the conference. She reiterated that the preparatory General Assembly would help better understand the agenda of the different sessions.

Ed Anker, Chair, Climate Adaptation, Dutch Municipalities, seconded the need for urgent action on water. Regarding the question on cultural change, he answered that engineering design is a cultural action since it is about providing solutions to people's uncertainty.

Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi, Secretary General, UCLG-Africa, recalled that the theme of the 9th World Water Forum was water for peace; that one of the key themes of COP27 relates to water and adaptation; and that a territorial approach to water governance is one of the main priorities emerging from the 17th meeting of the OECD WGI. These elements constitute strong messages to bring to the conference and to UN Member States.

The Chair thanked everyone for the informative and fruitful discussion and introduced the next session.

Breakout group discussion on the implementation of the Action Plan towards the UN 2023 Water Conference

The aim of this session was to brainstorm and generate a consensus on the ways forward for the UN 2023 Water Conference. Members were divided in six breakout groups, and rapporteurs from each group shared a summary of their discussions to the plenary. Questions asked to each groups related to i) objectives and priorities, ii) methodology and iii) expected outcomes of the UN 2023 Water Conference.

The Chair invited rapporteurs to provide a summary of their respective group discussions and agreed outcomes.

Group 1 (Katrin Bruebach, Resilient Cities Network) suggested sending a letter to government officials on behalf of the WGI to encourage national governments to endorse the OECD Principles. This could also help advance the WGI Programme of Work over the next two years.

Group 2 (John Dini, Water Research Commission) reported two main proposals. First, the WGI could work more closely with industries and sectors that are major users of water resources. The group agreed that an organised business voice may be needed at the conference. Creating an interface with that community of practice could offer a better understanding of how these water users internalise water risks. Second, members proposed to strengthen the focus on “localisation” and to translate commitments into action, in line with the Strategy Paper and Programme of Work 2022-24, notably through the Action Plan of Mayors, Local and Regional Governments for Water Security to secure commitments in the run-up to the conference.

Group 3 (Eric Tardieu, INBO) further discussed the local implementation of the UN agenda and SDGs. Regarding the communication strategy of the WGI, the group suggested to write blog articles, publish videos, and boost communication on social media in an accessible way for those outside the water sector. Discussions also highlighted the need to renew the communication strategy based on a new network made of local-level partners with an influence on water-related issues (agriculture, industry, nature welfare) and open to share knowledge and experience.

Group 4 (Federico Properzi, UN-Water) recalled the importance of putting people at the centre and the need for multi-sectoral and multi-level governance. For the methodology, the group agreed to use WGI Principles as criteria for commitments, operating as a self-assessment compliance process. For the communication, the group agreed on the need for positive messages highlighting the benefits of improving governance, and to have an overarching session on governance and local-national water governance in the margins of the conference.

Group 5 (Jeltsje Kemerink-Seyoum, IHE Delft Institute for Water Education) explained that the group main priority was to embed water issues in all policies by empowering local authorities and focusing on the territorial approach. For the methodology, it was suggested to advocate the OECD at large to represent the interests of local authorities. It was also deemed important to clarify the linkages between the OECD Principles and SDG 6 and to highlight these linkages. Group members agreed on four proposals: to have a resolution on water management, show the costs of inaction and inefficiency in water governance, reinforce coordination within the UN system at national and subnational level. And finally, to set regional goals to frame transboundary cooperation.

Group 6 (Colin Herron, GWP) reported four main conclusions from the group discussion. First, water governance is a means to an end, with the end being measured through SDG 6. However, many existing examples on good water governance emphasise on the process whereas the focus could be more impact oriented. Second, the group suggested looking into the definition of water governance and thinking about whether it needs to be updated to reflect current global changes. The third proposal was to strengthen the link between the OECD Principles on Water Governance and the SDG 6 framework. Finally, the group

encouraged all members to proceed differently by undertaking “radical collaboration” within the WGI, in a way that breaks down institutional silos and focuses on integration across organisations.

The Chair concluded the discussion on the UN 2023 Water Conference and recapped the main takeaways. She recalled the need of overhauling the communication strategy to reach stakeholders from other sectors; the importance of creating bridges between sectors and empowering communities, especially at local level; the need to make concrete proposals and to set clear expectations for the preparation phase of the conference and to undertake active implementation work in between these events. The Chair also considered the proposal to have an OECD WGI day during the New York Water Week, as the WGI will celebrate a decade of existence in March 2023. The Chair reiterated the importance of setting regional goals to improve transboundary cooperation and considered the possibility of updating the definition of water governance as suggested during breakout group discussions.

Closing of the 17th WGI meeting

The Chair concluded the 17th meeting of the WGI and thanked all the members who joined in The Hague and online as well as the technical team, the Steering Committee, and the Secretariat. She informed that the Secretariat will follow up with a revised Strategy Paper 2022-24, the Highlights of the meeting and a proposal on behalf of the WGI as a contribution to the UN 2023 Water Conference.

The Chair thanked the Dutch authorities and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management for welcoming delegates in The Hague for the past two days. She announced that the 18th meeting of the WGI will take place on 5-6 July at the OECD Headquarters in Paris, with major milestones for WGI members including the COP27 in November and the UN 2023 Water Conference in March 2023 until then.