

UN-Water Operational Guidelines

Updated April 2010

Background

These Operational Guidelines were first established in September 2008 and have been updated in February 2010 by UN-Water Senior Programme Managers (SPM) of UN-Water member agencies. They provide operational guidance to the SPMs from the member agencies and organizations of UN-Water and complement the UN-Water Terms of Reference. The Terms of Reference are attached in Annex 1.

Article I. Objective, organization of work and budget

Section 1. UN-Water objective and scope of work

UN-Water is an entity composed of the UN agencies and organizations engaged in work related to water and sanitation. The goals of UN-Water are to promote and provide an efficient, coherent and proactive mechanism for coordination of the UN System agencies and programmes, and to contribute substantially to the achievement of global water and sanitation related targets and goals. Emphasis is given to targets and goals articulated through the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) from the United Nations General Assembly Millennium Summit in 2000 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) from the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) (Johannesburg, South Africa 2002). UN-Water plays a key role in identifying and disseminating UN positions on various water-related issues within global fora and processes. The expected outcome of UN-Water activities is improved system-wide coordinated actions and coherence, as well as increased effectiveness and collaboration in the support to Member States in their efforts towards the achievement of agreed goals, targets and actions in the water sector.

The SPMs of UN-Water have no direct authority to resolve issues of gaps, overlaps or duplications between the mandates of members, but they are expected to highlight the scope for rationalisation and play an influencing role to improve accountability and delivery in water-related activities.

Section 2. Organization of work

UN-Water is not an organization with legal entity and activities outlined in the Work Programme are primarily implemented through members and partners. UN-Water is led by an elected Chair, rotating among its members, an elected Vice Chair, rotating among its members, and a Secretary from the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. UN-Water has a Joint Steering Group which has the operational responsibility for the implementation of the UN-Water Work Programme and for budget planning. The Terms of Reference of the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and the Joint Steering group are outlined in Annex 2.

UN-Water is supported by a Technical Secretariat consisting of a Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) to the Chair, an Advisor to the Secretary and other support staff as needed. The UN-Water Secretary, the Vice-Chair, the Chair, the CTA, the Advisor, and potential additional advisory staff constitute a single virtual team operating under the leadership of the UN-Water Chair. The governance of UN-Water is further regulated under ARTICLE III of these operational guidelines.

UN-Water also operates through UN-Water programmes, administered by the UN-Water member hosting them. Currently three UN-Water programmes are operational:

- (1) World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP) hosted and led by UNESCO in Perugia, Italy;
- (2) UN-Water Decade Programme on Capacity Development (UNW-DPC) hosted and led by United Nations University in Bonn, Germany;
- (3) UN-Water Decade Programme on Advocacy and Communication (UNW-DPAC) hosted and led by United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs in Zaragoza, Spain.

The WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme on Water Supply and Sanitation (JMP), led by the two agencies in Geneva and New York, is an associated UN-Water programme, but has an independent governance structure.

The work plans of the programmes are developed to foster further coordinating functions and tasks of UN-Water and are elaborated under the guidance from the UN-Water SPM. The Joint Steering Group provides operational guidance to the offices/programmes.

Section 3. UN-Water Budget

Members and partners to UN-Water pay no membership or partner fees. A Multi Donor Trust Fund (MDTF), administrated by United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) has been established to strengthen UN-Water activities. This MDTF is used to support the core functions as well as identified activities of UN-Water and specific projects that are initiated and implemented through UN-Water members. Members and partners are generally expected to cover their own expenses associated with their engagement in UN-Water activities, unless other arrangements have been agreed upon in the case of specific activities. The operational management of the Trust Fund is guided by the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between UNOPS and Participating UN-Water members. The MoU is attached in Annex 3.

Article II. Membership

Section 1. UN-Water membership

Any UN agency, programme or other UN entity with water-related issues, including sanitation and natural disasters, as part of their mandate may become member in UN-Water by contacting the Secretariat of UN-Water. The member's name will be entered/listed on the UN-Water web-page and other relevant UN-Water printed material as a full member, and such member will have full decision-making rights at the UN-Water SPM meetings. Each member will appoint one designated focal point and one alternate as principal contact persons.

Section 2. UN-Water partner status

Any organization, professional union or association or other civil-society group (jointly referred to as organizations) actively involved in water, that has the capacity and willingness to contribute tangibly to the work of UN-Water, and are active internationally and/or multinational in structure and membership may request partnership status with UN-Water. Such an organization should request registered legal status. In order to initiate the partnership process the organization needs to send a written request to the Secretariat of UN-Water. Such request will be considered by the SPM of UN-Water or its designee, following the established partner criteria, and if approved the applicant may be registered as a UN-Water partner. Upon approval the name of the organization will be included on the UN-Water web-page and other relevant UN-Water printed material as a partner. The partner criteria are listed in Annex 4.

Each partner shall appoint one focal point and one alternate as principal contact persons.

Section 3. Cancellation or refusal of partner status

The SPMs of UN-Water may cancel the partner status of any partner or refuse such a status to an applicant, when the integrity of UN-Water, in their judgment, justifies such action. If a partner fails to meet the requirements for UN-Water partner status as stipulated in Annex 4, it shall be notified that it must meet said requirements within a specified period of time or else its membership status with UN-Water will be terminated

Section 4. UN-System hosted entities

Entities that have entered into an agreement with a UN-Water member agency or organization for their legal hosting but maintaining independent governance may also apply for special partner status with UN-Water. High level Advisory Boards / Panels / Committees which are legally connected to the United Nations system will also be eligible for special partner status. Such entities can request, on a case by case basis, to participate in any UN-Water SPM meeting. Their rights and obligations are in all other matters regulated through the UN-Water Partner Criteria.

Article III. Governance

Section 1. UN-Water Senior Programme Managers (SPMs)

The UN-Water Senior Programme Managers represents UN-Water members. They constitute the highest operational decision-making body of UN-Water and provide the overall governance and strategic direction of UN-Water. The SPMs shall at the first meeting each year agree upon the UN-Water Work Programme and Indicative Budget for the forthcoming two years. The UN-Water SPMs shall agree upon the level of delegation to the UN-Water Joint Steering Group, the Chair and Vice-Chair and the Secretary, as stipulated in annex 2 of these operational guidelines.

Section 2. The UN-Water Joint Steering Group (JSG)

The Role of the UN-Water JSG shall be to support efficient implementation of the UN-Water Work Programme and oversee budget allocations. The JSG shall be appointed by the SPMs and shall consist of no less than 6 UN-Water members and the Secretary as Ex Officio member. The Chair and Vice Chair of UN-Water shall all be permanent members of the JSG. Other members shall be elected from among UN-Water members and serve for a period of two years. Two new members will be elected each year in order to secure continuity. The Chairperson of the JSG shall be the Chair of UN-Water and the Secretary of the JSG shall be the Secretary of UN-Water. Meetings shall normally be held at least four times per annum while discussions and decision-making in between meetings will take place through remote means.

The Terms of Reference of the JSG are further described in annex 2.

Section 3. Chair and Vice Chair of UN-Water

A Chair and Vice Chair will be elected from among UN-Water members on a rotating basis. The Chair and the Vice-Chair will commence their service with the first annual meeting following their election. The service period will normally be 2 years. The terms of reference of the Chair and the Vice-Chair are outlined in Annex 2.

Election of Chair and Vice Chair can be conducted through a cast of vote if more than one candidate is running. If three or more candidates are running for election, a second vote will be held if none of the candidates receive at least 50% of member's votes in the first round. The second round will only be held between the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes in the first round.

A Chief Technical Advisor, financed through the Multi-Donor Trust Fund, will support the work of the Chair provided the necessary financial resources are available.

Section 4. Secretariat

A permanent Secretariat is provided by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) in New York. The Secretariat consists of a Secretary. The terms of reference for the Secretary are outlined in Annex 2.

An advisor, financed through the Multi-Donor Trust Fund, will support the work of the Secretary provided the necessary financial resources are available.

Section 5. Technical Secretariat

The Technical Secretariat of UN-Water provides substantive and administrative support to the Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and UN-Water members in their operations and activities for UN-Water. The Technical Secretariat backstops UN-Water activities, as defined in the UN-Water SPM Meetings, by the Joint Steering Group and in the UN-Water work plan. The Technical Secretariat has a virtual set-up and consists of the Chief Technical Advisor, the Advisor and additional support staff if so decided.

Section 6. UN-Water meetings of members and partners.

The designated focal point and one alternate of each member will be invited to participate in all UN-Water meetings. The Secretariat will maintain an updated list of designated focal points and alternates of members, including full contact information. It is the responsibility of the focal points and alternates to inform the Secretariat of any changes.

The designated focal point and/or one alternate of a partner will be invited to participate at the UN-Water meeting organized normally in the third quarter of each year. The Secretariat will maintain an updated list of designated focal points and alternates of partners, including full contact information. It is the responsibility of the focal points and alternates to inform the Secretariat of any changes.

UN-Water meetings are further addressed under Article IV.

Section 7. UN-Water work programme, budget and reporting

The work of UN-Water is described in the biennial result-based work programme. The development of the work programme and budget is supported by the Joint Steering Group. The draft work programme and budget will be submitted, for discussion and final decision, to the annual UN-Water meeting held in the first quarter each year. The funding sources for UN-Water include the UN-Water Multi-Donor Trust Fund and resources provided through UN-water members and partners, both in kind and in cash. The work programme may contain, as annexes, separate plans for the UN-Water Task Forces, Thematic Priority Areas as well as for other activities, as needed.

An annual report of activities will be prepared by the Chair/Secretariat and should be finalized by March each year. The annual report will be available through the UN-water web-site.

Section 8. Cover of expenses.

Each member and partner is expected as much as possible to cover individual costs associated with the participation in UN-Water meetings and other activities. Certain activities under UN-Water have separate budgets and some support for specific activities and projects are also available through the Multi-Donor Trust Fund. The organization hosting a UN-Water meeting will be requested to cover relevant logistical meeting costs for such meetings.

Section 9. Transparency and accountability

Transparency and accountability will guide the operations of UN-Water. The minutes and decisions from UN-Water meetings as well as other documentation will be made available not only to all members but also to partners. The biennial work programme and annual report will be widely available through the UN-Water web-site.

Section 10. Reporting to the High Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP)

UN-Water was established by the HLCP at its meeting held on 18-19 September 2003 and later the same year endorsed by the Chief Executive Board (CEB). The Chair of UN-Water, or someone designated by him/her, should report back to HLCP on progress when requested. The Work Programme and Annual Report will be sent to the Secretariat of HLCP/CEB.

Article IV. Meetings of members and partners

Section 1. Time and place of regular meetings

Under normal circumstances, two UN-Water SPM meetings will be organized annually. Meetings will be hosted by a UN-Water member or partner, following the principle of rotation, and will generally be held in the first and third quarter each year. Only UN-Water members will be invited to these meetings which, beyond more substantive issues, will have a particular focus on governance related matters. Provisions should, as much as possible, be made to secure as wide a participation of members as possible, if so required through telephone or video conference facilities.

The second UN-Water meeting will be divided in two parts. On part will be open for UN-Water members only. The second part will include UN-Water members, partners and other key stakeholders by invitation and it will focus more on substantive discussions related to UN-Water collaboration with partners.

Section 2. Notice of meetings

The Secretariat shall send a request to each member and partner to inform the Secretariat and Chair of any issue they wish to be reflected on the agenda, at least 2 months prior to each meeting. A draft final agenda shall be sent by the Secretariat at least six weeks prior to the meeting and the final agenda and all necessary other documentation shall be sent no later than two weeks prior to the meeting. A number of aspects should be included as part of the final agenda:

- a) Items listed on the agenda should be supported through relevant material (if appropriate) which should be made available at least 2 weeks prior to the meeting;
- b) Items requiring that specific decisions are made by the UN-Water members should include a list of potential draft decisions for members to consider prior to the meeting;
- c) Supporting documents should be as short as possible, normally not exceeding 1-2 pages, and contain all relevant information. Additional information can be included as annexes;
- d) Proposals for publications through UN-Water need to be supported by a brief (1-2 pages) but clear description. These proposals shall follow the agreed format¹.

The member hosting the meeting shall send logistical information to all members and partners (directly or through the Secretariat) at least 6 weeks prior to the meeting in order to facilitate travel arrangements.

The Secretariat shall include in the minutes from each meeting a notice of the time and place of the next meeting.

Section 3. Conditions of quorum and decision making at UN-Water SPM meetings

When specific decisions are required at a UN-Water SPM meeting, more than 50% of the designated member delegates (or their alternates or any other person empowered to act on behalf of a member), attending in person or by proxy, will constitute a quorum.

Decision making at SPM meetings shall be sought through consensus among all attending members. If consensus is not reached, the meeting may delegate to the Joint Steering Group to draft a decision and seek consensus through electronic mail which will then be sent to all focal points of UN-Water members. Voting shall be used only as a last option and will be conducted through a simple majority.

The final notes from UN-Water SPM meetings will be sent for final comments and clearance to all members within one month after a meeting. These notes should capture the key points from the discussions and clearly outline decisions and the responsibility to implement those decisions.

Article V. Thematic focus areas, task forces and regional un-water arrangements

Section 1. Thematic Focus Areas

Thematic Focus Areas will guide activities of UN-Water in order to draw on the varied expertise of the UN system and of UN-Water partners. The Thematic Focus Areas are established by the UN-Water SPMs to offer a structured mechanism to address more long-term strategic water related challenges where there is a high degree of interagency activities and/or where increased co-ordination is desirable. They form a core activity of UN-Water's effort to increase cooperation and coherence within the UN system. After being established, each Thematic Focus Area will be led by one or more UN-Water member(s) acting as the coordinator of the Thematic Focus Area. Other UN-Water members or partners may join as Thematic Focus Area members. The coordinator may submit specific activity proposals to the Joint Steering Group and/or SPM meetings and can receive financial support for specific activities from the Multi Donor Trust Fund if so requested.

¹ Purpose and target audience, table of content and description including approximate length, note of any potential contentious issues, contributors (UN and non-UN), rationale for UN-Water association.

The Coordinators of the Thematic Focus Areas shall produce a short annual report no later than 1 February each year on their activities, including an analysis of the Thematic Focus Area, which will be included in the UN-Water Annual Report.

Section 2. Task Forces

UN-Water activities will also be carried out through time-bound Task Forces in order to draw on the varied expertise of the UN system and of UN-Water partners. The Task Forces are established by the UN-Water SPM to focus on a specific area of interest, an emerging issue or an area where increased co-ordination is desirable. They form a core activity of UN-Water in efforts to increase cooperation and coherence within the UN system. Each Task Force proposal should include terms of reference and a work-plan, respectively, considering the overall mandate and terms of reference of UN-Water. These shall be submitted for final approval to the UN-Water SPM meeting. Task Forces can receive financial support for specific activities from the Multi Donor Trust Fund if so requested.

Task Forces will be formed by members and partners of UN-Water but may also invite other stakeholders or individuals if deemed useful. Task Forces should produce a short annual report no later than 1 February each year on their activities, which will be included in the UN-Water Annual Report,

Section 3. Regional UN-Water arrangements

The terms of references of UN-Water encourages effective system-wide action and inter-agency collaboration at the regional and sub-regional levels as an integral part of UN-Water's functions. Regional UN-Water arrangements are expected to operate based on terms of references and work plans that are coherent and aligned with those of UN-Water itself, considering specific requirements of each region. The terms of reference and work plans of regional UN-Water arrangements should be discussed at UN-Water SPM meetings and they are expected to report back to UN-Water at least once a year on progress and challenges. The Chair, Vice-Chair and/or Secretary and/or someone designated by the Chair of UN-Water should attend meetings of the regional UN-Water arrangements. Similarly, the Coordinator or the Secretary of regional arrangements is/are expected to attend the UN-Water SPM meetings.