

# WATER DIALOGUES FOR RESULTS



Accelerating cross-sectoral  
SDG 6 implementation

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## Outcome Document for the Expert Roundtable on Governance

Turning the tide on *Governance* – How can good governance enable  
good progress on SDG 6?



Federal Ministry  
for the Environment, Nature Conservation  
and Nuclear Safety



Global Water  
Partnership



## Governance as accelerator for cross-sectoral SDG 6 implementation

As the water crisis is often referred to as a governance crisis, improving governance is fundamental to provide the enabling environment to be able to solve multiple interrelated challenges at various levels. Efficient and accelerated action to achieve SDG6, and consequently all the other SDGs, depends, therefore, on recognizing these interlinkages and clarifying overlapping governance roles and responsibilities at different levels, but also between international, regional, national, and local levels. Moreover, it involves fostering cooperation, promoting shared responsibility for water resources and empowering stakeholders to take ownership of their context specific roles.

### Participants of the Expert Roundtable

This outcome document has been prepared based on active participation of:

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- Philip Beetlestone (Water Integrity Network)
- Kevin Chrétien (European Commission DG INTPA)
- Arnaud de Vanssay (European Commission DG INTPA)
- Ines Dombrowsky (Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik)
- Colin Herron (Global Water Partnership)
- Marianne Kjellén (United Nations Development Programme)
- Sonja Koeppel (UNECE)
- Celestine Kroeschell (HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation)
- Eddy Moors (IHE Delft)
- Federico Properzi (UN-Water)
- Franz Rojas (Development Bank of Latin America)
- Oriana Romano (OECD)
- Saravanan Subramanian (Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik)
- Amy Sullivan (Gender and governance expert in the field of water and agriculture)
- Eric Tardieu (International Network of Basin Organizations)
- Mariet Verhoef-Cohen (Women for Water Partnership)
- Jeroen Warner (Wageningen University)

## Main findings of the Expert Roundtable

The Governance Roundtable participants largely support the overall message: “Growing water demand in the face of increased water uncertainty demands more vertical and horizontal governance and cooperation between institutions, sectors and countries.” This also applies to the need for closer collaboration between organizations working on water resources management and water, sanitation and hygiene challenges.

Three main outcomes have been articulated:

- a. **Through a systemic and integrated approach, sound and sustainable integrated water resources management can provide holistic solutions to many cross-sectoral challenges.** Water resources are used across the whole economy and should, therefore, be framed as a cross-cutting resource rather than an independent sector. Considering it in this way will, then, require balancing power dynamics and trade-offs between nexus areas, while identifying co-benefits, so as to arrive successfully at integrated legislation, planning and financing.
- b. **Governance is about building a whole of society approach, whereby citizens, especially women and marginalized groups, are empowered to articulate their voices within formal decision-making spaces and can hold government to account.** This implies building a shared vision, social consensus, and collective responsibility to enhance implementation and behaviours that are aligned with public interest and enforced by regulation. Multi-level coordination and governance can be reinforced through multi-stakeholder dialogues, bringing together key partners to enhance leadership, integration and accountability for substantive delivery on the ground and by establishing 1) coordination mechanisms at the local level; 2) broader multi-stakeholder coordinating groups; 3) national platforms for discussion; and potentially 4) (regional) mechanisms for coordination with the financial resources to support its implementation.
- c. **Good governance has a cost and takes time, and typically not enough resources are allocated to these processes.** At the same time, good governance can help drive investment and finance in an efficient, transparent and timely manner. In order to achieve SDG6, specific governance provisions are needed for financing water within broader governance structures, such as finance ministries, to increase accountability. Large financial “leaks” and anti-corruption measures need to be identified and addressed at every governance level.

## Recommendations towards the policy message on Governance

At the local and regional level:

- Emphasis should be placed on improving coordination, including not only for administrative structures but also for planning processes, policies, financing and investment.
- The Dublin Principles should be referenced as a means of addressing water inequities across sectors/users and a common language on water equity needs to be articulated and accepted.

- More mechanisms to support constructive and balanced dialogue between empowered rights holders and service providers should be established, leading to shared accountability.
- Corporate governance should not be overlooked.

At the national level:

- In order to improve water security, institutions must first be strengthened, and their capacity built, in accordance with the saying “Fix the institutions to fix the pipes.”
- Better, actionable data and information is needed to enable equitable policy and decision making.
- Country-level adherence to international conventions and legal and institutional instruments can build better governance.
- River basin approaches are generally governed at the national level, although management is regional.
- Cities represent singular challenges to water security. Multi-scale approaches between cities and basins can help address these specificities.
- Support cross-sectoral legal frameworks on water, land, and forestry governance aspects such as water tenure (to prioritize access and use rights of water resources) in urban and rural areas, including through river basin approaches.

At the multi-lateral level:

- Multilateral funding mechanisms, including those for climate financing, need to be more flexible in order for national and sub-national entities to be able to access funds for their needs. They should also consider extending funding streams to improve the quality and longevity of ongoing projects over a longer period of time.
- Fostering a nexus approach to both water and funding would provide cross-sectoral support and resources.
- Multilateral actors, especially IFIs, can support elaboration and dissemination of tools and instruments to measure progress on water governance.
- Supporting regional approaches can accelerate both scale and success.
- Multi-laterals mainly support sub-national and national actors, thus better coordination and engagement across levels is needed.

At the UN System level:

- A stronger mechanism for cross-sectoral cooperation on water within the UN is needed, and receptivity to change.
- The role of a UN Special Envoy for water should be created to advocate for raising water higher on the political agenda at an overarching level within the UN and globally, leading to its political prioritization.
- Learning from other UN development pathways and processes, such as those for nutrition and food, water governance measures can be scaled for collaboration at multiple levels.
- Financing instruments that are easily accessible at all levels of governance, and improved cooperation therein, can/should be supported by the UN.