



Meeting of the General Assembly Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals

United Nations - New York – 22-24 May 2013

European Union and its Member States – speaking points on “water and sanitation”

[These address the theme for 24 May as well as the issues raised in one of the background brief]

- As outlined at previous meetings, the EU and its Member States are currently elaborating their position on the post-2015 framework, including on SDGs.
- Indeed, before coming to detailed positions on these very important issues, the EU and its Member States are keen to engage, with other stakeholders, in the OWG and other related fora in an open and interactive way.
- Our work in the OWG will have to gradually focus on the central elements that can constitute a clear and limited set of universal goals and the basis for meaningful targets, where progress can be measured through clear indicators in the years ahead.
- Overall, the post-2015 process should reinforce the international community’s commitment to poverty eradication and sustainable development and set out a single comprehensive and coherent framework for effective delivery and results at all levels. The framework should be defined around a single set of global goals in order to drive action in all countries.
- We recognise that water and sanitation are at the core of the three dimensions of sustainable development and therefore are a crucial issue to tackle in order to achieve sustainable development, as well as poverty eradication.
- We welcome the UN thematic consultation on water and the UN issue brief. Let me just clarify one point regarding section 2 of the issue brief in order to avoid any misunderstandings: at this stage, the EU and its MS remain open on the option of having one goal on water and sanitation with several targets.

Mister chair,

- Without sustainable management of water resources and important efficiency gains, by 2030 two out of every three people living on this planet could be living under water stressed conditions, with increased risks of flooding and droughts and their toll on human lives and on our economies.
- In the context of the debate for the post-2015 framework, the EU considers that water and sanitation have to be considered from three important angles by the OWG.
- First, access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene for all, which is required for providing basic living standards and well-being.

- Significant progress has been made in relation to the MDG target on access to water while sanitation related goals are lagging behind. At the same time, there are significant disparities across different regions and countries, as well as within countries, and today over 780 million people still do not have access to safe drinking water and over two billion do not have access to adequate sanitation.
- Access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene for all and ensuring adequate use of water resources are central to human development and sustainable livelihoods, and a pre-condition for health and for success in the fight against poverty, hunger, child deaths and gender inequality. Improved access to sanitation and waste treatment will also bring environmental benefits through healthy ecosystem functioning, e.g. through prevention of eutrophication, which in turn supports economic development.
- Secondly, we need to ensure the sustainable management of our water resource, which is also a driver for inclusive and sustainable growth.
- Water is key to ensure progress in many economic sectors, such as agriculture, energy and industry, as well as urban planning to cite just a few.
- Integrated water resource management at all levels is necessary to address the balance between water supply and demand and contributes to inclusive and sustainable growth and the transition to a green economy, mainly through applying the water-energy-food security nexus approach.
- Issues like urbanization, rapid population growth, climate change are putting natural resources under serious stress and it is key that serious investments and changes in consumption patterns are made at global level to improve water efficiency and ensure water use becomes sustainable. We must ensure that people are aware of how precious a commodity water is. This includes approaches that can be tailored at various levels involving all stakeholders – and in fact, water stress will vary at each river basin level. Such integrated approaches are also needed for adaptation to climate change, enhancing resilience of societies and of ecosystems that provide essential services, and tackling extreme events, such as droughts and floods, which will require improved disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation policies. With increased water scarcity, more attention will also be need to groundwater management.
- Likewise, our work should contribute to the adoption of the necessary measures to significantly reduce water pollution and improve water quality, protect biodiversity, as well as improving wastewater treatment and ensuring sound management of chemicals. We support actions to protect ecosystems, which will help us to maintain water quantity and quality, and ultimately benefit human livelihoods through healthy ecosystem functioning.
- Data collection is crucial for the appropriate integration of water in a post-2015 framework.
- Thirdly, water should contribute to another element which we consider important for the overarching framework for post 2015: equity, equality and justice. We wish to reaffirm our commitments regarding the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, and its progressive global realisation, with full respect for national sovereignty, as agreed in Rio+20. Achieving our objectives on water sanitation and hygiene for all are also essential for gender equality, women's empowerment and the education of girls.
- Also, enhanced water cooperation across borders is indispensable in this context given the very often trans-boundary relevance of these issues. The EU and its Member States believe that equitable, efficient and collaborative management of transboundary water resources is an essential

element for sustainable development, security and stability. We call for enhanced cooperation in this respect and stand ready to share further our long standing experience on the matter.

Mr Chair

- We should employ the full range of policy instruments, including regulation, voluntary measures, market and information-based tools and cost recovery of water and sanitation services, to contribute to the sustainability of service provision and maintenance, without the cost-recovery objectives becoming a barrier to access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation for the poorest people.
- We reiterate the need to support these efforts and mobilise resources from all sources to that end. It is important to continue to engage in education, awareness raising and capacity-building for water and sanitation, including for developing adequate national institutional and governance frameworks as well as for formulating adequate national financing strategies for the water sector. All countries and stakeholders should continue to develop research and innovation and to disseminate technologies for water supply, including non-conventional sources where appropriate, as well as water treatment and sanitation.
- Overall, water must therefore be an important element of the post-2015 overarching framework for poverty eradication and sustainable development. The EU and its Member states support continued work on water having regard to the results of various consultations recommending an integrated approach on water issues, including universal access to and appropriate use of safe drinking water and sanitation, enhanced water efficiency, integrated water resource management, and improved good water governance at all levels.
- On the issue of the co-chair's summary raised yesterday and this morning, we would like to stress that we found the summary prepared at the end of our previous meeting quite useful and we thank the co-chairs for their efforts. At the same time, we would support any additional effort to make the summaries, prepared under the co-chairs responsibility, as focused on substance as possible, while highlighting upfront in a concise manner, areas where views are already converging, those where this is not yet the case as well as other important issues. In this regard, we also have to keep in mind that we are until early 2014 in the reflection phase of the group. Finally we would like to confirm that, as noted at the last meeting, we fully trust that the co-chairs may adjust as appropriate the programme of work ahead to ensure the effectiveness of our proceedings