

**High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development
On the SDG 6 and interlinkages with other SDGs – Clean water and sanitation**

Talking points Ms. Maria Fernanda Espinosa

VISION. Water is in crisis as established by the latest report on SDG6. Unless we act now, we will face challenges including access, malnutrition, global floods, droughts, conflict, etc. To confront this crisis, while turning it into an OPPORTUNITY, the GCEW focusses on the NEW ECONOMICS of WATER, informed by the NEW SCIENCE of the **global hydrological cycle** and how to keep it at ‘safe’ levels *for all*, recognizing the important links with access, biodiversity, and climate change. This requires understanding the water cycle as a GLOBAL COMMON GOOD.

URGENCY. Our goal is to put this urgency and vision at the forefront of policy making and new forms of partnerships. True partnerships require bringing diverse VOICES to the table including women, labour, youth, and indigenous communities. The challenge is how to govern a global common good with collective value creation (and the global community) at the center. The new economics focus will focus on a GLOBAL COMMON GOOD APPROACH that will allow us to focus on local and global ‘mission/moonshots’ with the ‘how’ focused on the following 4 key issues:

1) A new economics of water. Place the water cycle as a global common good, and part of a system where other sectors rely on this valuable resource including climate action, biodiversity, food production, health, among others. By doing this, we need to redefine the principles of our current economic systems to create a new water-centric economy.

This is a challenge that requires intense collaboration and collective intelligence, the co-creation of commonly shared goals, attention ways to achieve key objectives, and share the risks and rewards of economic activity. This involves attributing value to water that truly reflects its essential nature and promoting water-related investments as opportunities for economic growth and resilience, rather than as costs.

ECONOMICS of VALUING and PRICING WATER. How do we value the global hydrological cycle, and what are (high level) new ideas for underlying pricing, water budgets, and what this means for incentives.

These ideas will help us calculate the cost of INACTION. Key to this is understanding that water goes across ALL the SDGs:

- Trade & Repurposing of subsidies,
- Governance of utilities,
- No tradeoff with equity.

2) Partnerships. Establishing Just Water Partnerships. Mobilizing international finance to low- and middle-income countries. The GCEW estimates that around USD 200–400 billion per year of additional investments will be needed to achieve universal access to clean drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene in these countries by 2030.

Rechanneling today's inefficient domestic subsidies, leveraging on the multilateral development banks and development finance institutions, and crowding in private companies, banks and institutional investors, and philanthropic money.

Innovative financing mechanisms such as green bonds, impact investing, and blended finance can help attract investment in water management infrastructure.

3) Enhance global water governance and global collaboration. I strongly believe that the water emergency is a litmus test for the multilateral system. We need to promote stronger, more integrated water governance. This involves cooperation and data sharing between countries, sectors, and institutions. Efforts could be made to create an internationally recognized framework for water rights and responsibilities, that considers ecological, economic, and social dimensions.

We need to consider the interconnectedness of water with all SDGs. We need to address climate change, poverty, and migration. These current global challenges are interconnected, and water places a center piece. We also need to address the Water-Energy-Food nexus to build more sustainable and resilient societies. A new social contract between citizens, governments, businesses, communities, and civil society, which functions effectively from the local to the global.

4) Gender Lens that recognize women as powerful catalysts for change. Although women are the most affected by climate crisis, they are not just victims. They are crucial agents of change. Women often possess a rich repository of knowledge and expertise that can be harnessed in climate change mitigation, disaster reduction, and adaptation strategies. Women are ideally placed to devise and execute livelihood strategies responsive to evolving environmental conditions.

Women bear the primary responsibility for water collection. According to UNICEF, women and girls around the world spend 200 million hours collecting water. A study in Sub-Saharan African countries found that women are the primary collectors of water, ranging from 46% in Liberia to 90% in Cote d'Ivoire, equivalent to 13.54 million women. This is a physically demanding task as they do these journeys by foot, it is time consuming and can be dangerous. With the climate crisis and droughts, they need to walk further risking themselves to violence and attacks.

Also, the opportunity costs of collecting water are high. For girls, it is time away from school. Water scarcity is also causing disrupting schooling. According to UNICEF, 3.3 million children are in risk of dropping school to drought in the Horn of Africa. Globally, an additional year of education can raise a girls' income by 15-25%.

Additionally, not having indoor sanitation is a major factor for violence for women and girls. Violence against women affects more than 30% of women worldwide. Women and girls spend 266 million hours every day finding a place outside to use as a toilet. Additionally, 1 in 3 schools lacks access to basic water and sanitation.