

Policy Recommendations for the High-Level Political Forum 2018



Ministry of Land,
Infrastructure and Transport



Implementation Roadmaps (IRs), as a voluntary tracking mechanism to monitor progress on various water-related challenges, aim to catalyze long-term collective action for water. They are living documents that have been reviewed and updated regularly since 2015. Designed to help implement actions articulated at the 7th World Water Forum, the world's largest water-related event, the objective of the IRs is to create a common vision on specific issues and encourage action and policy changes in view of ensuring water security and sustainability.

The following 14 policy suggestions, based on input received from a wide variety of stakeholders, represent a pathway forward for ensuring resilience and sustainability for our water resources. These recommendations should help identify priorities for decision-makers and structure future debates and discussions. It is only through equitable, optimal, sustainable and integrated approaches described below that water security and the Sustainable Development Goals can be reached.

- 01 Water security is a prerequisite to the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), not only SDG 6. Without water, there can be no food, energy, production, development, equity, climate resilience, or urban or environmental harmony, and poverty reduction is impossible. Therefore, water resources should be managed and regulated in a holistic, systemic, and consultative way across silos and at different levels, ensuring that interdependent management choices yield the most positive outcomes, drive technological, institutional and financial innovations across sectors, and enable collaboration between institutions and stakeholders, both inside and outside of the water sector.
- 02 Stronger political leadership and commitment are essential to promote water as key for economic growth and environmental sustainability, enhancing socially-inclusive development.
- 03 Although achieving the SDGs is a country-level responsibility, national urban policies should, where appropriate, define delegation of authority and channel financial flows to sub-national and local governments, owing to their knowledge of local contexts and proximity to end beneficiaries that will contribute to more sound decision making. Again, a holistic approach at the city level addressing water in conjunction with land planning, solid waste management, energy and transport, will help identify co-benefits resulting in more elegant and efficient solutions that address multiple challenges at once.
- 04 Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) policies, strategies and plans will help ensure this cross-cutting approach in the context of the achievement of the SDGs. In addition, fostering IWRM in transboundary settings, based on international water law and their key principles, is cost effective and enables benefit sharing across administrative borders.
- 05 Sustainable and environmentally sensitive multi-purpose water infrastructure, be it natural or man-made, is crucial to support sustainable development and respond to multiple demands on the resource. While new infrastructure needs to be developed in line with local realities and contexts, it is urgent to maintain and adapt existing, ageing infrastructure as well.

- 06 A lack of investment in water security can limit growth and prosperity in the face of complex pressures including population growth, urbanization, increasing water pollution, and climate change. Financing must be increased to improve water security, including through new and innovative mechanisms and market-based instruments. However, existing funds must also be used better, so that finance or financial incentives adopt an inter-sectoral approach, reaping exponential benefits in multiple domains.
- 07 Water for agriculture remains one of the greatest consumers of water resources and where some of the greatest gains can be made along the entire value chain.
- 08 Innovative technologies and practices such as increases in efficiency and safe water reuse can help bridge the gap between water needs and water availability, while potentially recovering nutrients and energy at the same time. Different water qualities need to be appropriately matched to their use, for greater efficiency and economy, thus contributing to appropriate and economical multi-sectoral water resource management.
- 09 Sanitation coverage represents specific challenges, especially in rural areas. At the city level, the complementarity between seweraged and non-seweraged sanitation services is key in providing safely managed services to all.
- 10 Frequent and intensified water-related disasters (floods, droughts, sea level rise, etc.) and climate variability and change are fundamental threats to water security for all on the planet. National policies need to enable increased visibility about future risks and their limitations through multi-level and multi-stakeholder dialogue, so as to increase preparedness and resilience amongst communities.
- 11 Governance and strong institutions at every level (local, regional, national, basin, international, transboundary) must work together to shape, design and implement public policies, strategies and plans that will enable countries to achieve the full range of SDG targets, including IWRM. It must also rely on multi-stakeholder cooperation with relevant public, private and non-state stakeholders and a whole-of-society approach for citizens to fully reap expected benefits. Policy responses will only be viable if they are coherent; if stakeholders are properly engaged; if well-designed regulatory frameworks are in place; if there is adequate and accessible information, and if there is sufficient capacity, integrity and transparency.
- 12 Research, scientific knowledge and information on water and sanitation access, quality and management, including regional and gender specificities, provide a basis for sound policy making and sustainable solutions. Efforts to strengthen and share knowledge through science, research, and best practices should be reinforced and made available to all.
- 13 Education, awareness raising and capacity building on water issues, specifically for women, children and youth, can help reduce inequalities, ensure that all stakeholders' voices are heard, and create job opportunities. Vocational training centers and their networks are important for encouraging exchanges of technical experience and knowledge, including on IWRM. In addition, city-to-city learning and cooperation are useful to enable peer exchange and solidarity mechanisms for financing to scale up learning and innovation.
- 14 Since water is life, we share a moral responsibility to manage water not only wisely, but ethically, for the well-being for all.