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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

MDG+ Initiative: High Level Meeting on the Water-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)  
Amman, 1-2 November 2016

## INFORMATION NOTE

### I. BACKGROUND

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted in September 2015 at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit. This new agenda sets forth a comprehensive set of seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which replace the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that framed global development efforts for the prior fifteen years.

This new agenda covers a range of sustainable development priorities and includes dedicated goals related to poverty (SDG-1), food security (SDG-2), health (SDG-3) as well as water (SDG-6), energy (SDG-7), sustainable cities (SDG-11), climate change (SDG-13) among others. SDG-6 specifically aims to “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.” Six targets are identified to achieve this goal, namely targets aimed at achieving: universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water (SDG 6.1); universal access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene (SDG 6.2); improved water quality (SDG 6.3); increased water use efficiency to address water scarcity and reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity (SDG 6.4); more integrated water resources management, including through transboundary cooperation (SDG 6.5); and the protection of water-related ecosystems (SDG 6.6). The means for implementing this goal include increased international cooperation and capacity building support, as well as strengthened participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management. Water-related targets are also included in other SDGs, such as those listed above. General agreement has been achieved on 230 indicators to monitor the seventeen SDGs and their 169 targets thanks to work conducted under the United Nations Statistical Commission Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators. Of these, nine indicators have been adopted with respect to the six SDG-6 targets, with input to their deliberation provided by UN-Water.

This new comprehensive sustainable development agenda thus provides a promising framework for reporting and monitoring on goals, targets and indicators that were absent from the Millennium Development Goals. Indeed, it was the limited scope of water-related issues addressed in the MDG monitoring framework and concerns regarding the country-level data presented in MDG-related reports that led the Arab Ministerial Water Council to launch the MDG+ Initiative and establish a Regional Mechanism for Improved Monitoring and Reporting on Access to Water Supply and Sanitation Services in the Arab Region in 2010.

The MDG+ Initiative offers a successful model of how regional and country-based monitoring mechanisms can complement and inform global monitoring frameworks. This inter-governmental initiative identified a set of region-specific indicators that reflect the key concerns regarding access to water and sanitation in the water-scarce Arab region. With regards to water supply, the MDG+ indicators review access to drinking water as reported upon under the MDGs, but also monitor water consumption, continuity of service supply, water quality, tariff structures and affordability. With respect to sanitation and wastewater management, the MDG+ indicators report on access to sanitation as done under the MDGs, in addition to the volume of wastewater that is collected and treated, the type of treatment, whether the treated wastewater is

subsequently used for other purposes, as well tariff structures. While such indicators were absent from MDG reports, the potential exists to reflect these MDG+ indicators and their associated methodologies in monitoring frameworks under development to achieve the SDGs.

The MDG+ Initiative also institutionalized a regional monitoring framework for reporting on the MDG+ indicators, which is grounded at the country-level through the establishment of National Monitoring Teams responsible for data collection in 18 Arab States. These teams gather national counterparts responsible for water resources management; the delivery of water, sanitation and wastewater services; and statistics to produce annual reports on the indicators based on statistical records and administrative data sources drawn from utilities. Capacity building, technical assistance and a regional data platform to support data collection is provided by the Arab Countries Water Utilities Association (ACWUA) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) at the request of the Arab Ministerial Water Council and its League of Arab States secretariat. Pilot field surveys of water consumers were also implemented in coordination with the Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED) through its non-governmental member organizations in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Palestine, Sudan, Syria and Yemen to elaborate on conditions affecting access to water and sanitation in some of the region's least developed countries and those facing crisis. This allows for a two-track engagement of water stakeholders in the Arab region, namely the decision-makers responsible for the provision of water, sanitation and wastewater services and the users of water and sanitation in vulnerable areas.

The MDG+ Initiative is supported by an Advisory Board comprised of the League of Arab States, ACWUA, RAED, ESCWA, the Arab Water Council (AWC) and the Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE), in consultation with the World Health Organization (WHO). The initiative is financially supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

Arab States and global actors can thus draw upon the indicators, methodologies and institutional framework set up under the MDG+ Initiative to inform the development of monitoring and reporting frameworks on the water-related SDGs. Efforts to this end have already been initiated through discussions between the MDG+ Initiative, the UN-Water Integrated Monitoring Initiative (GEMI) and the complementary Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation administered by the WHO and UNICEF. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was selected as a pilot country for testing SDG-6 methodologies developed under GEMI and has been the leader in providing twinning and training opportunities on the MDG+ indicators for other Arab States. Organizing this high level meeting in Amman thus presents a valuable opportunity to exchange lessons learned, experiences and perspectives on pursuing the water-related SDGs at the global, regional and national levels and to consider the way forward for Arab States.

## **II. OBJECTIVES**

The objective of the meeting is to discuss the lessons learned from implementing the MDG+ Initiative in the Arab region and to present the findings of the MDG+ Initiative 2016 Report in view of discussing how this initiative can contribute to regional follow-up on the water-related SDGs.

In doing so, the High Level Meeting aims to:

- Report on the findings of the MDG+ Initiative 2016 Report being vetted by the Arab Ministerial Water Council in October 2016;
- Exchange experiences and lessons learned from the implementation of the MDG+ Initiative, particularly with respect to the indicators, data collection methods, institutional framework and pilot field surveys;
- Increase understanding of the water-related goals, targets and indicators adopted in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the work being undertaken within the framework of UN-Water to develop a global monitoring framework on the SDG-6 targets;

- Consider how the MDG+ Initiative indicators and regional monitoring framework can contribute to follow-up on the water-related SDGs; and
- Formulate recommendations on a way forward for monitoring and reporting on the water-related SDGs in the Arab region.

The deliberations will be informed by global, regional and national experience on water-related indicators.

### **III. PARTICIPANTS**

The meeting will gather the members of the ACWUA Board of Directors, the members of the ESCWA Committee on Water Resources, the MDG+ Initiative Focal Points who were nominated through the Arab Ministerial Water Council and who have chaired the National Monitoring Teams in 18 Arab States, as well as selected members of the National Monitoring Teams. Associated stakeholders representing water ministries, water utilities, statistical offices and civil society will also participate, as well as global and regional organizations working on the water-related SDGs, including UN-Water counterparts, the MDG+ Initiative partners and members of the MDG+ Initiative Advisory Board.

### **IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING**

The high level meeting is organized by ESCWA in collaboration with the League of Arab States Technical Secretariat of the Arab Ministerial Water Council and ACWUA within the framework of the MDG+ Initiative project supported by Sida.

The meeting will be held at the Kempinski Hotel in Amman, Jordan from 1 to 2 November 2016. Participants are kindly requested to arrive at 8:45 am on 1 November 2016 to register for the meeting.

### **V. LOGISTICAL INFORMATION**

A block of rooms has been reserved for participants at the Kempinski Hotel in Amman, Jordan at a preferential room rate of US\$ 127/night for a single room, and US\$ 145/night for a double room, inclusive of breakfast, internet access and all taxes. The hotel is located in the Shmeisani commercial district of Amman with restaurants and coffee shops situated nearby. Kindly indicate on the registration form if you would like ESCWA to reserve a room for you at this hotel.

Participants are kindly requested to return their completed registration form to ESCWA. Sponsored participants should submit their registration form to ESCWA no later than Thursday, 6 October 2016 to allow time to make the necessary arrangements for their travel. Sponsorship cannot be assured for registration forms received beyond that date. Participants are responsible for securing their own visa for travel to Jordan.

### **VI. DOCUMENTATION**

The meeting will be informed by the following documents:

- Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/70/L.1), available in Arabic and English at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>
- Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (E/CN.3/2016/2/Rev.1), Annex IV, "Final list of proposed Sustainable Development Goal indicators", available in English at: <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/>
- MDG+ Initiative 2015 Report, available in Arabic and English at: <http://www.acwua.org/mdg+/>

- MDG+ Initiative Training Manual on the Water Supply and Sanitation Indicators, available in Arabic at: <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/water-supply-and-sanitation-indicators-training-manual-mdg-initiative>
- ESCWA Background paper on “Drawing on the MDG+ Initiative for Informing the Water-related SDGs in the Arab Region” [https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/events/files/working\\_paper\\_on\\_mdg\\_for\\_informing\\_water-related\\_sdgs-31march16.pdf](https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/events/files/working_paper_on_mdg_for_informing_water-related_sdgs-31march16.pdf)
- ESCWA Water Development Report 5: Issues in Sustainable Water Resources Management and Water Services (E/ESCWA/SDPD/2013/4), available in Arabic and English at: <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/escwa-water-development-report-5-issues-sustainable-water-resources-management-and>
- UN-Water, “Metadata on Suggested Indicators for Global Monitoring of SDG 6 on Water and Sanitation” <http://www.unwater.org/publications/publications-detail/en/c/296330/> and additional information available at: <http://www.unwater.org/gemi/en/>

This high level meeting builds upon deliberations undertaken on the MDG+ Initiative Expert Group Meeting on the Water-related Sustainable Development Goals (Beirut, 12-13 April 2016). Documentation for that expert meeting is available at:

<https://www.unescwa.org/events/expert-group-meeting-water-related-sustainable-development-goals-sdgs>

Documentation for this high level meeting is available at:

<https://www.unescwa.org/events/mdg-plus-high-level-meeting-water-related-sdgs>

## VII. CORRESPONDENCE

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