**REPORTING FORMAT FOR RAPPORTEURS**

(*Please complete the report in English and limit your inputs to a maximum of 300 words per item*)

***Rapporteur’s name:*** *Marina Batalini de Macedo & Persis Ramirez*

***Rapporteur’s nationality:*** *Brazil and Dominican Republic respectively*

**Title of session**: Interactive Dialogue 2 - Water for Sustainable Development: Valuing Water, Water-Energy-Food Nexus and Sustainable Economic and Urban Development

**Number of attendees** (*if possible*): > 100

**Date and Location:** Wed 22 Mar 2023, 3.00 pm | Conference Room 4, UNHQ, New York

1. **Objective(s) of session**:

* Have an open discussion of the challenges that UN member states are facing regarding water sustainability and identify the key tools which help speed up progress.

**2- Key point(s)**:

*Current problem.*

The main issue that the session presented is how to ensure that water needs for development, the environment, food, and public health are met without creating imbalance and inequalities between all water stakeholders.

*Potential consequences and impacts.*

The unsustainability of water management can have devastating consequences. The session touched upon water scarcity and the limited availability of clean drinking water, resulting in adverse effects on public health. Much stress was put into the need of making access to water and sanitation a sustainable model. Impacts on biodiversity which also affects food security and development was mentioned. Social and economic conflicts were touched upon, particularly in areas where water is a scarce or stressed resource.

*Importance of the topic.*

Water sustainability is essential because it guarantees the preservation of the natural water cycle, and the preservation of water supplies for future generations. Also, it is essential for advancing economic growth, preserving public health, and safeguarding the environment.

*Synergies and trade-offs with other topics.*

The water-energy-food-ecosystem nexus, sustainable economic growth, and urban development were among the key issues that were discussed in the interactive dialogue on the water for sustainable development. The dialogue also highlighted the interactions and trade-offs between these issues and water management. It was emphasized that efficient water management may promote sustainable urban development, increase energy efficiency, and improve food security.

**3- Key Challenges:**

*What are the knowledge gaps identified during the discussion?*

* The availability of sufficient water to meet human needs, ensure public and collective health, and promote resilience to extreme weather events and food security is dependent on context-specific innovative technologies, projects, and programs.
* Countries lack knowledge of specific ways in which water can contribute to achieving WEFE (water-energy-food-ecosystem nexus) security and sustainability in developing countries.
* Although the importance and cultural significance of water was recognized, there was no mention of how to avoid trade-offs in its valuation.
* The strategies through which academia can promote and educate the WEFE nexus were not discussed in detail.
* The specific methods for addressing the gender gap among water professionals were not mentioned.
* The level of involvement of the private sector in investing in water solutions and the specific ways in which they can be engaged remains to be discussed.
* The potential implications of digital solutions in the regulation and decision-making process of water were not discussed.

**4- Key recommendations/solutions presented (key actions to address the problem)**:

* The European Green New Deal is a strategic policy that places water management and environmental sustainability as partners in the creation and development of new technologies, business opportunities and new jobs.
* Technologies based on Nature-based Solutions (NbS) are being developed for the restoration of rivers and watersheds, which help maintain the quality and quantity of water, contributing to its use in all sectors.
* Indigenous knowledge was mentioned as a possible solution to water management in specific contexts.
* Innovation was a keyword during the dialogue and panellists, discussants and country delegates mentioned innovation as a solution to pressing water and sanitation sustainability issues.

**5- Quotes from speakers**:

*Eg. “Water is increasingly related to the future of energy” - Paul O’Callaghan (CEO BlueTech Research)*

*“Water is a catalyst for sustainable development, it connects all SDGs”* -Co-Chair H.E. Dubravka Šuica, European Commission Vice-President for Democracy and Demography

“*From an early age I learned that water is a common good and that water, forest and biodiversity management is what allow us to protect our territories, our culture, our identity.”-* Myrna Cunningham Kain, Indigenous Peoples Major Group on Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

“*Effective urban and territorial planning is instrumental in ensuring the integration of the water sector with other urban sectors such as land use, housing, industry energy and transportation and organise a more sustainable use of natural resources including water”-* Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, USG and Executive Director of the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

“*How we manage water at scale needs to be reshaped”,* *“We argue for a new economic system that safeguards the water cycle”, and “Water policy does not have to be a choice between efficiency or equity”* -Ms. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director-General of World Trade Organization (WTO)

*“Water is everybody’s business”* - Mr. Abou Amani, Director for Water Sciences, Secretary of the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme, UNESCO

**6- Notes from the speakers’ talk**:

The co-chair (H.E. Dubravka Šuica, European Commission Vice-President for Democracy and Demography) stated that there is little time to turn the point and avoid a water crisis. To achieve this, there is a need to develop innovative technologies, projects, and programs that ensure enough water to meet human needs and public and collective health, guarantee water as a productive input for various processes, evaluate water resources within the integrated and holistic perspective of the nexus water-energy-food-ecosystems (WEFE), and ensure resilience to extreme weather events.

H.E. Li Guoying, Minister of Water Resources of the People's Republic of China highlighted that water is a strategic resource, and its management needs to be integrative. China has adopted this integrative vision, and with that, it has achieved progress in several SDGs. But this integrative vision must also go towards global integration, with partnerships and cooperation between countries.

The panellists ( H.E. Mr. A.K. Abdul Momen, Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, H.E. Mr. Nizar Baraka, Minister of Equipment and Water of Morocco, Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, USG and Executive Director of the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), and Mr. Tālis Juhna, Vice-Rector for Research and Professor at Riga Technical University) discussed the role that water plays in achieving WEFE security and how to avoid trade-offs in the valuation of water. The valuation of water plays an important role in financing and incentivizing new water-efficient technologies. However, water value cannot be limited by its economic value since it is a human right and has different cultural and spiritual importance and significance through different cultures.

**7- Relevant stakeholders and organizations present or mentioned**:

The Second Interactive Dialogue was coordinated by UNDESA and UNWater.

**Co-chairs**

* H.E. Mr. Li Guoying, Minister of Water Resources, People’s Republic of China
* H.E. Ms. Dubravka Šuica, European Commission Vice-President for Democracy and Demography, European Union

**Moderator**

* Ms. Myrna Cunningham Kain, Indigenous Peoples Major Group on Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

**Panellists**

* (Keynote) H.E. Mr. A.K. Abdul Momen, Foreign Minister of Bangladesh
* H.E. Mr. Nizar Baraka, Minister of Equipment and Water of Morocco
* Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, USG and Executive Director of the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)
* Mr. Tālis Juhna Vice-Rector for Research and Professor at Riga Technical University
* Lead Discussants
* Mr. Yong-deok Cho, Secretary-General at Asia Water Council
* Ms. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director-General of World Trade Organization (WTO)
* Ms. Dinara Ziganshina, Director of the Scientific Information Center of Interstate Commission for Water Coordination in Central Asia
* Mr. Abou Amani, Director for Water Sciences, Secretary of the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme, UNESCO

**8- Innovative ideas and/or approaches from the session** *(What was new and novel from your perspective?)*

* Nature-based solutions (NbS) for the restoration of rivers and watersheds that help maintain the quality and quantity of water, contributing to its use in all sectors.
* European Green New Deal that places water management and environmental sustainability as partners in the creation and development of new technologies, business opportunities, and new jobs.
* Developing technologies and policies to a more integrated approach and overcoming the challenge of siloed areas.
* Using digital solutions, such as big data, digital twins, data processing, IA to improve regulation and the decision-making process.
* Developing a bottom-up approach, considering the local experiences of the communities, including the rural, traditional, and indigenous communities, for an integrated water management.
* Educating and involving more the private sector in investing in water solutions, applying more venture capital in new tech start-ups with goals on SDGs and SDG 6 specifically.
* Increasing transparency and decreasing corruption in political will and governance by including participatory mechanisms.
* UNESCO is proposing a comprehensive knowledge based on water to support policy, regulation and decision making around the world much like the IPCCC for water.
* Additionally, it was moving to listen to the representative of Ukraine explaining how Russia weaponized their shared transboundary water resources in their ongoing armed conflict.

**9- How do the session outcomes impact the Water Action Agenda? How to translate the discussion into commitments and actions?**

The UN Member states and organizations participating in this event have shown their commitment to the water action agenda by submitting concrete actions that they will take to support the accelerated achievement of SDG6. These commitments can be accessed on the UN web portal, and they demonstrate a collective effort to address the urgent global water crisis. Additionally, the discussions held in the second interactive dialogues were also featured in the closing plenary of the UN Water Conference.

**11- How does this session relate water to other SDGs?**

The interactive dialogue highlighted the critical role of water in achieving several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 14 (Life Below Water), and SDG 15 (Life On Land).

**12- Short personal analysis of the session.**

My key takeaways are the following:

1. In light of the worsening water challenges caused by climate change, there was a general consensus that we need to transform the way we approach things, from household water usage to large-scale food production. However, there was little to no mention of behaviour change. I believe that social sciences are a key component of our fight for water and sanitation access, and it's concerning that no one is talking about this aspect. Society will have to modify the way we behave and perceive our resources, and ultimately, certain communities will be more affected by these changes.
2. Throughout the session, much attention was given to the need for transformative ways to approach the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus, with a recurring topic being "innovation." The word was used over a dozen times, but there's a skewed perception that innovation implies the creation of something new. It's usually forgotten that innovation also involves improving something already existing. Moreover, we need to reconcile the notion of innovation with the acknowledgement and onboarding of indigenous ancestral knowledge.
3. I am very excited about the proposal that Mr. Abou Amani, (Director for Water Sciences, Secretary of the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme, UNESCO) mentioned of having a comprehensive knowledge-based platform on water at the country and international levels. As a water professional, I understand the limitations that the self-reported JMP assessment presents. I do believe that having such a mechanism will be a game changer for water management.
4. I left the room with the impression that although water is recognized as a human right, governments are giving more weight to the economic value of water than its environmental, health, and social value. As an Afro-Caribbean woman residing in a region where water affordability and the financial sustainability of water utilities are always in question, this is particularly concerning to me.

**Persis Ramirez**

1. Much has been said about the need to invest in new technologies to improve the efficiency of water systems and that for this it is necessary to invest in science, in Universities and other research centres. But funding for such research is still challenging, especially in developing countries, where economic constraints are severe.
2. A possible alternative to finance research and actions in the water sector is charging for the use of water, as a productive input (as in the principle of water management in France and Brazil “water must pay for water”), which requires valuation of water, one of the topics discussed in this session. However, the term valuation is still very generic and the limits and trade-offs have not been deepened and addressed.
3. Much was said about the role of the private sector in increasing funding, putting in place the necessary new infrastructure, and the job opportunities that can be generated by the growth of actions in water. But there was no comment on the role of the private sector in places where there is no economic interest or profitability.

**Marina Macedo**