**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:*** *Sudipti Arora & Persis Ramirez*

***Rapporteur’s nationality:*** *Indian (Sudipti) and Dominican Republic (Persis)*

**Title of session**: Informal Special Event: Water Leadership: Uniting for a Sustainable World

**Number of attendees** (*if possible*): Although the number of attendees is currently unknown, the session audience was very inclusive and diverse in every sense.

**Date and Location:** Fri 24 Mar 2023, 10.00 am | Conference Room 2, UNHQ in New York

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

**Main objective:** *Amplify the voices of often underrepresented groups including youth, women, indigenous people, and local authorities.*

This session had four (4) additional objectives:

1. **Inspire** action and bold policies for a water-secure world for all.
2. **Compile** a concrete list of commitments related to each underrepresented group (youth, women, local authorities, Indigenous Peoples) to support the Water Action Agenda.
3. **Identify** inclusive leadership mechanisms for the implementation, and monitoring and evaluation, of the commitments taken within the Water Action Agenda.
4. **Recognize** the need to expand ﬁnancing mechanisms with strong accountability mechanisms, especially, federal and state funding in educational initiatives, competitive grant programs, development programs and other innovative training programs for youth, women, and Indigenous Peoples.

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

*Current problem.*

The water sector faces several critical challenges that are impeding progress towards achieving universal access to safe water and sanitation. These include a lack of recognition of water leadership from diverse backgrounds, resulting in missed opportunities for innovative solutions and new ideas. Water leadership from diverse backgrounds is critical because it brings together people from different walks of life, with varying perspectives, experiences, and expertise. This diversity of thought can lead to a more holistic approach to water management that is inclusive, equitable, and sustainable. Unfortunately, water leadership positions have often been filled by individuals from similar backgrounds, resulting in a lack of diversity of thought and ideas. Additionally, the failure to engage with underrepresented groups is perpetuating persistent inequalities and disparities. These groups, including women, indigenous peoples, and marginalized communities, are often excluded from decision-making processes and not consulted on issues that directly affect their lives. This exclusion leads to a lack of understanding of their needs and priorities, which can result in water management policies that do not meet the needs of these communities. The absence of understanding that every individual has the potential to initiate change and make an impact is a challenge to progress. Empowering individuals and communities to take ownership of their water resources and to participate in decision-making processes is critical to sustainable and equitable water management. Finally, the lack of prepared enabling conditions by member states is impeding the development of effective, inclusive, and meaningful water leadership from the ground up. Member states must establish enabling conditions that provide opportunities for diverse individuals and communities to participate in decision-making processes and leadership positions. These conditions include policies that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as access to resources and training opportunities. These challenges must be addressed to ensure sustainable and equitable water management for all. Achieving universal access to safe water and sanitation requires the active participation of all individuals and communities, regardless of their background or circumstances. By recognizing and addressing these challenges, we can promote diversity of thought and ideas, empower underrepresented groups, and create enabling conditions for effective and inclusive water leadership from the ground up.

*Potential consequences and impacts.*

* Missed opportunities for innovative solutions and new ideas that come from diverse perspectives.
* Marginalization of important voices and perspectives in the water sector (women, youth, indigenous people and local authorities).
* Stagnation and lack of progress in addressing water-related challenges and achieving sustainable water management.
* Underestimation of the value of small-scale actions and initiatives in achieving global water-related goals.
* Lack of recognition for the efforts of individuals who take on a leadership role in water-related issues.
* Persistent inequalities and disparities in access to safe water and sanitation.
* Missed opportunities for the development of innovative solutions and approaches that consider the needs and perspectives of underrepresented groups.
* Lack of trust and legitimacy in water-related decision-making processes.
* Ineffective, top-down water management approaches that do not consider local needs and context.
* Lack of ownership and commitment from local communities in water-related initiatives.
* Missed opportunities for the development of sustainable, context-appropriate solutions.

*Importance of the topic.*

Water is an indispensable resource for human life, economic development, and environmental sustainability. However, the water sector is facing various challenges that hinder the achievement of universal access to safe water and sanitation, such as the lack of recognition of diverse leadership, under-representation of marginalized groups, and inadequate enabling conditions. Therefore, frameworks are necessary to establish commitments and ensure accountability to implement the Water Action Agenda, which is crucial for sustainable and equitable water management.

*Synergies and trade-offs with other topics.*

**Session 1 on "What does Water Leadership Look Like?"** set the tone for the event and lays the groundwork for understanding the importance of water leadership in achieving SDG 6, the session touched upon the following topics: Human rights, advocacy, the role of women in water management and diverse representation in decision making related to access to water and sanitation.

**Session 2 on "Building commitments and accelerating action"** built on the understanding of water leadership by showcasing commitments by different stakeholders and presented potential synergies with the Water Action Agenda specifically the Mutual Accountability Mechanism (MAM) of Sanitation and Water for All and the actions integrated in the Water and Climate Youth Development Plan and Agenda (YDPA) for UN1FY.

**Session 3 on "Beyond the 2023 Water Conference"** discussed the way forward beyond the conference and how to sustain the momentum created during the event. Capacity building, awareness raising, mobilization of human and financial resources were the topics that dominated this session.

**3- Key Challenges:**

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

* Minorities are not adequately represented in the water sector, and they frequently have their voices ignored or drowned.
* Young people also don't participate as much in water management decision-making procedures due to lack of representation in such fora.
* Despite the critical role they play in ensuring that people have access to clean water, local governments and indigenous people in water management are frequently disregarded.
* A further challenge for underrepresented groups is the continued dominance of men in the water sector and the unbalanced representation of women in STEM.
* It was argued that the privatization of water and sanitation services limits access to these necessities, ultimately preventing the fulfillment of the fundamental human right to water and sanitation.
* Adopting an accountability system is required to make sure the Water Action Agenda achieves its goals.

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

* To ensure adequate representation of minorities in the water sector, it is recommended that policies be put in place to encourage and facilitate the participation of underrepresented groups in decision-making processes. This can be achieved by offering training and capacity-building programs, providing financial incentives for underrepresented groups to participate, and creating channels for feedback and consultation.
* To encourage greater participation of young people in water management decision-making processes, it is recommended that specific initiatives be launched to engage young people in water management and provide them with opportunities to contribute their ideas and perspectives. This can include support to youth-led water projects, youth-focused training and education programs, and the establishment of youth water organizations.
* Local governments and indigenous communities as well as indigenous knowledge on water management should be given greater recognition and support for their role in ensuring access to clean water for all. This can be achieved by providing greater funding and resources for local water management and their inclusion in decision making.
* It was recommended that gender equity be promoted in the industry through the adoption of policies and programs that encourage greater representation of women in water.
* To ensure that the fundamental human right to water and sanitation is upheld, it is recommended that the privatization of water and sanitation services be carefully monitored and regulated to prevent the exploitation of vulnerable communities. Governments should prioritize the provision of public water and sanitation services to ensure access to these necessities for all citizens.
* Finally, to ensure that the Water Action Agenda achieves its goals, an accountability system should be put in place to monitor progress and hold stakeholders accountable for their commitments. This can include regular reporting and review mechanisms, as well as the establishment of clear targets and benchmarks for measuring progress.

**5- Quotes from speakers**:

* *“People closer to the problem, are closer to the solution”* – **Daniel Koto Dagnon** ( Leeder Benin Youth Parliament for Water)
* *“We need to work together for this cause, because water is a common good that safeguards life, not just human life but all life*” - **Rodrigo Mundaca** (Governor of Valparaiso Region, Chile)
* “*We must return to a way of life that understand, respects and upholds our responsibility to this precious life giving resource”* - **Janene Yazzie**, (IITC delegate, Navajo Nation)
* “*Only meaningful quotas make sense”* - **Bharti Kannan**, (Boondh Social Foundation)
* *“[The water crisis] is an extra burden, the challenge is 2 to 3 times more on women than men”* - **Vika Kalokalo**, (DIVA Fiji)
* “*It should not be possible to be profiting in water which is a common human right*” - **Philippe Rio** (Mayor of Grigny)
* *“Youth need to fight to be better understood by their governments”* **Kenneth Alfaro** (Red de Jóvenes por el Agua Centroamérica)
* *“Water is a common public good, one that must serve communities, it is not a group of clients but rather a group of citizens that have a human right”*- **Pedro Arrojo-Agudo**, (Current United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights to water and sanitation)

**6- Notes from the speakers’ talk**:

**Dr. Phil Duncan**

The value that indigenous people place on water is a deeply held perception that deserves recognition and acknowledgement. In Australia, there has been a case study on this issue, and efforts have been made to include indigenous people in parliament to ensure their voices are heard. These efforts have been ongoing for 23 years, and commitment to the cause is essential.

**Anita Soina**

The lack of clean toilets in schools is a violation of basic human rights, with implications for health and well-being. There are also barriers to menstrual health, including a tax on menstrual products, which even women have supported. Women should have access to menstrual health as a fundamental policy. Menstrual justice is an essential issue, and quotas alone do not translate into gender-positive policies. Root causes of gender inequality need to be addressed with policies that create real change. Ensuring that women have access to menstrual health is not only a matter of basic human rights but also a matter of gender equality and social justice.

**Bharti Kannan, Boondh Social Foundation**

Bharti explains current situations of India & her experience with working with women of rural India. The situation in India is complex as the needs vary with geography. In 1992, a landmark legislation was passed which included 1/3rd of women in Panchayati Raj institution. Panchayati Raj is a system of self -governance. But at the local village level, the real power still lies in the men. She emphasized on a meaningful quota, and shared that women should have voices and should be heard and/ lead with dignity.

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

The coordinating partners of this event included:

* **The Major Group for Children and Youth:** Major Group for Children and Youth (unmgcy.org)
* **The Women’s Major Group:** Women's Major Group (womensmajorgroup.org)
* **Sanitation and Water for All:** A global partnership to achieve universal access to clean water and adequate sanitation | Sanitation and Water for All (SWA)
* **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights:** UN Human Rights Office (ohchr.org)
* **UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to water and sanitation:** https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-water-and-sanitation
* **United Cities and Local Government (UCLG):** UCLG - United Cities and Local Governments
* **Local Authorities Major Group:** Local Authorities Major Group | Global Taskforce (global-taskforce.org)
* **Water Youth Network: Water Youth Network | Connecting you(th) on water issues**
* **Water and Climate Coalition:** Homepage - Water and Climate Coalition (water-climate-coalition.org)
* **UN1FY:** UN1FY - Water and Climate Coalition (water-climate-coalition.org)
* **International Secretariat for Water:** Home - Secrétariat international de l’eau (SIE) et Solidarité Eau Europe (SEE) (sie-see.org)
* **International Water Association:** International Water Association - International Water Association (iwa-network.org)
* **Global Water Partnership:** Global Water Partnership - GWP
* **World Youth Parliament for Water:** World Youth Parliament for Water - Home | Youth network acting for water around the world (youthforwater.org)
* **Aither Pty Ltd:** AITHER | Advisors in Water Policy and Management, Infrastructure & Natural Hazards
* **Wavemakers United:** Wavemakers United
* **YOUNGO – UNFCCC:** YOUNGO | UNFCCC
* **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations:** Home | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (fao.org)

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

1. All participants in person and online were able to contribute to the discussion using mentimeter.
2. The second session of the event hosted for the first time ever the three Special Rapporteur on the rights to water and sanitation at the same time:

* Pedro Arrojo-Agudo, current United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights to water and sanitation
* Mr. Léo Heller, second Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation
* Catarina de Albuquerque, SWA CEO and the ﬁrst Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation

1. SWA proposed the Mutual Accountability Mechanism (MAM) as a way to monitor the advancement of the commitments that compose the Water Action Agenda.

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

The 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.

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

**SDG 6**: **Clean Water and Sanitation** was the main topic of discussion at this event. However, the event also addressed other SDGs, including **SDG 5**: **Gender Equality** (Debate 2 on Women and water leadership), **SDG 10**: **Reduced Inequality** (Debate 1 on Indigenous water leadership), and **SDG 13**: **Climate Action** (Session 2 on Frameworks for building commitments, which included the Water and Climate Youth Development Plan and Agenda). The event also emphasized the value of accountability and monitoring in accomplishing the 2030 Water Action Agenda, which is consistent with the idea of *leaving no one behind*, a theme that runs across all of the SDGs.

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

*“From the musical interludes, the opportunities to contribute to the discussion using the mentimeter, to the actual discussions held in the panels, this event was an incredibly necessary and refreshing change of pace within the UN Water Conference. Each session was packed with so much information and somehow, I was not overwhelmed at all. At the end of the event everyone left feeling energized and motivated to take on the challenge of accelerating SDG6 in a much more inclusive manner*.”

**Persis Ramirez**

*The session was powerful and enriching with meaningful interpretations of what is being said and what is un-said. The session emphasized the crucial role played by youth, women, and indigenous communities in driving transformative practices and innovative solutions for sustainable water management. These groups can significantly accelerate progress towards achieving SDG 6, which aims to ensure universal access to safe water and sanitation. The session also highlighted that the water crisis is an urgent and emergency crisis, and immediate action is needed to address the challenge. The existing policies and frameworks may not be adequate, and a more urgent response is required. In summary, the session highlighted the significance of inclusive and diverse leadership in the water sector to achieve sustainable and equitable water management.*

*-Sudipti Arora*