



SAHEL

DEEP DIVE ON WATER AS AN ACCELERATOR FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE SAHEL

United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS)
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Introduction

At the 13th Steering Committee meeting of UNISS held in N'djamena Chad, one of the major outcomes was the identification of Water as one of the key accelerating factors to drive development in the Sahel. To implement the recommendations of the UNISS Steering Committee members regarding the choice of development accelerators for the Sahel region, the UNISS Co-chairs have organized a one full day deep dive workshop on 15 February 2023 in Dakar, Senegal to unpack and prioritize actions identified in the technical paper prepared by the UNISS experts from the Resilience Working Group.





OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the deep dive workshop on water as an accelerator was to continue the conversation that started at the last UNISS steering committee meeting in Ndjamena in May 2022 to jointly agree on two or three main ticket items drawn from the UNSP and the UNISS Vision Paper or even beyond those, that UN AFPs can coalesce around to spur accelerated implementation of UNISS for the benefit of the Sahelians. More specifically the deep dive workshop examined what is needed to support the achievement of the Sahel's vision around water as an accelerator covering:

1. Gaps and opportunities

2. Policy

3. National and regional frameworks

4. Investment in integrated sustainable water management

5. Investment in water mobilization and irrigation

6. Blue economy, energy and climate

7. Water – peace building and conflict resolution

8. One water-One health (Agriculture and waterborne diseases, quality of care)

9. Water for domestic and human consumption

10. Water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure, systems, and service

The deep dive session on water was held under the leadership of the two co-chairs of the Steering Committee: UN Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General for West Africa and the Sahel, Ms. Giovane Biha and the Assistant Secretary General, Assistant Administrator and Regional Director of the United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for Africa, Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa-Onochie. It also benefited from the presence, and perspective of the UN Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel, Mr. Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, ASG and Regional Director for WHO, Dr. Matshidiso Rebecca Moeti and DCO Regional Director, Yacoub El Hillo. Key participants included: United Nations Resident Coordinators of the United Nations System in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, The Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, and Senegal, and Regional Directors and technical staff of United Nations Offices, Agencies, Funds and Programmes. Guest speaker included Mr. Abdoulaye Sene, President of Global Water Partnership West Africa and Former Executive Secretary WWF9- Dakar 2022.

OPENING AND FRAMING SESSION KEY HIGHLIGHTS

The opening session was moderated by Ms. Nwanne Vwede-Obahor, Director – UN Office of the Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel (OSCDS) and included introductory remarks from (a) the Co-Chair of the UNISS Steering Committee, the ASG, Assistant Administrator and Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa, and vice co-chair of the Regional Coordination Platform (RCP) for Africa, Ahunna Eziakonwa-Onochie, (b) ASG and Regional Director for WHO, Dr. Matshidiso Rebecca Moeti, and (c) DCO Regional Director, Yacoub El Hillo. The session was framed by the UN Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel, Mr. Abdoulaye Mar Dieye.

In her introductory remarks, the Co-Chair of the UNISS Steering Committee, the ASG, Assistant Administrator and Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa, and vice co-chair of the Regional Coordination Platform (RCP) for Africa, Ahunna Eziakonwa-Onochie seized the opportunity to stress out the importance of water and the necessity of working on water considering its various uses throughout all sectors of development. However, water scarcity remains more critical to vulnerable communities in the Sahel region while suffering of transboundary disruptions. She mentioned that the evidence shows a triple benefit of investing in water, which nourishes the need to invest in water as an accelerator for development.

She underscored the need and reasons to be hopeful about the potential of development offered by water as substantiated by the



numbers and evidence. Nevertheless, it remains key to evaluate how much water lays underground. Moreover, the use of data and innovation to map aquifer potential need to be implemented and strengthened to harness the importance of water in all sectors and for all actors.

USG and UN SCDS Abdoulaye Mar Dieye highlighted the Sahelian paradox (rich in groundwater but with communities affected by food insecurity). He recognized that the question of water has been over-studied with enough elements following the world water forum. He highlighted the results of the United Nations Water Conference, the maps of underground reserves developed by UNESCO on the availability of water which are interesting data to exploit in order to make the invisible visible (groundwater) and adapt integrated water management policies and strategies to the particular case of the Sahel, characterized by insecurity.

However, he cautioned the operational nature of the majority of the documents is limited, hence the need to hold the deep dive. Similarly,

of the 10 UNISS countries, only 3 countries have a water profile, thus the need to support countries on water governance. In terms of action, he advised it would be important to update the body of analysis that exists and internalize it in the work of UNISS. On the other hand, the Sahelian regional contextual aspect of water has gaps on which it is necessary to dwell. The current focus is essentially on how to manage water in crisis and conflict situations which are not extensively studied.



He emphasized the lack of a coherent analytical framework in our work in terms of projection is a weakness that deserves the attention of the UN System. On the other hand, the notion of optimization on constraints relating to possible water financing in the sub-region is not fully considered in the financing plans. The gap between water supply and demand widens even more with a significant deficit in terms of extraction. For instance, agriculture is the most demanding sector followed by industry and human consumption. The general human demand should respond more to the needs for a harmonized distribution of available resources. To this end, it is imperative to strengthen sustainable water resources management systems.

He noted the limitations generated by working in silos must be addressed at the expense of significant synergy both at the thematic and geospatial level. The UN System approaches and interventions in water sector seem more reactive than proactive, despite the projections in terms of water availability. The Sahel must, in a proactive approach, emphasize water as a development accelerator.

DCO, Regional Director, Mr. Yacoub El Hillo expressed thanks for the focus on water in the current regional dynamic, a resource taken for granted. Cooperative frameworks are still very country centric, hence a bridge between the country and regional level need

to be established for a better integration and synergy between regional and country priorities. He fully supported the idea of having a technical platform to support countries and have economic expert join the process.



He noted that UNISS is the only strategy in the Sahel sanctioned by the UN Security Council, which provides it with more convening power and legitimacy to act. He suggested a novel approach through embracing UNISS as a regional strategic framework and use this opportunity for the launch of the new concept “UNCT without borders”.



ASG and Regional Director for WHO, Dr. Matshidiso Rebecca Moeti welcomed the organization of the Deep Dive Session and underscored the insights of water’s importance for health vulnerability and water born disease. She noted the opportunity of looking at water as a vulnerability factor for less favored communities, including the importance of having appropriate settings for access to clean water in health care as paramount.

In terms of recommendations, participants agreed to (i) establish a UNISS integrated water platform to support UNCT, countries and regional programs through data and information collection and sharing; (ii) organize and support UNCT briefing sessions towards the consolidation of water as an accelerator, and (iii) implement integrated programmatic actions plan for the UN including NGO and other entities.

SESSION II

Identification of synergy on water as a development accelerator in the Sahel: This session examined what is needed to support the achievement of the Sahel's vision around water as an accelerator covering key topics developed in the technical non-paper. The panelists all interrogated the following: (i) Why an integrated approach? (ii) support to States for the implementation of different SDGs at the local, national, and regional levels.

The session was moderated by Regional Director for DCO Africa, Mr. Yacoub El Hillo and featured a panel made of Regional Directors for FAO Mr. Robert Guei and WFP Mr. Chris Nikoi, and UNICEF Principal Advisor for the Sahel, Ms. Macoura Oulare who reflected on the major expectations of the deep dive session. The session was framed by the Resident Coordinator for Cameroon, Matthias Naab. The focus of their intervention was:

Identify synergies between UN agencies in their work on water and how they align with other strategic interventions, including under National Development Plans.

How those synergies can be enhanced as catalysts or accelerators. Where no synergy has been built, how to build it?

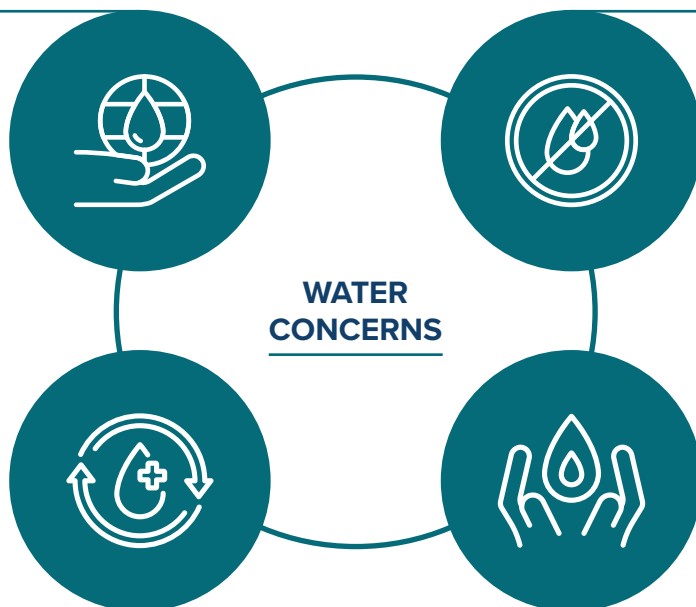
Other aligned issues to the identified areas of priority – advocacy plans, action plan on water, financing etc.



Mr. Yacoub El Hillo, RD DCO Africa highlighted few important statistics that caught his attention in the non-paper serving as a background for the deep dive:

Across the Sahel, **WATER AVAILABILITY HAS DROPPED BY MORE THAN 40 PER CENT IN THE LAST 20 YEARS**, largely due to climate shocks and destructive conflict patterns. In Burkina Faso for instance, deliberate attacks on water infrastructures and services providers dramatically increased in 2022, leaving 830,000 people without access to safe water.

Only 72% have access to safe drinking water in the Sahel, compared to 90% globally, meaning that **96 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE SAHEL LACK ADEQUATE WATER SUPPLY**. Additionally, only 48% of schools and 36% of healthcare facilities in the Sahel have safe drinking water supply. In Mauritania, only 34% have access to safe drinking water, and 40% with access to improved latrines.



The chronic shortage caused the region's worst cholera outbreak in the last six years, leading to almost **112.000 SUSPECTED CASES AND 3.800 REPORTED DEATHS IN THE 10 UNISS COUNTRIES**, mostly in Nigeria and Niger. Sahelian countries currently have the worst Water, Sanitation, Hygiene (WASH) mortality rates globally.

In Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria, **MORE THAN 75 MILLION PEOPLE, INCLUDING ABOUT 40 MILLION CHILDREN, ARE FACING HIGH TO EXTREMELY HIGH LEVELS OF WATER VULNERABILITY**. Water vulnerability is even worse in Burkina Faso, where out of a total population of 21 million, more than 18 million, half of whom, are children who are experiencing high levels of water vulnerability.

He underscored that water insecurity is one of the greatest challenges to sustainable development in a region where two thirds of the population depend on rain-fed agriculture and livestock rearing for survival. It is threatening social cohesion, with farmers, herders, fishermen, forestry workers, miners, and other groups competing over less available natural resources and depleted water resources. Water scarcity has also had a multiplier effect on the migration crisis, pushing people to move, fueling communal and cross border tensions, and exposing young people to an increased risk of recruitment into violent extremist groups.

He noted that water scarcity has also aggravated gender equality, with women and girls spending hours daily to fetch drinking water and losing opportunities to go to school or work in decent jobs. Menstruating girls and women are also at a higher risk of losing access to education and employment when they do not have access to clean water and sanitation facilities. Achieving almost all of the SDGs requires closing the water gap, both in volume and quality. Government and partners need to accelerate efforts to achieve SDG 6 by 2030, aiming at providing access to safe water for all. Investing in water would also help the Sahel meet the ECOWAP results, the Africa Water Vision for 2025, AU's 2063 Agenda, the 2030 Agenda, the Water cooperation for peace and stability and the 2022 World Water forum declaration for a "Blue deal".

Matthias Naab, Resident Coordinator for Cameroon emphasized that water is life and water won't get enemy; water is related to many different sectors and an integrated approach to water has a positive impact on almost all the SDGs. Hence, there is need to focus on areas that have greater impact on socio-economic aspects such as energy, agriculture, and climate change which are all key to address the issue of water. He noted the synergies between water management strategies and policies and those related to climate change, agriculture, resilience and fragility, health, and education. The issues related to water need to be addressed holistically, also considering the water, energy, and food nexus.

He made some recommendations and suggestions, notably:

1. At the regional level: (i) use water efficiently in particular in the agricultural sector – reflect on how the UN can help ensuring this in the Sahel; (ii) call for multinational governance mechanisms to be put in place for a regional approach and a shared water policy for the Sahel.
2. At the national level: UN can support the governments in working on the three following policy areas (via the CF, programmes, advocacy): (i) Water and Health: need to ensure access to safe drinking water (ii) Water and Energy: need to diversify the energy sources and explore the potential of solar energy – water-energy nexus (iii) invest in water resource management: investment in water management has positive impacts on agriculture, energy, health and the economic sector as can in turn increase production and productivity.
3. At the local level: focus on water conservation and decentralization (work at the sub-national and municipal level is also key to ensure equitable, affordable, and resilient access to water.)

Mr. Robert Guei, Regional Director for FAO highlighted the importance to have an integrated approach to access to water by starting to map water resources. He also underscored the significance of having geospatial data on land and water administration. He concluded by pleading for the protection and restoration of the natural water storage of the Chateau d'eau de l'Afrique de l'Ouest, Massif du Fouta-Djalou.

Ms. Macoura Oulare, UNICEF, Sahel Principal Advisor recalled that water is a matter of rights. Access to water is a human right. Everyone should have access to the quantity and quality needed to live. Water is increasingly becoming a source of conflict. Proper management of this resource is crucial for peace and security in the Sahel. Indeed, in five countries of the Sahel (Niger, Nigeria, Mali, Chad and Burkina Faso) - 1/3 of the population has no access to water, with inequality between rural, urban, rich, and poor. This has major consequences also for health facilities, schools, food security etc. In Burkina Faso for instance, deliberate attacks on water infrastructures and services providers dramatically increased in 2022, leaving 830,000 people without access to safe water.

She stressed that water needs to be protected as well as WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) infrastructure. The issue of water quality and availability is an opportunity for the development of the Sahel. These opportunities are open by the availability of renewable energy, large youth population in the region, and the increased awareness through the organization for the first time of the World Water Forum of last year in Dakar, Africa.

As for recommendations, she advised the following at :

1. Country-level: (i) ensure that humanitarian and development actors work together to ensure access to water with a nexus approach; (ii) ensure to include youth, women and girls in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects; (iii) protect water, the workers of this sector and the infrastructure and (iv) consider climate change in UN actions, building resilient WASH infrastructure and doing solid risk analysis in the CCA and CF.

2. Regional level: (i) ensure that UNISS work plan includes issues around governance, knowledge management, innovation; (ii) establish at the end of this deep dive a group responsible to follow up on the recommendations of today.

Mr. Chris Nikoi, Regional Director for WFP underlined that water is at the root of humanitarian needs due to floods, droughts, and other extreme weather events, as well as communal and cross-border conflicts over increasing scarce access to water resources. It can be the key to creating jobs and livelihoods for young people as it is central to food processing and health. Water is vital in the relations between herders and farmers regarding water sharing and accessibility that can lead to conflicts. He also mentioned that water is crucial to the work of building community resilience and food security.

He underscored the centrality of water in the work of all UN agencies as it can bring the whole UN system together without controversy because it falls outside the mandate of any one agency. Water reservoirs are critical, not only as dams or ways to collect rain, but also as natural reservoirs that needs to be protected. Even artificial reservoirs can help save water. The importance of irrigation and more efficient use of water is also crucial, using both high and low technology solutions, cannot be overemphasized. In addition, water will be at the center and will also drive strategic and development decisions in terms of nutrition (e.g., by choosing crops that require less water) and there is need for preparation to advise the government on this (including the transition to different diets).

The gender aspect is also important in water management and necessitate to reflect on when regarding implementation of programmes and projects. For example, the promotion of school feeding, and that is good for children who are in school and can eat and have access to water, but what if instead of being able to go to school, girls have to fetch water from far away? There is a need to reduce the distance girls have to walk to access water.

He suggested the following recommendations:



To invite in the future the national water managers to the water-related meetings



Water supply and demand must be transformed in a more resilient and sustainable way



To review UN strategic priorities in the Cooperation Frameworks and look specifically at water to see how UN can contribute directly to this issue



Need to focus on rural communities because that is where the pressures are greatest and where UN agencies have a comparative advantage



Need to look at the regional dimension



Need to identify 3 or 4 specific actions for RCs to engage with governments

Argentina Matavel, Regional Director for UNFPA pointed out that water is critical for girls and women because it multiplies existing vulnerabilities. Women and girls miss school, work, and social events when they are menstruating if they do not have adequate toilets and are more vulnerable to violence when they have to travel to collect water: She recognized that water is a critical issue across all UN entities mandates. It is therefore good for all UN entities to work on together. But it is also a government issue - and some actions go beyond UN mandate as they are the responsibility of national governments. Hence, it is important to take note of all that has been done and what needs to be done on water in the Sahel by the UN but also by governments. The Cooperation Frameworks and the mainstreaming of UNISS are two essential tools to support the governments on this matter.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS SESSION

1. Design a work plan for UNISS with specific actions to implement the recommendations made at the Deep Dive session. Structure the UNISS Action Plan for Water in the Sahel around the themes included in the SDG 6 Acceleration Plan, namely: (a) governance, (b) financing, (c) information management, (d) capacity building, (e) innovation. Contextualize this global reading grid to the specificities of the Sahel region.
2. Establish at the end of the deep dive a group who will follow up on the recommendations/ UNISS work plan that will come out of the deep dive session.

3. Support initiatives that can lead to the setup of multinational governance mechanisms for a regional approach and a shared water policy for the Sahel.

4. Agree on 3/4 specific actions for RCs to engage on water with Governments.

5. Engage counterparts responsible for water management in national governments in future conversations.

6. Use the opportunity of the new UN Cooperation Framework to have water included in the strategic priorities – in 2023, 6 countries of the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Chad, The Gambia, Guinea, Mauritania, Senegal) are designing their Cooperation Framework. Address the issue of water specifically to see how UN can contribute directly to this issue. Also ensure the inclusion of UNISS in the Cooperation Framework to allow regional collaboration and action.

7. Map water resources with more detail; including geospatial data on land and water administration as well as a stocktaking of what has been done on water and what needs to be done by the UN – and other actors.

8. Water storage and water conservation is key. Focus on the protection and restauration of natural water storage such as the Chateau d'eau de l'Afrique de l'Ouest, Massif du Fouta-Djalon and other natural water storage. Consider also building artificial water storages.

9. Prioritize the following in UN programming:

- Ensure local communities, youth, women are included in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects
- Rural communities (they are the most affected by water scarcity; and it is also where the UN has a comparative advantage)
- Gender equality (considering how girls and women are affected when access to water is not easy and when private places to wash and change are not available)
- Youth (water as an opportunity to create jobs and livelihoods for young people)
- Take into consideration the effects of water management on social cohesion, conflicts, and migration in UN analysis
- Decentralization (working at the sub-national – municipal, local level – is essential to ensure access to water)
- Resilience (support governments in building WASH facilities and services more resilient to climate change, including through a sound risk analysis in the CCA and in the CF, and the development of climate-sensitive sector plans in their national development plans)
- Nexus (ensuring that humanitarian and development actors work together to ensure access to water with a nexus approach).

10. Put in place actions in line with International Humanitarian Law and the Geneva principles on the protection of water, WASH infrastructures and services during armed conflicts.

11. Remind stakeholders that access to water, as well as personnel working in the water sector, are protected by International Humanitarian Law and the Geneva List of Principles for the Protection of Water Infrastructure.

SESSION III

Perspectives from the Dakar Declaration on Water: Setting a blueprint for water as an accelerator for development across the humanitarian, development, and peace and security nexus: The session was to build on the Dakar Declaration on Water to explore and propose concrete opportunities and actions to reaffirm the centrality of water in the development process of the Sahel region in view of the Nexus approach that characterizes the particular situation in the region. The session was moderated by Mr. Matthias Naab, Resident Coordinator in Cameroon and the framing was done by Mr. Robert Guei, Regional Director for FAO. The presentation was made by Mr. Abdoulaye Sene President Global Water Partnership West Africa and Former Executive Secretary WWF9- Dakar 2022.

Mr. Abdoulaye Sene underlined that water is intimately tied to life, development, peace, resilience, and human right. There cannot be health, sustainable socio-economic progress without access to adequate water resources. Water is essential for people, nature, security, and is key foundation and enabler of the SDG agenda. He also noted that with the current trends, few countries in Africa will have universal access to water and sanitation by 2030, and access could even deteriorate for certain countries in the Sahel region.

He gave an overview of water access and situation in the Sahel, which for basic water access rate in the 10 Sahel countries is 72% compared to 90% worldwide with significant inequalities by region and area (urban and rural). Sahelian countries have the worst WASH mortality rates (according to WHO) in the world. He underscored that solving a community's water problem in the Sahel, yield solving 80% or even 90% of its problems. Annual rainfall varies between 200 mm and 600 mm, (2 to 3 months), surface water is limited and often seasonal. The low quantity, temporal and spatial variability of rainfall are a limiting factor for agricultural production. 5 countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria), face high to extremely high levels of water vulnerability.

He highlighted the Sahel rich transboundary basins whose groundwater at varying depths covers most of the region and is the main resource. The most abundant aquifers as well as important river basins are transboundary, which complicates water resources management. Cooperation is essential for the concerted sharing and management of TGLs (Temiscamingue Watershed) in order to avoid conflict and preserve international peace and security. The rapid growth of the population (117 million in 2025 and 208 million in 2050), which is very young, poses challenges for access to water in the Sahel. Accelerated demographics and urbanization overwhelm the capacity to meet the multiple and growing water needs. He also noted that lack of water leads to increased political/public insecurity, displacement of populations and youth.

He underlined that water withdrawals represent less than 1% of total renewable resources. Agricultural sector largest user of water with over 70% of withdrawals. Less than 3% of arable land is equipped with irrigation "economic scarcity of water". Achieving the SDGs will require a 12-fold increase in current rates of progress for drinking water, and a 20-fold increase for safely managed sanitation.

As for Blue Deal on Water Security for Peace and Development, he highlighted five components and principles to sustain the implementation of the Blue Deal from 2022 to 2023 through a multi-actor's platform made of ministers, parliamentarians, local authorities, and regional entities in charge of basins. The actions for Blue Deal on water for peace and development include: (i) Ensure the right to water and sanitation for all; (ii) Accelerate the implementation of the human right to water, mobilize all actors through integrated and inclusive, structured, and informed strategies; (iii) Promote the application of international humanitarian law, with the protection of water and sanitation systems, vital in times of conflict; (iv) Ensure that the values that societies place on water and its uses are recognized in political decisions; and (v) Accelerate efforts to achieve MDG 6, with safe access to safe water and sanitation for all.

With regards to ensuring resource availability and resilience, Mr. Abdoulaye Sene suggested:

01 Adoption of IPWR (Integrated Plan for Water Resources Management) plans, to balance demands, preserve resources and ecosystems and ensure resilience to pressures;	02 Implementation of more efficient and sustainable Patterns of water consumption and production;	03 Strengthen the protection and restoration of wetlands, traditional water systems;	04 Prevent pollution, remove contaminants to improve water quality, ensure recycling and reuse of treated wastewater.
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He also highlighted the need to ensure adequate funding for water through:

- 01** Increase adequate financing for water infrastructure and develop “blue” and “green” jobs for youth, women, and rural people;
- 02** Evolve financing models with innovative mechanisms involving the private sector;
- 03** Implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, in particular investment in water infrastructure.

Mr. Abdoulaye Sene mentioned some necessary norms and principles for inclusive water governance. These principles are, among others, the promotion of transparent, efficient, and inclusive management of water services at the appropriate level, as well as diversified and concerted management methods. The implementation of plans for the rational, equitable and sustainable use of resources, ensuring the right balance between socio-economic development and the preservation of resources and ecosystems are key for water governance as well. He also underlined the importance of building decompartmentalized public policies related to water on the basis of knowledge, support innovations, train and strengthen the capacities of all stakeholders.

He underlined that water plays a critical role as a lever for cooperation. Hence, it is important to pay attention to water issues in bilateral and multilateral cooperation, including support basin organizations in their efforts for inclusive, sustainable, and integrated resource management. It is also vital to strengthen cooperation and partnership in the management of transboundary and aquifer basins, as well as putting dialogue, coordination, and cooperation at the heart of dispute resolution, in the spirit of hydro diplomacy.

ELEMENTS OF A WATER ACTION PLAN FOR THE SAHEL

1. Accelerate access to safe water and sanitation, including for populations in disadvantaged, fragile and conflict-affected environments.
2. Build massively sustainable WASH services that are resilient to crisis and change.
3. Ensure access to reliable WASH services for schools, health facilities.
4. Promote “One Water One Health” to embrace the values of water and its role for humans, animals, and ecosystems.
5. Mobilize and secure water for sustainable development, develop productive water: irrigation, livestock, fisheries, industries, (to create more jobs).
6. Promote sustainable agricultural practices, focusing on water efficiency, pollution reduction.
7. Invest in the global and optimal use of the resource: circular economy, desalination, social and climate-smart innovations, water transfers, renewable energy.
8. Put water at the heart of climate and environmental resilience with resilient water systems.
9. Ensure wastewater recycling to reduce freshwater inputs and discharges and with ‘productive sanitation.
10. Support innovations (rainwater harvesting, greening techniques, natural regeneration) that are effective in water conservation.
11. From the “tragedy of the commons” to the “virtue of the commons”, Promote and strengthen cooperation for water, to further connect, ensure peace and development.
12. Implement the Dakar Basin Action Plan, strengthen basin organizations as multi-stakeholder platforms for dialogue.
13. Strengthen political and diplomatic cooperation, the legal and institutional framework, the search for innovative financing for basin organizations.
14. Promote adequate water governance, in a context of increasing pressure on water supplies, and financial burdens related to infrastructure.
15. Develop effective negotiation and allocation mechanisms between different sectors, areas (urban and rural), present and future.
16. Improve data generation and knowledge management for sound decision making and shared responsibility with communities at the center.

ELEMENTS OF A SAHEL WATER ADVOCACY PLAN

1. Promote the NEXUS Water-Development-Humanitarian-Peace in the Sahel, a territorial, vertical, and horizontal governance based on cooperation between all stakeholders.
2. Promote international humanitarian law on the protection of WASH infrastructure during conflict.
3. Promote the paradigm of “Managing all water, by all, for all”, which helps promote peaceful and inclusive societies.
4. Raise awareness on the multiple values of water, the right to water and sanitation for all and to protect the resource.
5. Ensure water education for all, organize “Save Water Save Generations, Safe Water Safe Life” campaigns to build citizens’ capacity to engage in water-related policies and the SDGs.
6. Promote synergy and coherence of programmes, dialogue on water, mobilize resources for water security, at the heart of the strategy to reduce the structural vulnerability of the Sahel.

By way of recommendations for this session:

As for immediate actions: (i) conduct a study on infrastructures plan for access to drinking water: wells can play a very important role with good equipment (such as solar pumping); (ii) Improve investments in water access: e.g., in Senegal, access to water for rural populations (PUDC) characterized by fast-tracking and flexibility; (iii) increase the rate of access to water in schools and health posts by building improved latrines (WASH); (iv) better use of productive water for multi-sectoral infrastructures using local innovations around boreholes and wells.

As for medium and long-term actions: (a) creation of data hub to support reframing and positioning of country analysis and support implementation of specific programme to address capacity issues; (b) ensure steady financing for water development and management; (c) UNISS to accommodate and facilitate the sharing of best practices regarding water declaration and management; (d) gender equality and water issues (management) should be integrated as a crosscutting area over the 3 pillars of UNISS and in the Cooperation Frameworks and CCAs at country level.

SESSION IV

Managing ground water and transboundary aquifers of the Sahel: The objective of the session was to present and discuss technical approaches and solutions to manage ground water and transboundary aquifers efficiently and sustainably in the Sahel. It was moderated by Ms. Violet Kakyomya, UN Resident Coordinator in Chad and featured a panel made of Mr. Dimitri Sanga, Regional Director for UNESCO who framed the session and Ms. Maha Sall, Water Expert for UNESCO who led the session.

Mr. Dimitri Sanga, RD for UNESCO underlined the importance of monitoring and analyzing the slight positive evolution of the HDI (Human development Index) in spite of the negative outlooks of the Sahel countries, overall. This calls for a need for better analysis and in-depth reflections by key stakeholders and decision-makers. He noted that only one per cent of water resources worldwide are above the ground, while 99 per cent are underground. Therefore, the availability of water is not the issue, but underground water needs to be made accessible. Another source of concern is the use of water resources to use them in a sustainable way to respond to all needs and to avoid destroying water sources, such as through overexploitation.

He suggested that faced with water shortages in the Sahel and given the impacts of climate change on water supply (droughts, rainfall variability, etc.), groundwater reserves are a solution with immense potential for meeting growing water needs, the survival and adaptation of populations, and promoting economic development.

Ms. Maha Sall, Water Expert for UNESCO underscored some key challenges are with regards to managing ground water and transboundary aquifers of the Sahel:

Knowledge of water as a resource

Governance of water resources, including across borders

The financing of infrastructure to exploit resources.



She defined aquifers as the water bodies below the ground. Water resources law is referred and applied to both surface water and groundwater. Depending on the ground material and the depth, the search for water differs. Sahelian countries have aquifers, but they are particularly deep and do not fill up quickly. Therefore, the exploitation needs to be sustainable and managed in an integrated manner to avoid negative side effects.

She emphasized that in-depth knowledge and continued follow-up is needed to take appropriate decisions regarding the management of resources. Moreover, governance issues need to be resolved, including a lack of application of existing regulations, a lack of data collection and sharing. Given the cross-border nature, governance needs to take place jointly between countries. She also highlighted the following good examples of cross-border water management, along with some challenges to address:

01



Limited surveillance networks, lack of qualified personnel and lack of information etc.

02



Several technologies exist to facilitate the use of water resources, including the use of water detection from a distance (Global Gravity Based Groundwater Product, participative management of ground water, MAR (Management of Aquifer Recharge).

She noted the need for information sharing between agencies, e.g., maps produced by UNESCO, which would be needed at the local level indicating aquifers cross borders, including regional view providing good insights. She suggested to put in place strategic collaboration with research institutions as the one UNESCO has with a regional research center in Kaduna, Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS SESSION

1. Need to communicate around water issues for governments to act.
2. Support linkages with universities and research institutions in the region.
3. Reflect more on what to do concretely to support countries, including through sharing concrete examples.
4. Extend reflection beyond the Sahel to include for example North Africa which have suffered from droughts – to create synergies with countries that have experience.
5. Train qualified personnel, particularly in public institutions.

SESSION V

Technical presentations on multi sectoral usage of water: Ms. Seraphine Wakana moderated the session, UN Resident Coordinator in The Gambia and it was framed by Ms. Lila Pieters Yahia, UN Resident Coordinator for Mauritania. The session featured a panel of experts on water, notably Eugene Rurangwa (FAO); Alemu Gebre (WFP); Ruben Bayiha (UNICEF); and Mohamed Fadiga (FAO) to cover respectively the following sectors:

01

Available and tested techniques of multisectoral water management in the Sahel

02

Water use and management in Agriculture and Livestock

03

Health, Nutrition and Education

04

Water and Energy

05

Water in Peace building and conflict resolution

The experts from the above-mentioned UN AFPs presented and discussed their organisation' distinct approaches and solutions for the use of water in the multi-sectoral dimensions and context of crisis in the Sahel. This is a means of initiating the goal of cooperation between UN organizations, that is, to learn from one another (use experience from their region) and in order to scale up.

The Experts noted the integrated and inter-sectoral approaches to the water crisis, including the importance of how the UN is communicating on its work on water in the Sahel. It is necessary to underline the various initiatives and explore collectively how to scale them up. For instance, some techniques of managing water in Sahel led by UNICEF include: (a) working on cholera, malnutrition, medical systems, children in educative systems; (b) focus on coordination of stakeholders and activities and the influence they have on policies (that is: to help develop sustainable policies + implement studies); (c) focus on girls: those who abandon school in order to go get water; (c) think of means to accelerate investment; (d) Actors + Intervention; (f) support to policies on Water; (g) currently in collaboration with WFP on a programme of resilience in Mali, Niger and (health + nutrition + education); and (h) imperative to work with government and other agencies in order to avoid working in Silo.

On water use and management in agriculture and livestock, it should be noted the usage of new technologies for instance in Chad with UN agencies and the national government, is making a great difference on the ground through mutlipurpose projects covering agriculture, livestock, driking water and healthcare. Water has several effects, which spread from drinking to agriculture. FAO is focusing on areas where it has service capacity (areas of run-off rain collection), technologies implemented in Sahel (water adversity), including rainwater collection and spreading structure, water for integrated farming such as multipurpose dykes. It should be highlighted that the high potential in return on investement in water within an average of 2 years. Currently, the focus is more on underground water while the use of floods for stocking up run-off water can also necessary to mitigate damage.

With regards to health, nutrition, and eductaion, WHO has been helping women and youth in the Sahel to access water for domestic, agriculture and commercialization use. Efforts have been made to generate evidence and data that indicate the deficit of water in schools causing girls to drop-out.

WHO has established a partnership with GIZ for WASH in school and coordination platform of actors for the management of crises, regional monitoring and alerts. There is a call for other UN AFPs to join WHO for joint programs on the ground with regards to policies, advocacy, and investments in WASH within healthcare sector. For instance, the initiative called 1 million cisterns for the Sahel was launched in Senegal through a pilot phase as a means of addressing issues raised by the Heads of States regarding the utilization of the rainfalls. Hence, the 1 million cisterns initiative was created as a means of catching and purifying rainfalls. It has multiplied and the project currently stretches out over 8 countries. It has generated jobs for women and the youth (whilst providing continuous education on the cisterns utility and means of using it through educational bootcamps). As a result, the project has contributed to the reinforcement of social cohesion, generating nutritional foods and environmental security.

On water in peace-building and conflict resolution, UNOWAS noted the strategic role that water plays in terms of Nexus and across all sectors. Therefore, it is paramount to find solutions to water access and management as it could be considered a source of conflict. The scarce crops is, among others, a source of conflict because of climate change, which in turn is cause for competition between communities in the region. Unlock groundwater potential and transform the governance and management systems to deal with climate change and build sustainable peace. For instance, Burkina Faso and Mali even though they share a border, face different constraints at country level. Thus, PBF has an opportunity to work on social cohesion and cross-border issues while addressing water management through mainstreaming and embedding conflict analysis to ensure that no one is left behind.

On water and energy, UNDP emphasized the mutual and relationship between energy and water. For instance, 84% non-fossil fuels come from hydro-power and resource extraction. There is need to develop an efficient climate information systems to help governments to better plan and use water and energy. The use of new technology (e.g. satellites) to see availability of water in depths of the earth is encouraged and it should be pursued.

The importance of collection and generation of data and analysis in supporting governments to develop policies for water governance and management in a participatory manner that includes beneficiaries, was underscored. More water technical and financial partnerships are needed, including the exchange of knowledge and good practices to avoid the same mistakes and facilitate scale-up.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS SESSION

1. To encourage more investments in technical and financial partnerships (governments, agencies and experts) to cope with challenges related to extracting water and moving nature of water.
2. To support the efforts aiming to the estimations of underground water availability, which doesn't include deep groundwater as its consideration could drastically help the cause of water scarcity, like in Somalia and Kenya.
3. The following principles and approaches are critical and should be applied systematically when it comes to water management (i) local solutions to local problems to enhance ownership; (ii) local Governance and human capacity; (iii) evidence based initiatives; (iv) development of technologies, (v) South-South cooperation, and (vi) NEXUS - HDP to cover everything.
4. To establish a concerted management systems in order to guarantee inclusive access for the benefit of all potential users, including internally displaced persons and refugees.

SESSION VI

Way Forward: The objective of this session was to reflect on concrete action points, solutions, and recommendations for the way forward. The session was also to review of overall solutions and general recommendations of the Technical Non-Paper on Water as Accelerator for Development in the Sahel and it was moderated by Mr. Njoya Tikum, UNDP Regional Manager for Dakar Hub.

The recommendations were grouped in three major categories (i) activities and actions of coordination nature to be conducted at regional level, (ii) actions that can be conducted at country level and (iii) actions that require elaboration of working tools necessary to support water work.

RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO COORDINATION

1. Creation of a regional group of experts in charge of a Think Tank or working group on water.
2. Further strengthen cooperation between development and humanitarian actors to give a more consistent reality to the triple NEXUS (HDP). Support the scaling up of the triple Nexus approach by governments and partners at all levels for the implementation of water-related interventions and identify good practices in the region to assess the feasibility of scaling them up.
3. Putting gender at the heart of any UNISS analysis or work plan.
4. Support the “One Water - One Health” initiative for integrated water use for ecosystem, human and animal, livestock, and healthcare.
5. Share and publicize good practices on innovative financing for the water sector.
6. Define a clear communication plan to increase the visibility of water and raise awareness about the importance of water as an accelerator for development in the Sahel with support of media experts.
7. Identify possible levers of action for UNISS to support the development of technical skills in the water sector, including in university or academic curriculum and professional courses.
8. Invest in research for a better understanding, characterizing, and monitoring of groundwater resources in the Sahel region.
9. Encourage South-South learning, particularly between the Sahel and the Horn of Africa region.
10. Consider solar energy systems as an integrative gateway for community water supply, irrigation, health centres, schools, including the support of the existing Solar Hub Regional initiative which is a multi-sectoral support platform on the use of solar systems.

RECOMMENDATION FOR COUNTRY LEVEL

1. Assist the 7 countries in the Sahel region who are missing the Water Profile to produce their Document.
2. Map and centralize existing documentation on the issue of water in the Sahel.
3. Support states to make WASH facilities and services more climate resilient, by including and considering good risk analysis, and developing climate-sensitive sector plans in their national development plans, the UNSDCF as well.
4. Prioritize investments in water infrastructures in rural impoverished areas.
5. In conflict-affected countries, remind stakeholders that access to water, as well as personnel working in the water sector, are protected by International Humanitarian Law and the Geneva List of Principles for the Protection of Water Infrastructure.
6. Encourage and accompany governments to offer a more substantial place to young people as agents of change in the definition, implementation and monitoring of orientations, priorities, and governance of the sector in order to change the narrative about young people in the Sahel.
7. Consider scaling up a WASH Severity Classification tool currently being piloted (similar to the IPC tool for food security) to better characterize water issues over time and space in 5 phases, to identify priority areas, and to influence the programming and geographic focus of country investments in water.
8. Encourage community participation in integrated water resource management.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WORKING TOOLS

1. Elaborate a UNISS Action Plan for Water in the Sahel in line with MDG 6. Structure the UNISS Action Plan for Water in the Sahel around the themes listed in the acceleration plan for MDG 6, namely: (a) governance, (b) financing, (c) information management, (d) capacity building, (e) innovation. Use this global reading grid while contextualizing it to the specificities of the Sahel.
2. Put in place all the methodological approaches to make WASH works more climate resilient according to the Global Water Partnership/UNICEF framework.
3. Map which agency is working on what and where (3W).
4. Establish a database of sectoral experts who can provide support to countries in their areas of expertise.
5. Identify, document, and share experiences of local solutions and innovations to local problems.

Closing Session

This session was to reflect on concrete action points on which to focus work during the next 12 months, including the concluding remarks from the UNISS two co-chairs and final reflections from SCDS which captured the most important points of the deep dive by summing up the entire purpose of the workshop. Therefore, the UNISS steering committee members urged the Office of the Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel together with the co-chairs of UNISS to lead the development and adoption of a Sahel Regional Action Plan on Water to include areas such as (i) the development and protection of water Infrastructure (ii) support for States for enhanced Governance of Water at all levels, and (iii) expand the partnerships to establish a knowledge-based digital platform.





SAHEL

Working Together for a Prosperous and Peaceful Sahel

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