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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Report

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

Summary

The high level meeting was convened within the framework of the MDG+ Initiative, which was launched under the auspices of the Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC) in 2010 to establish a regional mechanism for improved monitoring and reporting on access to water supply and sanitation services in the Arab Region. This closing meeting of the regional initiative was convened by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in collaboration with the League of Arab States Technical Secretariat of the Arab Ministerial Water Council and the Arab Countries Water Utilities Association (ACWUA) with the financial support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The meeting was attended by senior representatives from water-related ministries and utilities, water regulators and statistical offices from Arab States, as well as members of the MDG+ Initiative Advisory Board and associated non-governmental organizations and specialized institutions.

The meeting presented the findings of the MDG+ Initiative 2016 Report and examined the lessons learned from implementing the initiative over the past six years. The exchange fostered discussion on how the initiative can contribute to regional follow-up on the water-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were adopted as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015. Discussion focused on the experience and knowledge gained by Arab States from developing a regional indicator framework, applying a harmonized methodology for data collection, and institutionalizing an inter-governmental, cross-sectoral mechanism for monitoring and reporting on a common set of indicators.

The participants were also introduced to the global inter-agency effort aimed at reporting on the dedicated SDG water goal and its associated targets and indicators, which is being organized under the umbrella of the UN-Water Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG6.

The meeting concluded with a series of recommendations on the way forward. The recommendations were formulated based on the outcomes of working group consultations convened among country teams and institutional actors. In summary, the participants agreed that it was important to: (a) build upon the regional and national experiences and partnerships gained from implementing the MDG+ Initiative and ensure that regional and national priorities are reflected in SDG follow-up; (b) continue to collect data on the MDG+ indicators through the National Monitoring Teams and foster opportunities to share regional experiences; (c) support further capacity building on water-related indicators based on harmonized definitions, methodologies and cross-sectoral exchange; and (d) identify ways to incorporate the findings and lessons learned from collecting information on these indicators in decision-making as well as in global, regional and national follow-up on the water-related SDGs.

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Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) organized a high level meeting within the framework of the MDG+ Initiative, in collaboration with the League of Arab States Technical Secretariat of the Arab Ministerial Water Council and Arab Countries Water Utilities Association (ACWUA) and with the support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The meeting was held from 1 to 2 November 2016 in Amman, Jordan.

2. The main objectives of the meeting were to:

(a) Report on the findings of the MDG+ Initiative 2016 Report approved by the Arab Ministerial Water Council in October 2016;

(b) 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;

(c) 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 SDG6 targets;

(d) Consider how the MDG+ Initiative indicators and regional monitoring framework can contribute to follow-up on the water-related SDGs;

(e) Formulate recommendations on a way forward for monitoring and reporting on the water-related SDGs in the Arab region.

3. The meeting spanned over two days and consisted of nine sessions. Section I of this meeting report highlights the main conclusions and recommendations of the meeting, while section II provides a summary of the presentations and the main topics of discussions held during each session. Section III reviews the organization of work as well as information regarding the meeting agenda, participants and evaluation. The full documentation of the meeting is available at the following address: <https://www.unescwa.org/events/mdg-plus-high-level-meeting-water-related-sdgs>.

I. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4. The discussions undertaken during the meeting led to the following conclusions and recommendations:

(a) The MDG+ Initiative offers a successful model of how regional and country-based monitoring mechanisms can complement and inform global monitoring frameworks and help to ensure that regional and national priorities are addressed;

(b) The global SDG indicator framework can be adapted to the regional context based on Arab regional specificities that reflect the policy needs of Arab States, and which can be reflected in a regional monitoring framework and regular statistical reports; this may include monitoring on a set of additional region-specific indicators;

(c) The definitions for the SDG6 indicators should be harmonized over the Arab region, although the methodologies and approaches for data collection might differ from one country to the other;

(d) It is important to build the capacity of countries to develop regional and national targets and standards, and methodologies against which regional and national monitoring could be pursued and to organize workshops to this end;

(e) The exchange of experiences across Arab States and among the diverse members of the national monitoring teams can help to enhance regional capacity and cross-sectoral understanding (e.g., among representatives of water, agriculture, energy and statistical agencies), and could include regional learning from the Jordanian pilot experience collecting data on the SDG6 indicators under the UN-Water Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG6;

(f) While national statistical records are the primary source of information for reporting on the SDG indicators, administrative records - such as data from water utilities - are instrumental in providing additional water-related information. These data sources can be further complemented by information gathered from household surveys, such as through censuses undertaken at the country-level and through the MDG+ Initiative consumer field surveys conducted in vulnerable areas;

(g) There is a need to further support and consolidate coordination on water and wastewater effluent standards for informing monitoring with respect to the SDG6 indicators, including in transboundary settings;

(h) The guiding principles for the implementation of the SDG indicators are based on a progressive monitoring approach whereby countries can start reporting on basic indicators, which subsequently progressively develop, to more sophisticated indicators with their accompanying advanced means of data collection;

(i) It is possible to include water-related indicators of particular relevance to the Arab region context that go beyond and complement the existing global SDG indicator framework by including indicators that address the number of people facing water scarcity, water supply intermittency, non-revenue water losses, coordination on transboundary water management issues from a quality perspective, as well as the level of wastewater treatment and type of reuse;

(j) It is proposed to organize a meeting of the national statistical teams in Arab States who serve on the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) to communicate technical issues and specific recommendations on the water-related SDG indicators of concern to the water scarce Arab region (notably on Tier III indicators) for consideration at upcoming IAEG-SDG meetings, noting that the statistical agencies of Algeria, Bahrain and Egypt serve on the IAEG-SDGs on behalf of the Northern Africa and Western Asia regions;

(k) It is important to build upon the experience accumulated from the MDG+ Initiative and the methodologies and institutional framework set up under the regional initiative to inform the development of monitoring and reporting frameworks on the water-related SDGs;

(l) Data collection efforts in the context of the SDGs should build upon the existing water-related statistical datasets;

(m) It was recognized that the AWMC mandated the MDG+ National Monitoring Teams to continue to follow-up on the MDG+ indicators and acknowledged that continued regional and national support was needed for the collection of data on the MDG+ indicators and the population of the MDG+ database during the transition period taking place following the closure of the MDG+ Initiative and up to the final roll out of the water-related SDG methodologies at the global level; it was further suggested that assistance should be extended to the remaining four Arab States that have not yet engaged in the initiative;

(n) The experience in implementing the MDG+ Initiative can inform processes being undertaken at the global level through the UN-Water Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG6 and the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme;

(o) Greater dissemination is needed of the outcomes and findings of the MDG+ Initiative water-related indicators in order to better inform decision-making and financial policies in Arab States;

(p) It is important to mobilize funding for SDG follow-up activities and to collect and analyse better quality data.

II. MAIN TOPICS OF DISCUSSIONS

5. Presentations and discussions are presented in the following sections, which are organized according to the substantive sessions of the meeting.

A. WATER IN THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

6. The potential of building on the achievements of the MDG+ Initiative were highlighted especially successful experiences such as the establishment of vetted database, institutionalization of national teams and the political umbrella provided by the AWMC to conduct the initiative with the technical and financial support of partner agencies.

7. The session opened with an overview by ESCWA on perspectives from the Arab region on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. The presentation emphasized the transformative, indivisible and integrated nature of the global sustainable development plan. The relevance of the 2030 Agenda to the Arab context mainly links to the goals focusing on poverty eradication and those addressing inequality with a section dedicated to refugees and immigrants. The need to complement the global natural resources indicators with regional targets and indicators reflecting Arab specificities was highlighted.

8. Additional interventions by ESCWA included a presentation focusing on the targets and indicators of the water related SDGs and their interlinkages across goals; followed by an intervention related to the Water-Energy-Food Nexus as an approach to the relevant SDGs achievement given their indivisible and integrated nature. The League of Arab States representative then highlighted the link between MDG+ Initiative and the Arab Strategy for Water Security, a vision for achieving water security for all by 2030. It was emphasized that the project was initiated based on the request of regional stakeholders who expressed interest in further follow up phases of the initiative. In addition, the successful implementation of the initiative presents an example on how regional goals could be implemented at the country level through the institutionalization of national mechanisms.

9. During the subsequent discussions, it was made clear that the value of successfully achieving the MDG+ Initiative was not limited to the consolidation of a vetted national water related data base but most importantly the institutionalized engagement of stakeholders at the regional, national and local levels; in addition to a consolidated data collection methodology and enhanced capacity in terms of data collection and analysis. The importance of drawing upon the experience gathered in the MDG+ indicators to inform and complement the SDG indicator framework was discussed and emphasized.

10. Further discussions revolved around the means of engaging countries in the implementation of the SDGs despite the non-binding nature of the Agenda 2030 and given the disparities in financial and technical capabilities characterizing Arab states and hence their ability to embark on the SDGs. It was clarified that the Agenda 2030 has put forth an implementation mechanism with one goal dedicated to strengthening the means of implementation through the development of monitoring and follow-up capacities and establishing the

appropriate partnerships. Besides, the international community has committed to provide financial support for developing countries in support of the implementation of the SDGs.

11. It was also mentioned that whereas the first list of the SDG indicators prepared at the global level was already submitted, there might still be a possibility to propose changes to the list of indicators knowing that the UN Statistical Commission convenes its next session in March 2017. This provides a possible venue for Arab countries to provide their input to the final list.

B. THE MDG+ INITIATIVE

12. The session opened with a presentation by the Coordinator of the MDG+ Unit at ACWUA and provided a quick overview of the MDG+ institutional framework along with the corresponding monitoring and reporting mechanisms. It was highlighted that the MDG+ indicators build upon the MDG indicators and expand the scope of their coverage to include reliability, consistency, affordability, quality and sustainability of the water related services and which are of particular relevance to the water scarce Arab region. The presentation explored the possible ways by which experience gained in the implementation of the MDG+ indicators can inform and complement the monitoring and reporting framework on the SDG indicators.

13. The Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) then focused on the lessons learned from the coordination and consolidation of inputs by the National Monitoring Teams (NMTs) from the multiple existing water utilities. The main challenges faced consisted mainly of insufficient financial resources, lack of responsiveness from some of the surveyed service providers and other technical challenges in data entry.

14. The Ministry of Water and Sanitation of Mauritania presented their experience in establishing their National Monitoring Team (NMT). As a means to address challenges faced in initiating the NMT, the Mauritanian team benefited from a twinning experience with the NMT in Jordan to enhance exchange of experience and knowledge sharing. The team also benefited from training workshops conducted at the regional and national levels, which further enhanced their capacity. This resulted in the operationalization of the team and successful submission of data on the MDG+ indicators in the second MDG+ report.

15. This was followed by two presentations by ESCWA related to the key findings of the 2016 report of the MDG+ Initiative on both water supply and sanitation and wastewater. The main MDG+ indicators were presented including population connected to the public water supply networks, continuity of water supply, water quality and tariff structure in addition to population connected to piped sewer, percentage of wastewater treated and reused, along with the type of wastewater reuse. The MDG+ Initiative indicators are calculated on a per capita basis and by volume. Reporting indicators in both methods allows for greater incorporation of the MDG+ Initiative indicator findings into water-related SDG indicators related to water scarcity, water quality, water efficiency and wastewater treatment, which in turn can help to provide data on pollution loads and effects on water-related ecosystems.

16. Discussion in this session focused on the importance to harmonize the understanding of the indicator definitions among countries in the region. In relation to the validation of the data collected at the national level, it was clarified that prior to publishing country data in the MDG+ Initiative reports and posting on the website, these were sent out to the respective National focal points for verification and approval. In addition, it was proposed to broaden and diversify the scope of data sources to capture the perspective of a larger base of actors including service providers, regulators and consumers.

17. Representative from the Ministry of Electricity and Water of Kuwait presented lessons learned from population baselines and household size. This was followed by an intervention by the Ministry of Water and Energy in Lebanon on lessons learned and the difficulties in differentiating between urban and rural consumers

in terms of segregating the water and wastewater related indicators as such since water utilities do not perform such separation when compiling the data collected.

C. BUILDING ON THE MDG+ INDICATORS

18. This session opened with two presentations highlighting the lessons learned from field surveys within the framework of the MDG+ Initiative. The first presentation was by the Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED) in charge of implementing the consumer field surveys in the selected rural communities in coordination with ESCWA and in partnership with local NGOs. The presentation highlighted that the consumer field surveys were rolled out in two phases, first one in Mauritania, Palestine, Sudan and Yemen; and the second phase included Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. The lessons learned were presented and challenges in completing the questionnaires were mainly attributed to the poor understanding and knowledge by community members of the significance and value of water related indicators. Ensuing recommendations focused on the importance of including local communities when developing local and national plans and strategies. This was followed by a Land and Human to Advocate Progress (LHAP) representative, the Jordanian NGO tasked with implementing the pilot field survey in Jordanian communities and areas facing inflows of refugees. LHAP described the methodology developed to conduct the survey and its main components, including training provided to the survey team, pilot testing, adjustment based on the outcomes of the tests, and the final roll out of the survey in various communities.

19. The Ministry of Environment and Water in Yemen presented Yemen's experience with regards to monitoring access to water services under conflict conditions. The water network infrastructure was highly affected by the armed conflicts, in addition to a great difficulty to enforce laws and regulation. Degradation of the water supply networks has resulted in the spread of cholera and proportion of the population connected to public water supply networks have significantly decreased. Citizens are looking for alternative water supply sources such as water cisterns and water harvesting. In an attempt to address the challenges faced by the water sector in Yemen, the ministry in collaboration with KfW have assessed the damages and put in place a mechanism for intervention along with a work plan developed in October 2016.

20. The ensuing discussions focused on the importance of reaching out to community members in compiling a comprehensive database regarding water supply and sanitation indicators to capture the situation from the consumer point of view. In addition, the experience in collaborating with civil society organizations in monitoring and reporting on sustainable development indicators can be generalized to the monitoring and reporting on other SDG indicators and replicated at the global level.

21. Representative from the Holding Company for Water and Wastewater (HCWW) in Egypt gave a presentation related to drawing on the MDG+ Initiative indicators and key performance indicators in monitoring and reporting on access to water supply and sanitation services in Egypt. The main outcomes of the MDG+ indicators for Egypt were presented and the commonality between the key performance indicators and those of the MDG+ Initiative were highlighted. The main challenge in reporting on the MDG+ indicators in the case of Egypt was the issue of illegal connections, which are particularly challenging when measuring the efficiency of water services.

22. An intervention by Egypt Water and Waste Water Regulatory Agency (EWRA) presented the role, strategic goals, guiding principles and tools of the regulatory agency and emphasized the importance of separating the various roles of the service providers' ownership, operation and monitoring of water supply and wastewater services.

23. The session was followed by a discussion on the effectiveness of some of the indicators such as the "continuity of water supply" and "the percentage of population connected to piped network receiving

chlorination prior to supply”. The importance of conducting national household surveys in order to capture the quality and availability of water reaching consumers was underscored. There was a consensus regarding the need to ensure financial sustainability of the regulatory agencies through full cost recovery for the services provided as a precondition for their autonomy and integrity. Participants agreed on the crucial role of National Water Master plans to explore the possibility of non-conventional water sources and as a necessary step for the elaboration of investment plans needed to engage the private sector in the water development and production projects.

D. DATABASE MANAGEMENT: ACCESS AND APPLICATIONS

24. The session was conducted by the MDG+ Unit at ACWUA to inform on how Arab States can access and provide input to the MDG+ Indicator Database. The steps to follow for the electronic submission of the data by the National Focal Points in the respective countries were presented. The coordinator of the MDG+ Unit highlighted the flexible and interactive nature of the electronic platform developed at the MDG+ Unit, and how it allows for the review and validation of the data by both the National Focal Points and experts before the final datasets are uploaded to calculate the MDG+ indicators at the national level.

E. STATISTICS FOR MONITORING AND REPORTING ON THE SDGs

25. The session opened with a presentation by ESCWA on challenges facing official statistics in support of 2030 Agenda. The presentation highlighted the progress in the development of the methodology for the calculation of the water and wastewater indicators at the global level and the status of each indicator in terms of developed and agreed upon methodology.

26. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics gave a presentation on the Palestinian experience as a proof of concept for the Integrated Monitoring on the SDGs and emphasized the participatory nature of the national statistical system in Palestine encompassing the various national actors concerned (governmental and non-governmental). In addition to the challenges faced and measures taken to address these challenges.

27. The ensuing discussions focused on the most efficient means to convey the concerns and comments of Arab countries to the SDG global process regarding the methodologies developed to calculate SDG indicators. Countries were encouraged to voice their concerns regarding the technical issues and specific comments on SDGs methodologies to the Arab statistical representatives in Algeria, Bahrain and Egypt, as they are part of the Inter-Agency Expert Group of the UN Statistical Commission.

F. THE INTEGRATED MONITORING INITIATIVE FOR SDG6

28. The session opened with a presentation by the World Health Organization (WHO) on behalf of UN-Water on the Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG 6. The role of UN-Water in supporting the deliberations leading up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the input being provide to the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Indicators (IAEG-SDG) was highlighted within the framework of establishing an integrated monitoring framework on the SDG 6 indicators. An update was provided on the progress made in developing the SDG 6 indicator framework at the global level, including the preparation of the indicators and their associated methodologies. It was indicated that work being undertaken at the global level on a common set of definitions and methodologies could be complemented at the regional and national levels through the prioritization and collection of data on indicators based on national circumstances. It was noted that the guiding principle for implementing the SDG6 indicator framework relies on national monitoring efforts to be implemented based on a progressive monitoring approach. The developed monitoring methodologies will be tested in pilot countries over the year 2016, with Jordan being one of the pilot countries for testing the SDG6 indicator methodologies. This would be followed by review of outcomes

and complemented by continuous data collection efforts based on improved and adjusted methodologies, in view of preparing a baseline report by mid-2018 for submission to the High Level Political Forum.

29. Discussions focused on the relevance of the SDG 6 indicators to the region. Their importance in providing a measurable and practical assessment tool was underscored. Participants suggested that the selection of the best-suited sources of data should be linked to the type of indicator monitored; this includes data sources related to water quality and availability as these are best provided by administrative sector sources, whereas data on accessibility and affordability can be obtained from household surveys, and particularly those that are now served by water utilities.

30. This was followed by an overview presented by WHO on monitoring and reporting on SDG 6.1, SDG 6.2 and SDG 6.3.1 through the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme under UN-Water. The presentation introduced the related SDG 6 targets and indicators and explained how these can be implemented through a progressive monitoring approach. It was suggested that the scope of national household censuses and surveys be expanded to address the SDG indicators. The presentation demonstrated how national targets can be put in place based on the global SDGs and highlighted the importance of disaggregating data by income, sex, age, etc., in order to make sure that the overall ambition of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is met, namely that “no one is left behind”.

31. A presentation by UNEP followed on the methodologies and mechanisms for reporting on SDG 6.3.2, SDG 6.5.1 and SDG 6.6.1. The presentation explained the methodology adopted to address the SDG indicators SDG 6.3.2, focused on water quality in freshwater bodies, and SDG 6.5.1, which is focused on integrated water resources management (IWRM), by clarifying the parameters associated with each indicator by explain that monitoring and evaluation of the indicators was based on a comparison with baseline values. For IWRM, the assessment is conducted at four levels by examining the enabling environment, supporting institutions, management instruments and sustainable financing. For each of the four parameters, a number of measures are identified and the degree of implementation is evaluated as low, medium or high. For SDG 6.6.1 (water related ecosystems), the methodology consists of identifying the physical boundaries of the water bodies under study with the corresponding parameters assessing the changes in water related ecosystem.

32. A pre-recorded video message was delivered by the FAO, the custodian agency working on the SDG 6.4, which addressed water-use efficiency and water stress resulting from freshwater withdrawals. The inclusion of the proposed indicator 6.4.3 on the “Number of people affected by water scarcity/stress” in the final set of SDG 6 indicators was discussed in light of the mandate included the language of the SDG 6.4 target. The importance of building partnerships for monitoring and reporting on the SDGs was emphasized. It was also stressed that while monitoring and reporting on SDGs was very important, one should keep in mind that the end goal is to actually achieve the SDGs.

33. It was followed by a pre-recorded video sequence delivered by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) on the methodology for calculating SDG 6.5.2 indicator, Proportion of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for water cooperation. The methodology adopted calculates the surface area of the shared water body for which there is an operational transboundary cooperation arrangement as a percentage of the overall surface area of the shared water body.

34. A presentation was delivered by the Jordanian Ministry of Water and Irrigation related to the integrated monitoring initiative with Jordan as a proof of concept pilot country. In line with the selection of Jordan as a proof of concept country to test the SGD6, the ministry of water and irrigation established the national monitoring task force that included representatives from concerned ministries as well as the department of statistics. The various activities, challenges and lessons learned involving the operationalization of the national monitoring task force were presented.

G. THE WAY FORWARD

35. A presentation by ESCWA on issues for consideration while informing the SDGs with the MDG+ indicators highlighted the lack of consistent household surveys in most of the Arab countries, which is a major impediment for the availability of reliable data source needed to monitor and report on SDG indicators. In addition, the main challenges facing water utilities in data collection are mainly related to the lack of disaggregation of data by urban/rural areas; the identification of population illegally connected to the water supply networks and the volumes of wastewater collected but left untreated. This was followed by a presentation by a representative from the Water Sector Regulatory Council in Palestine who explained that the Water Regulatory Body was separated from the Palestinian water Authority in 2014 and was established as an autonomous legal entity with separate financing sources. The presentation detailed the main functions and activities of the Water Sector Regulatory Council and highlighted the importance of having effective water regulatory authorities in countries of the region.

36. Working groups were formed at the country level and also among regional organizations to reflect, discuss and elaborate on the way forward following the completion of the MDG+ Initiative and the most effective approach to regionalize monitoring and reporting framework for the water-related SDGs.

37. The working groups concluded that the MDG+ National Monitoring Teams should continue to collect data on the MDG+ indicators for the coming years. The representatives from Arab States also highlighted the need to enhance networking and the exchange of experience and knowledge among the various National Monitoring Teams, and emphasize the importance of continued capacity building. There was clear consensus on the need for further financial support to assist with data collection and analysis on water-related indicators. The participants also stressed the importance of encouraging decision-makers to draw upon the MDG+ indicators to inform the development of national policies and strategies. The regional organizations contributing to the initiative and the high level meeting stressed the importance of maintaining existing collaboration and partnership arrangements and suggested expanding existing networks when pursuing follow-up on the SDGs.

H. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CLOSING STATEMENTS

38. This session focused on the preparation and finalization of the main recommendations of this High-level meeting. Closing statements by the government of Sweden, League of Arab states, ACWUA and ESCWA reconfirmed the commitment of the organization in supporting countries in their endeavours in relation to the monitoring and reporting of the SDG 6 indicators.

III. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. VENUE AND DATE

39. The MDG+ Initiative: High Level Meeting on the Water-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was organized from 1 to 2 November 2016 in Amman, Jordan.

B. OPENING

40. The meeting was formally opened by Mr. Tawfeeq Habashneh, Secretary General of the Ministry of Water and Irrigation in Jordan on behalf of H.E. Hazim El Naser, Minister of Water and Irrigation in Jordan. Opening statements were also delivered by Mr. Anders Frankenberg, Head of the Regional Unit MENA at Sida; Ms. Inas Mostafa, Technical Secretariat of Environment, Housing, Water Resources and Sustainable Development Department at the League of Arab States on behalf of H.E. Mr. Djamal Eldine Djaballah, Ambassador Plenipotentiary, Director of Department of Environment, Housing and Water Resources and Sustainable Development at the League of Arab States; Mr. Khaldon Khashman, Secretary General of the Arab

Countries Water Utilities Association (ACWUA); and Ms. Roula Majdalani, Director of Sustainable Development Policies Division at ESCWA.

C. PARTICIPANTS

41. The meeting was attended by 64 participants and gathered members of the ACWUA Board of Directors, members of the ESCWA Committee on Water Resources, MDG+ Initiative National Focal Points, as well as selected members of the National Monitoring Teams. Associated stakeholders representing water ministries, water utilities, statistical offices and civil society also participated in the meeting, 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.

D. AGENDA

42. Presentations and discussions were made over nine sessions. The agenda of the meeting is summarized below:

- (a) Opening statements;
- (b) Water in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- (c) The MDG+ Initiative;
- (d) Building on the MDG+ Indicators;
- (e) Database Management: Access and Applications;
- (f) Statistics for Monitoring and Reporting on the SDGs;
- (g) The Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG6;
- (h) The Way Forward;
- (i) Recommendations and Closing Statements.

E. EVALUATION

43. An evaluation questionnaire was distributed to participants to assess the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the meeting. The feedback received was positive with all participants rating the overall quality of the meeting as good to very good. The majority of the participants found that the meeting achieved its objectives and majority (over 96 per cent) agreed that their expectations were met.

44. The meeting organization was rated as good for more than 88 per cent of the participants. Participants also considered their expertise well suited for the meeting. Most submitted questionnaires indicated that the meeting represented a good to very good forum for exchange of information and provided an important opportunity to share experiences with other experts and establish new useful contacts in the field. For the vast majority of participants (more than 90 per cent), written material distributed by ESCWA and the presentations delivered during the meeting by contributing experts were deemed to be of good quality. More than 70 per cent of participants expressed their interest in follow-up activities mostly capacity building and training on monitoring and reporting SDG 6 indicators based on globally developed methodologies.

F. DOCUMENTATION

45. In addition to the meeting information note, agenda and participant list, a background working paper entitled “Drawing on the MDG+ Initiative for Informing the Water-related SDGs in the Arab Region” (E/ESCWA/SDPD/2016/WP.1) and a technical booklet on “Moving towards the SDGs in the Arab Region: Key Findings for the 2016 MDG+ Initiative Report” (E/ESCWA/SDPD/2016/Booklet.5) supported the deliberations. The meeting documents and presentations delivered during the high level meeting are available at the following link: <https://www.unescwa.org/events/mdg-plus-high-level-meeting-water-related-sdgs>.

Annex

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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