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13th Meeting of the UfM Water Expert Group

7th-8th June 2023

Ministry of Equipment and Water, Rabat (Morocco)

[Venue: [Secrétariat d'Etat chargé de l'Eau, Rue Hassan Benchekroun, Agdal, Rabat](#)]

Draft Concept Note and Agenda

Background

The UfM Water Agenda

The [UfM Ministerial Declaration on Water](#) (Malta, 27th April 2017), called for “a Union for the Mediterranean Water Agenda to enhance regional cooperation towards sustainable and integrated water management in the UfM region” and mandated the UfM Water Expert Group (WEG), under the guidance of the UfM Senior Officials’ Meeting (SOM), and in consultation with regional institutions, donors and non-governmental actors of the UfM region, to “elaborate and implement the UfM Water Agenda”.

The UfM Senior Officials’ Meeting endorsed the UfM Water Agenda on 17th December 2018. The UfM Water Agenda includes:

- The [UfM Water Policy Framework for Actions 2030](#). A strategic framework to guide the work of the WEG up to 2030, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) horizon. It is structured around four thematic priorities: (1) water-energy-food-ecosystem nexus; (2) water, employment and migration, (3) water, sanitation and hygiene; and (4) water and climate change. For each thematic area, the document details aims and objectives; aimed outputs and main types of interventions; aimed outcomes; and partnerships. Its 2020 update includes the UfM WEG Work Plan 2020-2022 and highlights an number of UfM projects and initiatives, as well as actions implemented by UfM member states.
- The [UfM Financial Strategy for Water](#). A strategic document that aims to facilitate increased financing of investments that contribute to water security in the Mediterranean region (access to water and sanitation services; protection against risk of droughts, floods or polluted water; and availability of water resources to underpin sustainable growth) while enhancing the financial sustainability of the water sector. The UfM Financial Strategy for Water identifies common challenges and a shared goal, 10 strategic objectives and a menu of 47 actions. Each UfM member state is expected to implement different actions according to their individual circumstances, priorities and capacities.

The 12th Meeting of the WEG

The 12th Meeting of the WEG (WEG-12) took place in Amman (Jordan) on 23-24 May 2022. It was attended by 55 participants, including representatives from 14 UfM member states (Albania, Algeria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Egypt, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Tunisia and Turkey) and the European Union as well as from partners, civil society, and the private sector.

The objectives of the meeting were to review progress in the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda (including the UfM programme on Water Investment and Financing); to discuss how the WEG and the UfM Secretariat can best support individual member states to implement the UfM Water

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Agenda; and to discuss how the WEG should contribute to international water-relevant events in the next 12 months (including the UNFCCC COP-27 and the 2023 UN Water Conference).

UfM member states expressed the need to re-launch the work of the WEG Task Forces, updating their action plans while looking for ways to increase their efficiency and their impact. They supported the further development of the UfM Programme on Water Investment and Financing, with added focus on national-level activities (such as peer reviews, national workshops, trainings, and other capacity development activities). They welcomed the work carried out by international projects (such as The WEF Nexus Hub, Matchmaker 2, Smart DESERT, and WES) and expressed their interest in further benefit from them. Partners expressed their willingness to support the work of the WEG Task Forces, including through existing projects.

The WEG Work Plan

The [UfM Water Policy Framework for Actions 2030](#) includes in its first appendix the 2020-2022 biennial work plan for the four thematic areas. The 2020-2022 work plan detailed a number of suggested activities as well as an indicative timeframe for their implementation, suggested contributing partners and possibly engaged resources. The 2020-2022 work plan has come to an end and a new work plan needs to be endorsed by the WEG.

To support the implementation of its work plan, the WEG created in 2017 four thematic task forces: Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Water-Energy-Food-Environment Nexus (WEFE), Water, Employment and Migration (WEM), and Water and Climate Change Adaptation. (WCCA). Their mandates, set to expire in December 2022, were renewed by the WEG at its 12th Meeting. The WEG also created in February 2018 the Water Finance Task Force, which has not been reconvened since the approval of the UfM Financial Strategy for Water in December 2018.

The co-chairs of the thematic task forces have led the development of a new work plan for the period 2023-2024, which needs to be approved by the WEG. In addition, there is a question of whether the Water Financing Task Force should be re-launched to facilitate peer learning and guide the development of the UfM Programme on Water Finance and Investment.

The UfM Secretariat's Work Programme

The UfM Secretariat has an annual programming cycle. In recent years, its work on water has been structured around three areas of action: (1) Supporting the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda, (2) Supporting the implementation of the UfM Financial Strategy for Water, and (3) Enhancing cooperation and ensure coherence with relevant partners and initiatives in the UfM region. Within the UfM Secretariat, discussions to define the following year's programme and budget usually take place in September. The meetings of the WEG provide an opportunity to provide input to the UfM Secretariat's Annual Work Programme.

The UfM Secretariat regularly contributes to a number of events, whether leading, co-organizing or attending, to bring the voice of the Mediterranean region to international discussions on water.

The UfM Programme on Water Finance and Investment

The UfM Secretariat leads the implementation of the UfM Programme on Water Finance and Investment. The activities carried out under this programme include:

- In 2018, the ad-hoc Water Financing Task Force (co-chaired by Jordan and the EU) developed the [UfM Financial Strategy for Water](#).

- In 2019, the UfM Secretariat supported the organization of National Workshops on Water Financing in Albania and Jordan and organized the [First UfM Conference on Water Investment and Financing](#). The conclusions of the Conference were summarized in the publication [Public Private Partnerships and the Financial Sustainability of the Mediterranean Water Sector](#).
- In 2021, the EU and the UfM re-focused the EU-UfM Governance and Business Forum (organized since 2019 in the framework of Cairo Water Week) and jointly organized the [2021 EU-UfM Water Investment Policy Forum](#). Its conclusions were summarized in the publication [Improving water investment policies in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean](#).
- In 2022, the annual regional event jointly organized between the EU and the UfM in the framework of Cairo Water Week focused on water and climate and it was designed as a Pre-COP 27 event. The [High-Level Conference on Water Finance and Investment](#) developed the [High-Level Action Agenda on Water Finance and Investment for Climate Resilience](#) (Cairo Action Agenda), which was endorsed by the WEG and has recently been published as the policy brief [Water, Climate and Finance – Strengthening water finance and investment policies to address the climate emergency in the Mediterranean region](#).
- In 2023, the UfM led the organization of the side-event [Water Finance in the Mediterranean](#) as part of the official programme of the UN 2023 Water Conference.

The global water agenda

Several high-profile water-related meetings have taken place since the 13th meeting of the WEG in May 2022. The [2022 UN Climate Change Conference](#) (COP-27) took place on 6-20 November in Sharm-el-Sheikh (Egypt) with water as prominent theme. The [2023 UN Water Conference](#) took place in New York (USA) on 22-24 March 2023. It is timely to reflect on their conclusions and how they may affect the work of the WEG.

UfM ministerial meetings on water

The First UfM Ministerial Meeting on Water took place in April 2017. Six years have passed since that ministerial meeting and seven years are left until the 2030 deadline for the SDGs and the UfM Water Agenda. It is timely to consider the organization of a new ministerial meeting on water to renew the political impetus of the UfM Water Agenda. Preparing a Ministerial Meeting requires a lead time of at least nine months.

Aim and objectives

The overall aim of the 13th Meeting of the WEG is continue supporting efforts by UfM member states to increase water security in the Mediterranean region through the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda and the UfM Financial Strategy for Water.

The specific objectives of the Meeting are:

1. To review progress at national level in the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda, including the UfM Financial Strategy for Water, since the 12th meeting of the WEG.
2. To review efforts at regional level to support the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda, including the work of the UfM Secretariat and different partners.
3. To review the work plans for 2023-2024 developed by the four water task forces as well as the Secretariat's plans for the UfM Programme on Water Investment and Financing.
4. To reflect on the conclusions of UNFCCC COP-27 and the UN 2023 Water Conference and discuss whether and how the work of the WEG needs to evolve accordingly.



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5. To discuss the need for a new UfM Meeting of Water Ministers in order to provide impetus to the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda.

Logistical information

The 13th Meeting of the WEG will take place in Rabat (Morocco) at the [Direction Générale de l'Hydraulique](#). The meeting will run from 14h00 on Wednesday 7th June until 17h00 on Thursday 8th June.

The UfM Secretariat will cover insurance, visa, flight, transfer and accommodation costs for sponsored participants according to standard UfM rules. Dinner will be provided to sponsored participants at Hotel Farah Rabat on 7th June. Lunch will be provided to all at the meeting venue on 8th June.

13th Meeting of the UfM Water Expert Group

Draft Agenda

7-8 June 2023

Venue: [Secrétariat d'Etat chargé de l'Eau](#), Ministry of Equipment and Water, Rabat (Morocco)

Room name: *Salle de conférence*

Day 1 – Wednesday 7 th June	
14:00-14:30	Registration of participants
14:30-15:00	Session 1. Opening session <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcoming remarks<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Abdelaziz Zerouali, Director for Water Research and Planning, Moroccan Ministry of Equipment and Water)○ DG NEAR/DG ENV (EU co-presidency)○ Jordanian Ministry Water and Irrigation (Jordan co-presidency)○ Almotaz Abadi (UfM Deputy Secretary General for Water, Environment and Blue Economy)• Meeting objectives and agenda<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Samira Shaban Pina (Project Analyst, UfM)
15:00-16:00	Session 2. Review of national progress in the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda <p><i>Chair:</i> DG NEAR/DG ENV (EU co-presidency)</p> <p><i>Session objective:</i> To review progress at national level in the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda (including the UfM Financial Strategy for Water) since the 12th meeting of the WEG.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keynote presentation<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Implementation of the UfM Water Agenda in Morocco (Abdelaziz Zerouali, Director for Water Research and Planning, Moroccan Ministry of Equipment and Water) (15 minutes)• Roundtable of WEG members (45 minutes). <i>WEG members will reflect on achievements, challenges, and lessons learned at national level, and their priorities for 2023</i>
16:00-16:30	Break
16:30-17:30	Session 3. Review of the work of the thematic task forces <p><i>Chair:</i> DG NEAR/DG ENV (EU co-presidency)</p>

	<p><i>Session objective:</i> To review efforts at regional level to support the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda (including the work of the UfM Secretariat and different partners) carried out through the UfM thematic task forces.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports from co-Chairs of the thematic task forces (40 minutes) <i>The co-Chairs of the WEG Task Forces will inform the WEG of the activities carried out by their respective task forces since WEG-12 and present the plans for 2023-2024.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Water-Energy-Food-Environment Nexus (WEFE) – Lebanon and GWP-Med ○ Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) – Egypt and Malta ○ Water and Climate Change Adaptation (WCCA) – Morocco and France ○ Water, Employment and Migration (WEM) – Italy and Turkey • Discussion (20 minutes) <i>UfM member states and partners will discuss the proposed plans of the thematic task forces.</i>
<p>17:30-18:00</p>	<p>Session 4. Review of the UfM Secretariat’s work on water</p> <p><i>Chair:</i> DG NEAR/DG ENV (EU co-presidency)</p> <p><i>Session objective:</i> To review efforts at regional level to support the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda (including the work of the UfM Secretariat and different partners) carried out through other activities led by the UfM WEBE Division.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretariat report (20 minutes) <i>The UfM Secretariat will report the activities carried out by the UfM Water Unit since WEG-12 and the remaining activities included in the Secretariat’s work programme for 2023. Samira Shaban Pina (Project Analyst, UfM).</i> • Q&A (10 minutes)
<p>Day 2 – Thursday 8th June</p>	
<p>9:00-11:00</p>	<p>Session 5. Review of the contributions of technical and financial partners</p> <p><i>Chair:</i> Mohammed Al-Dwairi (Jordan co-presidency)</p> <p><i>Session objective:</i> To review efforts by technical and financial partners to support the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations (10-15 minutes per speaker). <i>UfM partners will present their related work carried out since WEG-12 and their plans for the year ahead.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Khaled AbuZeid, Regional Water Director, CEDARE ○ Nada Majdalani, Director, Eco-Peace Middle East ○ Vangelis Constantianos, Executive Secretary, GWP-Med ○ Alain Meyssonier, President, IME ○ Timothy Hanlon, Programs Director, INWRDAM ○ Abir Ben Romdhane, Coordinator, MedYWAT

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Omar Amawi, Deputy Director, PRIMA Foundation ○ Maroua Oueslati Naceur, Information and Project Manager, SEMIDE
11 – 11:30	Break
11:30-12:30	<p>Session 5 – Continuation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Magnus André, Regional Programme Manager, Sida ○ Philip Beetlestone, Director of the Water Cooperation and Diplomacy department, SIWI ○ Veronica Girardi, Environmental Affairs Officer, Water Convention Secretariat ○ Michael Scoullou, Team Leader, WES <p>Q&A (30 min)</p>
12:30-13:30	<p>Session 6. UfM Programme on Water Finance and Investment</p> <p><i>Chair: Mohammed Al-Dwairi (Jordan co-presidency)</i></p> <p><i>Session objective:</i> To review efforts at regional and national level to support the implementation of the UfM Financial Strategy for Water.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Presentation. <i>Roberto Martín Hurtado (Senior Water Economics Advisor, UfM) will report on the implementation of the UfM Programme on Water Finance and Investment (including the 2022 EU-UfM High Level Conference on Water Finance and Investment, and the UN 2023 Water Conference side event “Water Finance in the Mediterranean”) and present the future plans.</i> ● Plenary discussion (30 minutes). <i>UfM member states and partners will be invited to report on activities carried out since WEG-12 that contribute to implement the UfM Financial Strategy for Water, and provide feedback and express their potential interest in taking part in the suggested future activities.</i>
13:30-14:15	Lunch break
14:15 -15:00	<p>Session 7. The Mediterranean region and the global water agenda</p> <p><i>Chair: Mohammed Al-Dwairi (Jordan co-presidency)</i></p> <p><i>Session objective:</i> To reflect on the conclusions of UNFCCC COP-27 and the UN 2023 Water Conference and discuss whether and how the work of the WEG needs to evolve accordingly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduction (15 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Water in COP-27 (10 minutes).</i> (Egypt TBC) and Almotaz Abadi (Deputy Secretary General for Water, Environment and Blue Economy, UfM) ○ <i>The UN 2023 Water Conference (5 minutes).</i> Roberto Martín Hurtado ● Discussion (30 minutes) <i>WEG members and partners will reflect on how the work of the WEG need to evolve to respond to the conclusions of COP-27 and the UN 2023 Water Conference.</i>

15:00-15:30	<p>Session 8. The need for a new impetus: the 2nd UfM Ministerial Meeting on Water</p> <p><i>Chairs: EU co-presidency and Jordan co-presidency</i></p> <p><i>Session objective: To discuss the need for a new UfM Meeting of Water Ministers in order to provide impetus to the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation (10 minutes). Almotaz Abadi (Deputy Secretary General for Water, Environment and Blue Economy, UfM) • Discussion (20 minutes) <i>WEG members and partners will reflect on the need for a new ministerial meeting, and provide early input regarding the objectives, dates and location of the ministerial meeting.</i>
15:30-16:00	<p>Break</p>
16:00-16:45	<p>Session 9. Bringing everything together</p> <p><i>Chair: DG NEAR/DG ENV (EU co-presidency)</i></p> <p><i>Session objective: To improve the way UfM member states, the UfM Secretariat, and partners work together to achieve the objectives of the UfM Water Agenda.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roundtable (20 minutes). <i>UfM member states and partners will be invited to identify options to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the combined efforts of UfM member states, the UfM Secretariat, and partners to implement the UfM Water Agenda.</i> • Discussion (25minutes) <i>UfM member states and stakeholders will discuss the merits of those options and agree a way forward.</i>
16:45-17:00	<p>Session 10. Concluding session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Almotaz Abadi (Deputy Secretary General for Water, Environment and Blue Economy, UfM) • Closing remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mohammed Al-Dwairi (Jordan co-presidency) ○ DG NEAR/DG ENV (EU co-presidency) ○ Abdelaziz Zerouali (Morocco)