



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

Committee on Middle East Questions

Second Roundtable on Water: *From words to actions*

6 - 7 July 2017
IPU Headquarters
Geneva, Switzerland

Working Paper I produced by the IPU and WaterLex: The role of parliaments in implementation of SDG 6 on water

Introduction

Fresh water is a scarce resource, with increasing population growth, rapid urbanization, the negative effects of climate change and competing demands all exerting increasing pressure on it. Water crises have been highlighted as the most important concern for the coming decade. The Middle East region hosts 14 of the world's 33 most water-stressed countries. Studies show that since 1946 there have been 37 cases of reported violence between States over water, among which 30 have occurred within the Middle East. At the same time, it has been also identified that "any two countries engaged in active water cooperation do not go to war for any other reason". Active water cooperation between countries reduces the risk of war".¹

UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, warned that by 2050, global demand for fresh water is projected to grow by more than 40 per cent and at least a quarter of the world's population will live in countries with "chronic or recurrent" lack of clean water. Currently, more than 800 million people lack access to safe drinking water and more than 2.5 billion do not have basic sanitation. Mr. Guterres stressed that water, peace and security are inextricably linked, and therefore the United Nations is ready to engage in preventive diplomacy to keep the competition for water from sparking conflicts.

Sustainable Development Goal 6

Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) is the goal on water. It is critically important to achieve many other SDGs such as those covering food, health, a healthy environment, climate change and gender equality. For the Middle East region, which is prone to water scarcity, the adoption of the 2030 Agenda is an opportunity for governments to improve the quality of life for many of their citizens.

The SDGs present crucial momentum to take action in ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, that is to take concrete actions based on national targets and indicators to achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all (6.1); to ensure access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation (6.2); to improve water quality (6.3); to substantially increase water-use efficiency and to ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity (6.4); to implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate (6.5); and to protect and restore water-related ecosystems (6.6).

It was agreed in the first Roundtable that a regional approach to dealing with the implementation of SDG 6 could enhance synergies which otherwise could not be developed if a single-country approach was adopted. These synergies could include the following:

- Establishment of a regional Parliamentarian Network on Water (PNOW) with regular exchanges of ideas and experiences;
- Identification and establishment of "pilot" countries to share information and good practices through baseline research for water governance:
 - a. A structured approach to progressive realization of SDG 6;
 - b. An opportunity to share ideas for establishing National Action Plans and customised, tailor-made sets of indicators to monitor progress.
 - c. Establishment of an enabling governance framework for encouraging governments to

¹ SFG, Water Cooperation Quotient - 2015

- utilize the private sector as part of the solution for achieving SDG 6, and;
- The process of identifying these “gaps” in meeting SDG 6 targets would also create a need for sharing technological solutions (in collaboration with our partners, such as CERN and SESAME) for water safety, availability, accessibility, affordability, and acceptability.

The role of parliamentarians

National parliaments have a key role in ensuring the availability and the sustainable management of water governance through the enactment of ambitious legislation to implement SDGs; adoption of budgets; exercising oversight of government actions in honouring their Sustainable Development Agenda commitments; and promoting the data monitoring.

ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS in SDG AGENDA

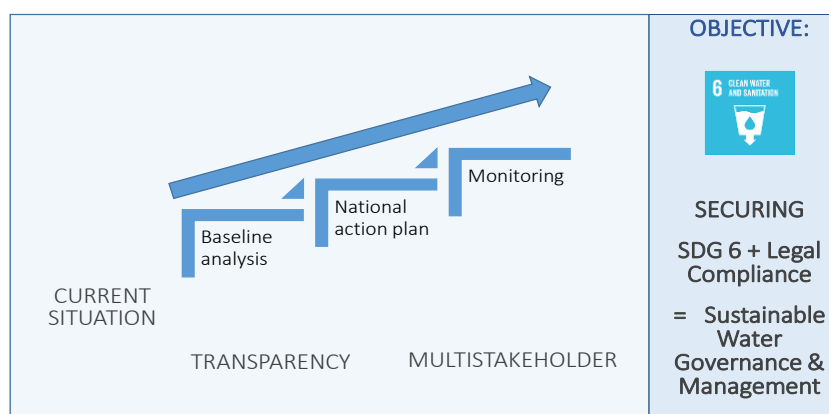
Human Rights, transparency, efficient governance, inclusiveness, non-discrimination

Achieved through:



Parliamentarians are uniquely placed to ensure policy and institutional coherence among sectors; foster multi-stakeholder collaboration; and the mobilization of finance, capacity building, and transfer of technology.

PROGRESSIVE REALISATION OF SDG 6



The figure above highlights the steps that parliamentarians can support in the realization of SDG6. Starting with understanding the current situation, which involves a rigorous analysis of the governance architecture, covering the laws and policies related to water, and field studies to test the service provided across the whole population, including marginalized populations. The outputs from this baseline analysis provide an understanding of the gaps in the governance framework and allows for a series of recommendations that can help to structure a process of progressive realization over a number of years. This will include the identification of areas for improvement; an outline of the relevant indicators; guidelines for a targeted monitoring programme and engagement with stakeholders.