

G20 Call to Action on Strengthening Drinking-water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Services

Access to safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene is a prerequisite to health and nutrition and is critical to sustainable development outcomes. We reaffirm our commitment to ensure safe drinking water and sanitation. With the world experiencing climate change, environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, pollution, and disasters, achievement of the SDG 6 targets of universal access to water and sanitation by 2030 is off track. Globally, achieving the targets requires a six-fold increase in current rates of progress for safely managed drinking-water, a five-fold increase for safely managed sanitation and a three-fold increase for basic hygiene.¹

Achieving universal access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in many fragile contexts requires even greater acceleration, and inequalities in access exist within and among countries. The importance of progress on WASH for achieving SDG 5, to realize gender equality and empower all women and girls in diverse situations and conditions², is also widely recognized, while gender equality and women's empowerment are essential for the realization of SDG 6 targets. Women and girls are often made responsible for water collection and provision, which can be time-consuming labor, putting them at risk of injuries, threats and acts of violence and harassment, including gender-based violence, and negatively impact their education, employment and income-generation. Women and girls can also be disproportionately affected when health facilities and educational institutions do not have WASH infrastructure.

¹ Lack of access to hygiene also disproportionately affects women and girls. *Progress on household drinking-water, sanitation and hygiene 2000–2022: special focus on gender*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO), 2023.

² Throughout this document women and girls may be read in conjunction with "irrespective of age, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

Further, while taking into account the rural-urban continuum, service delivery for both sanitation and drinking-water is lower in rural areas, slums, and other underserved areas, with many countries facing challenges and lacking local capacity in extending services to rural areas and to people living in poverty and in vulnerable situations, who are most at risk of being left behind.

We are therefore at a crucial moment whereby all countries should elevate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) on their national development planning and agendas, as well as in the international agenda, recognizing there is a need not only to accelerate progress, but also to make transformative changes to ensure that water and sanitation services are used and managed in a sustainable and efficient manner. We commit to explicit actions to mainstream water and sanitation and hygiene services within domestic and international cooperation policies and by reinforcing systems³ that deliver equitable, inclusive, integrated, sustainable, and climate, environment and disaster-resilient WASH services, benefiting both developed and developing countries and society as a whole. In this regard, mobilizing resources to build sustainable and resilient water and sanitation systems is essential for a healthier and more equitable future for all. Achieving the SDG 6 targets alone is a whole of a government effort, together with other actors, that could save at least 1.4 million lives per year⁴ and provide a return of investment of \$2.6-7.9 for every dollar invested in water and sanitation⁵.

This Call to Action builds on recent actions to promote WASH, such as the recognition of water in the Political Declaration (78/1) of the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, where Member States committed to “*address water scarcity and stress and drive transformation from a global water crisis*”

³ Accelerated action needed to ensure safe drinking-water, sanitation and hygiene for all

⁴ Improving access to water, sanitation and hygiene can save 1.4 million lives per year

⁵ Hutton G. Global Benefits and Costs of Achieving Universal Coverage of Basic Water and Sanitation Services as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In: Lomborg B, ed. *Prioritizing Development: A Cost Benefit Analysis of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals*. Cambridge University Press; 2018:422-445.

to a world where water is a sustainable resource, ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.”⁶, the resolution by the United Nations Environment Assembly on “Effective and inclusive solutions for strengthening water policies to achieve sustainable development in the context of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution”,⁷ the UN General Assembly’s Resolution 78/130 on “Sustainable, safe, and universal water, sanitation, hygiene, waste and electricity services in health care facilities”, the UNGA 2023 resolution on “Water, Sanitation, Hygiene, Waste and Electricity in Health Care Facilities”, the Water Action Agenda⁸ voluntary commitments made during or further to the UN Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028, held in New York in March 2023, and its follow up resolution adopted by UNGA (A/RES/77/334), as well as relevant G20 deliverables, such as G20 Roadmap for Stronger Recovery and Resilience in Developing Countries, including Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States.

The Call to Action complements the recent United Nations system-wide strategy for water and sanitation strategy⁹, the Heads of State Initiative for Water and Sanitation (HOSI) and the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework. Further, the Call to Action presents opportunities for Member States to demonstrate their commitment to WASH political prioritization and accountability at forthcoming events including the Summit of the Future, and the 29th UN Climate Change Conference (COP29); the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD4), the Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) Partnership Sector Ministers Meeting and COP30 in 2025; and the 2026 United Nations Water Conference to Accelerate the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

⁶ A/RES/78/1 General Assembly

⁷ UNEP/EA.6/RES.13

⁸ Water Action Agenda

⁹ United Nations System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation

We therefore are committed to implement the four core areas of actions below and further mainstream water, sanitation and hygiene in our respective policies and actions to accelerate the implementation of SDG 6 targets by 2030 and to engage relevant stakeholders. This requires a whole of government approach through integrated water resource management and that involves all spheres of governance, national to local, and other actors, that is triggered at the highest political level with dedicated resources towards the achievement of universal access to WASH, in particular for those who are the hardest to reach.

CALL TO ACTION

- a. We reaffirm our commitment to lead by example in building and strengthening WASH systems and raising the political prioritization to accelerate progress towards achieving SDG 6 by 2030**, including to strengthen their resilience in the face of climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental and land degradation, as well as disasters. Strong WASH systems and improved access to water, sanitation and hygiene are essential for equitable, resilient and sustainable development of communities. An enabling WASH system comprises effective, accountable and inclusive governance and institutions, adequate and well-maintained infrastructure, including digital public infrastructure as applicable, diversified finance sources, voluntary monitoring and evaluation and capacity, as well as being inclusive and equitable. These domains, along with innovation and collection and use of data for development, are identified as requiring acceleration under the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework¹⁰ and should be approached in a manner similar to ‘systems strengthening’ in the health sector. An enabling WASH system should be complemented with sustainable consumption and production through mainstreaming Lifestyles for Sustainable Development (LiFE).

¹⁰ Recent documents reflecting recommendations aligned with the [SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework](#) include the UN 2023 Water Conference interactive dialogue paper titled [Water for Health](#), prepared by WHO and UNICEF; [State of the World's Drinking-Water \(2022\)](#); [State of the World's Hand Hygiene \(2021\)](#); and [State of the World's Sanitation \(2020\)](#).

WASH systems should also contribute to the swift, full, and effective implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the realization of the 2050 Vision of "Living in harmony with Nature". WASH systems strengthening is part of a recognition that sustainable and integrated, safely managed and climate-resilient WASH services, serving people and communities in the most vulnerable situations, cannot be realized with a project-oriented provision of infrastructure alone, while it remains an essential aspect. We stress the importance of supportive political will and coherent and enforced policies, regulations, vocational and other training, human resources, technology development and transfer of technology on voluntary and mutually agreed terms, and funding from all sources which cover operations and maintenance in the management of water resources. It is essential that WASH solutions are gender responsive and ensure the inherent dignity of all women and girls in diverse situations and conditions, persons with disabilities and persons in vulnerable situations, including local communities as well as Indigenous Peoples. We encourage women-led development and remain committed to enhancing women's full, equal, effective, and meaningful participation as decision makers including in the development and implementation of national WASH policies, plans and strategies. In order to ensure WASH systems work is progressing, we encourage support for the Heads of State Initiative for Water and Sanitation, the proposed World Bank Fast-Tracking Water Security for Climate Adaptation and Climate Mitigation, and Climate Adaptation Global Challenge and initiatives to support climate-resilient WASH systems, including also by other MDBs.

- b. We support increased mobilization of the financing, from all sources, for drinking-water and sanitation planning, programs and infrastructure.** As part of this, we are committed to the mobilization of domestic resources and use of international sustainable financing mechanisms including public and private, and increase the effective and targeted use of existing funding. To significantly expand access to safe drinking-water and sanitation services we will build on and reinforce existing initiatives for improving WASH infrastructure, including taking into account the G20 Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment, and

services, for households, workplaces, schools and health care facilities to those in vulnerable situations especially in rural and/or peri-urban areas. This includes fostering public-private partnerships, gender-responsive budgeting, complemented by innovative financing mechanisms, such as blended finance, as well as facilitating investment in innovative water, sanitation, and hygiene solutions, including through enhanced water efficiency and circular use, improved wastewater treatment and sustainable desalination, and promoting accessible, affordable as well as efficient use and management of water resources and systems. Achieving SDG 6 targets is crucial for reducing inequality and poverty, strengthening food security as well as achieving good health and wellbeing; therefore, making financial resources available and using and targeting existing funding more effectively are essential actions to directly benefit all women and girls in diverse situations and conditions, groups and individuals in vulnerable situations, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities, who are disproportionately impacted by the effects of water scarcity, water related hazards (such as floods and droughts) and inadequate water resources management and access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene. In order to ensure that WASH financing is efficient and effective, we recommend the development of comprehensive national and regional ‘WASH Finance Plans’ based on evidence from all sources and informed by robust WASH monitoring. We also recommend the inclusion of WASH programs in the national development plans and programs, where appropriate, a review of WASH¹¹ and fiscal space analysis and other efficiency initiatives to optimize existing funds available, taking into account national circumstances.

- c. We call for G20 Members to boost international technical cooperation for WASH services in the rural-urban continuum.** International technical cooperation plays both a catalytic and sustaining role in promoting capacity building in developing countries, sustainability and resilience of communities, equity and inclusion in relation to the use and management of water resources, impacts of climate change, and other environmental, health and nutrition challenges,

¹¹ [WASH accounts](#)

especially for children, such as water-borne and vector-borne diseases arising due to inappropriate or inadequate WASH approaches and water scarcity circumstances. We also highlight the role of international technical cooperation to combat water pollution, including microbiological and chemical, such as from lead, mercury, arsenic and other heavy metals, from a range of sources including industrial and municipal waste and agricultural run offs, as well as marine litter, which can impact health, education and socio-economic development. It is important that countries work together to ensure equitable access to safely managed drinking-water, sanitation and hygiene for all people, regardless of their geographic location, socioeconomic status or other status. Furthermore, it is necessary that integrated water resource management is implemented including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate. G20 Members should promote the sharing of knowledge, experiences and best practices specifically in the context of technological development as well as transfer of technology on voluntary and mutually agreed terms. Members should also support building local capacity to install and maintain technological solutions as well as inclusive governance of water and sanitation services developing scalable and adaptable solutions, considering local geographical contexts encouraging synergies with ongoing international platforms and global coalitions, including the G20 Dialogue on Water. For example, the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) together with other partners provides a model for promoting trilateral and south-south cooperation.¹² *We recommend efforts to increase capacity at all levels and professionalize institutional capacities through existing or new training programs and specifically through the development of capacities of local government representatives,¹³ personnel, service providers in planning, operating and maintaining sustainable, safe and **affordable** drinking-water supply and sanitation systems in rural and/or peri-urban areas. This could include the promotion of existing, easy-to-operate technological solutions and management and maintenance models that allow for large scale,*

¹² [ABC - Manual of South-South Technical Cooperation Management](#)

sustainable implementation of national WASH programs by the responsible government entities. We support a Call to Action to scale up regulatory support to national and local water, health and environmental institutions, small water suppliers and decentralized sanitation systems in rural areas, such as through the UN Sanitation and Hygiene Fund, RegNet, the International Network of Drinking-water and Sanitation Regulators supported by the World Health Organization (WHO). We recognize the WHO's role in providing guidance on water quality and health through its guidelines, as well as convening platforms on water and health.

- d. We will promote and invest in WASH services, in the health, and education sectors and in workplaces and encourage further inclusive community engagement.** WASH is a key component of quality of health care and quality of learning environments. SDG 6 is also closely connected to SDG 3 and SDG 4. Many schools and health facilities lack WASH, compromising the quality of education and health care, including safe birth. Strong public health systems, including primary health systems and public health emergency response and management systems, are essential to safety and health for all. The continuing support of sanitation and hygiene promotion including menstrual health and hygiene, in communities, schools, and health care facilities and community engagement in sanitation actions can encourage all relevant stakeholders' and sectors' commitment to improving people's living conditions and where it raises awareness of the importance of basic sanitation for public health and the environment. This may encourage further personal and household and community hygiene behaviors, including menstrual health management while paying special attention to the needs of all women and girls in diverse situations and conditions and those in vulnerable situations¹⁴, and fosters community participation in professional local management of drinking-water and sanitation services, infrastructure and facilities, especially in rural areas, promoting social cohesion and project

¹⁴ Menstrual health is linked to SDG target 6.2 which aims to achieve 'access to adequate sanitation and hygiene for all... paying special attention to the needs of women and girls'.

sustainability. We recommend to systematically foster inter-sectorial collaboration with the health and education sector to accelerate action to assess WASH in health facilities and school and to support to the integration of WASH within health care facilities, schools, workplace and community centers, which is fully in line with the Primary Health Care approach, a necessary precondition to achieving Universal Health Coverage and boosting maternal, newborn and child health. WASH in health care facilities is also central to the WHO Health Emergency Preparedness and Response (HEPR) framework while also taking note of the ongoing negotiations for a WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. This will enable communities to be fully equipped to respond effectively to the spread of antimicrobial resistance and combat infectious diseases of all scales including the burden of neglected diseases, and not limited to global outbreaks also encompassing malnutrition and including epidemics. Specifically, we recommend that WASH in schools, workplace, in health care facilities and in other public places upholds recommended standards and fosters community-level readiness to promote health taking into account the local circumstances. We recommend support to the integration of WASH within health care facilities, schools, the workplace and community settings, which is fully in line with the Primary Health Care approach, a necessary precondition to achieving Universal Health Coverage and central to the WHO Health Emergency Preparedness and Response (HEPR) framework. This will ensure that communities are fully equipped to respond effectively to emergencies of all scales, including at the local level, not limited to global outbreaks. Specifically, we recommend that WASH in communities' schools, in health care facilities and workplaces, and in other public places upholds recommended standards and fosters community-level readiness to promote health, taking into account the local context and circumstances as well as capabilities.

This Call to Action is a declaration of intent and a commitment to achieving transformative progress in WASH access by all as well as sustainable and integrated resource management at all levels. G20 members and partners are

encouraged to integrate these priorities into national policies aligned with approaches that promote progressive improvement in WASH services for all, ensure that actions are sustainable, climate-resilient and inclusive. We encourage the implementation of this Call to Action and we will advance these commitments in relevant international processes. We take note of the One Water Summit in 2024, Sanitation and Water for All ministerial meeting in 2025, and the 2026 United Nations Water Conference, to Accelerate the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.