



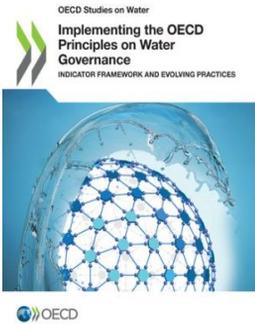
OECD Water
Governance Initiative

Highlights from the 8th World Water Forum



18-23 March 2018,
Brasilia, Brazil

DRAFT FOR COMMENTS – Please send your comments to
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The OECD Water governance team and many members of the OECD Water Governance Initiative (WGI) participated in the [8th World Water Forum](#), 18-23 March 2018. It gathered more than 10,600 practitioners, policymakers and representatives from major stakeholder groups as participants to the various high-level panels, regional, thematic and other specific sessions. In addition, the Forum organised Citizen's Forum and Exhibition. The Forum encouraged debates and exchanges of experience on water resources and water services management amongst all stakeholders in the water community.

The Thematic Process of the Forum covered six main topics (climate, development, people, urban, finance, ecosystems) and 3 cross cutting themes (sharing, capacity, and governance), for which concrete tools, actions and feasible solutions were identified to fit for current and future water challenges. The OECD was lead coordinator for the water governance theme, in collaboration with INBO, Women for Water Partnership, CONAGUA and ANA-Brazil. The OECD WGI was the main coordinator of the topic area **Effective governance: Enhanced political decisions, stakeholder participation and technical information**, under which 3 governance sessions were held relating to multi-level governance; water governance indicators; and water governance stories. All the sessions had full rooms (60-65 participants) and discussions were energetic and lively. A thank you is extended to all the various session co-convenors, presenters, panellists and moderators, for making the events interactive and for constructive dialogues. It was felt that many participants were very appreciative of the session format of smaller roundtables where they could raise their voice, share experiences and learn from others.

In the Thematic opening session, 19 March, the Governance theme highlighted that we need a shift, from the previous paradigm focused on solving individual situations, to begin **connecting the dots between actors, policy fields and scales** to address development challenges in a systemic way. Moreover, the **interconnectedness** of the SDGs implies that their implementation should be considered in a systemic way, which requires particular attention to **governance**. The various sessions under showcased how **robust evidence-based analysis, knowledge sharing and international best practice** can help foster integration across people, places and policies.

Outcomes of the three sessions (under 9c1-3 on Effective governance) are highlighted at the end of this document. The concluding session for the Water Governance Theme, held 22 March, covered all three Topic areas under the Water Governance Theme: IWRM; Transboundary water; and Effective governance. From the closing Water Governance Theme session it is worth highlighting that the theme delivered concrete results of next steps (see further in Session key highlights at the end of this document):

- Topic 9.C on Effective and inclusive governance concluded with **the Brasilia Pledge for the implementation of the OECD Principles of Water Governance** and that the **OECD Water Governance Initiative** is a multi-stakeholder platform with 140 members, committed towards promoting the implementation of the OECD Principles on Water Governance at different levels ranging from cities, regions, basins to national. It will bring governance from vision to action. The WGI will work to realise the pledge on enhanced water governance implementation and report progress at the 9th World Water Forum, Senegal, 2021.
- Topic 9.B on Transboundary water will by 2021 **promote additional ratifications** of one or two of the global water conventions as well as conclusion or revision of at least 5 basin agreements worldwide. It will also seek to rally **additional signatories for the Pact for Climate Change Adaptation** at Basin Level and therefore contribute to the Paris Agreement
- Topic 9.A on IWRM will contribute to the **monitoring and implementation of SDG target 6.5** to implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate

The OECD Secretary-General, Angel Gurría, launched the report [Implementing the OECD Principles on Water Governance: Indicator Framework and Evolving Practices](#). The report takes stock of the use and dissemination of the Principles building on a Survey across the 40+ countries and 140+ stakeholder groups who have endorsed them over the last three years, and proposes an **indicator framework** and a set of **50+ evolving practices** to support their implementation. The Map showing the 11 indicator pilots and the 50+ evolving practices are accessible [here](#). These tools were developed through the WGI. As part of the outreach strategy, the OECD Water governance team produced a guest article on the indicators and evolving practices for the IISD Knowledge Hub on the SDGs. Click [here](#) for the full article.

Peter Glas, Chair of the *OECD Water Governance Initiative*, handed over to the OECD Secretary-General the [Brasilia Multi-stakeholder Pledge](#) to implement the OECD Principles. It reflects a commitment by 140+ organisations and representatives from government and non-government actors to engage further with the OECD Principles and to support and promote the urgent need to implement improved water governance. The Pledge will be an important foundation for the next 3 years to come and will be reported on at the 9th World Water Forum to be held in Dakar, Senegal in 2021.

An informal WGI gathering was held in the evening 22 March, Brazilian Pavilion, with approximately 20 WGI members and some organisations expressing interest to work with WGI. Impressions from the Forum confirmed a continued high priority to work on governance in water, but increasingly beyond SDG 6 itself to promote the role of water in other SDGs. The gathering acknowledged that WGI has built exceptional momentum

from the adoption of the OECD Principles on Water Governance in 2015, to the development of water governance indicators and evolving practices. The coming work phase of the WGI should thus put strong focus on the promotion of implementation. At the margins of the meeting, 18 March, the WGI Steering Committee met to discuss the upcoming WGI satisfaction and forward looking survey and set date to 17 May, for a full day workshop, to be held in Paris, on developing WGI programme of work for the next 3 years.

The OECD Secretary-General was awarded the [6th King Hassan II Great Water World Prize](#) by the Government of Morocco and the World Water Council, in recognition of his leadership, and the achievements of the Organisation, in the water area. It is the highest world-renowned tribute paid every three years to strategic leaders on water security. This year's edition of the Prize was awarded under the theme "Working towards greater solidarity and inclusion in order to ensure water security and climate justice" and provided an excellent recognition of the last decade of OECD and WGI work to raise the profile of water governance and economics in national policy agendas and support countries around the world on the issue.

A number of declarations were launched during the Forum as part of the programme and they can be found [here](#). Many thanks to WGI members that provided inputs to the Forum related [The Sustainability Declaration](#) and [Brasilia Declaration of Judges on Water Justice](#). The declarations' remarks on the importance of water governance are noted with appreciation. The Sustainability Declaration will among others be taken to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development of the United Nations, which takes place in July 2018. The aim is to ensure cooperative alliances, water reforms and financial innovations.

Throughout the Forum, OECD was consistently active on social media under the handle @OECD_local with #WorldWaterForum8. Approximately 500 visits to the [OECD Water Principles webpage](#) and 330 to the [Publication's page](#) throughout the Forum can be attributed to the campaign.

Session Key-messages: 9c1: How to Enhance Multi-Level Water Governance?

Session Coordinators: OECD (lead); Portuguese Water Partnership; IRC – International Water and Sanitation Centre for Community; Water Supply Public Ministry of Ceará State (Brazil); and K-water Convergence Institute.

Water governance is about who does what, why, at which level of government and how. These questions have to be addressed through:

- **Coordination across sectors:** sound water management and policy implementation require coordination across sectors, such as energy, food production, manufacturing industry and domestic water.
- **Coordination across governance scales:** policy alignment across governance scales – from local to transboundary water - is key for effective policy implementation.
- **Inclusive governance.** If stakeholders are not on board it will be very difficult to implement policies. Stakeholder knowledge can also improve the quality of policies and making them more practical to implement

Multi-level governance is complex encompassing different institutional arrangements and dealing with the needs and (political) interests of multiple actors. But a common factor is often that those structures give little opportunity for the voice of many stakeholders (water users, poor people) to be heard.

- **Effective accountability mechanisms** at all levels (national, regional, local) through which the government can be held accountable for progress towards its goals and commitments in the water sector, are an essential part of good water governance.
- Many countries have **different accountability instruments in place** (e.g the regulator, complaints mechanisms etc) but those are seldom part of a structured and formal system that allows for effective multi stakeholder participation.
- There is a great **potential for civil society organisations in strengthening water governance**. They can be the “connectors” between (local) governments and citizens by making their interest and needs visible. This requires appropriate platforms for CSO participation in the whole planning, monitoring and review process in the water sector.

Session Key-messages: 9c2: How is Water Governance in Your Country? Indicators to Assess Institutional Performance

Session Coordinators: ASTEE (lead); International Office for Water; Transparency International; Water Governance Observatory / WWF (Brazil).

Good governance is critical to manage too much, too little and too polluted water and make sure citizens have universal access to drinking water and sanitation;

- Challenges remain to assess the performance of water governance. It is partly a methodological challenge and partly a challenge of investing in improved water governance assessments;
- Cutting edge **indicators and evaluation frameworks can help governments and stakeholders measure institutional performance properly and collectively** through multi-stakeholder methodologies and self-assessment tools for dialogue; and
- This is particularly timely and relevant given the need to monitor SDG 6 progress, and particularly its two targets on local participation (6b1) and IWRM (6.5).

The meeting highlighted that:

- Indicators are a means to an end. Water governance systems (more or less formal, complex, and costly) should be designed according to the challenges they are required to address.
- Indicators can be a vehicle to promote multi-stakeholder dialogues at local, basin, regional and national levels.
- It was seen as important that indicator framework assesses: The “what” (policy frameworks); the “who” (institutions); The “how” dimension (practices and tools).

In carrying out assessments it was seen as critical to:

- ✓ **Search for consensus building** and a need to recognize that there are common views, or at least, as a minimum, to acknowledge that there are different interests and objectives among various stakeholders, leading to limited or no consensus

- ✓ Have **true engagement** from various water stakeholders. It is imperative that an inclusive process is put in place. There can only be policy efficiencies in case the key stakeholders are on board.
- ✓ **Look out for risks** that only the known stakeholders, or those with strong financial and political backing are those that are involved in the process, or that they tend to dominate the assessment process. Hence, participation and inclusiveness in assessing water governance is important for effective implementation of any action plan formulated in relation to the assessment
- ✓ **Build appropriate capacities** among stakeholders

Session Key-messages: 9.c.3 What's Your Water Governance Story?

Session Coordinators: SUEZ (lead); Water Integrity Network; Stockholm International Water Institute; Ministry of Environment (Brazil); Women for Water Partnership

A main conclusion of the session was that water Governance stories are important to help policy makers, practitioners and other stakeholders learn from each other and identify pitfalls to avoid when designing and implementing water policies. As such, they are a vehicle for peer-to-peer dialogue and learning.

Stories are important because they provide inspiration. It shows that something can be done, problems can be resolved. Some issues highlighted by the meeting were:

- Sharing water: what solutions to integrate different needs?
- Governance is complex and cannot be improved without collective efforts: Who does what? How? At what level?: those questions are not necessarily easy to answer when it comes to water management
- Integrated Water Resources Management: do not leave data analysis alone: transdisciplinary is key
- Regulation is an evolving process until it gets independent as an organisation, in which every stakeholder is represented

An analysis of more than 50 water governance stories suggested that three critical elements are common to the progress of all these practices: **stakeholder engagement**, **financing** and **political will**. The stories suggest that improved water governance can generate positive effects on social and environmental well-being and sustained economic growth.

Water governance stories or practices were seen as **critical for transforming SDGs into very practical actions**. The water-related SDGs will require countries to translate global goals into concrete actions on a number of water topics. It will imply that countries address governance challenges related to water policy design, regulation and implementation.

Collecting quality water governance practices is challenging. It requires a lot of resources and skill-sets on governance. Moreover, some stories can be very difficult and sensitive to collect, such as for corruption.

Key-messages from the Closing Session of the Water Governance Theme:

Water governance is about who does what, why, at which level of government and how. These questions have to be addressed across all levels of government. Being convinced there is not a problem in the world that cannot be solved if we follow the water!

The practical relevance of water governance for the implementation of water policies needs to be communicated in simple language. In language that connects to every day need, hopes and aspirations of people in local communities. **We should talk about lives and livelihood before we start talking about water.**

Some conclusions suggested:

- If you do not **support financially and back up politically the institutions that are responsible for IWRM and governance** from local to transboundary levels most of the work will stay undone since implementation will not take place
- If we do not find ways of **inclusive collaboration between stakeholders** we will not reach the SDGs: Inclusive governance is critical for effective policy development and implementation. Working on integrity, transparency, accountability and participation is critical for making sustainable actions for water supply and sanitation and water resources management.
- **Legislation and regulation** is an essential condition to enable practitioners to do their work in an effective and responsible manner
- We need to **build capacity at different levels, from government to grassroots**, to adapt to new climate and socio-economic situation and innovative thinking on how to govern and manage water at multiple levels across a range of stakeholders
- Water governance **tools and methodologies are available as means to assess the quality of governance and identify ways on how to move forward, and their use need to be promoted**

In addition to providing policy guidance, lessons from practice and measurement tools to build effective water governance frameworks, the Governance theme **delivered concrete results and next steps included:**

- Topic 9.A on IWRM will contribute to the **monitoring and implementation of SDG target 6.5**
- Topic 9.B on Transboundary water will by 2021 **promote additional ratifications** of one or two of the global water conventions as well as conclusion or revision of at least 5 basin agreements worldwide. It will also seek to rally **additional signatories for the Pact for Climate Change Adaptation** at Basin Level and therefore contribute to the Paris Agreement
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Tweet from Peter Glas, Chair of the OECD Water Governance Initiative:



“Thanks for the great Water Governance team at OECD and all WGI members and the Steering Committee members of the Water Governance Initiative for your tireless contribution to the 8th World Water Forum. Now on to the implementation!”