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Item 7 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Parallel meetings for an in-depth review of progress made and peer learning on the sub-themes of the Regional Forum: clean water and sanitation

Progress, challenges, opportunities and priority actions to accelerate the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6

I. Introduction

1. The present document has been prepared for the ninth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, the theme of which is "Accelerating the inclusive and green recovery from multiple crises and the integrated and full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063". It provides information on the trends and progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6, "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all", of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is aligned with goal 7, "Environmentally sustainable and climate resilient economies and communities", of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union.

2. There are eight targets associated with Goal 6, as set out below, to achieve by 2030:

(a) 6.1: Achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.

(b) 6.2: Achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.

(c) 6.3: Improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally.

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(d) 6.4: Substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity.

(e) 6.5: Implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate.

(f) 6.6: Protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes.

(g) 6.a: Expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water- and sanitation-related activities and programmes, including water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling, and reuse technologies.

(h) 6.b: Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management.

3. The ninth session of the Regional Forum coincides with the end of the first 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063 and the midterm comprehensive review of the implementation of the objectives of the international decade for action, "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018–2028. The present report, therefore, takes stock of the progress, good practices and lessons learned in the first 10 years of the implementation of Agenda 2063 and in the efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

4. In the present report, workable programmes and actions are identified that can feed into and advance the implementation of the second 10-year implementation plan to ensure that the aspirations of Agenda 2063 are achieved. It ends with key messages for consideration at the ninth Regional Forum, drawing on existing assessments and literature on the two related goals (Sustainable Development Goal 6 and goal 7 of Agenda 2063).

5. Africa has a combined population of about 1.2 billion people, which represented about 17.1 per cent of the global population in 2019. Renewable water resources for the whole of Africa amounts to about 3,930 km^3, or less than 9 per cent of global renewable water resources.[1] The majority of sub-Saharan African countries suffer from economic water scarcity because of their populations' lack of the monetary means required for access to adequate sources of water[2]. Of the two forms of water scarcity (physical and economic), physical scarcity can be addressed quickly and effectively with simple infrastructure, such as the collection of water from rainfall and dams, but overcoming economic water scarcity requires economic resources that many of the affected areas lack.

6. For Africa, adaptation is of prime importance and water (or lack thereof) is central in implementing the Paris Agreement on climate change. The Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, at its twenty-seventh session, emphasized, in the Sharm el-Sheik Implementation Plan, "the importance of protecting, conserving and restoring water and water-related ecosystems, including river basins, aquifers and lakes," and urged "Parties to further integrate water into adaptation efforts", thus providing a great impetus to

[1] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Irrigation in Africa in figures: AQUASTAT Survey – 2005* (Rome, 2005).

[2] Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture, *Water for Food, Water for Life: A Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture* (London, Earthscan; Colombo, International Water Management Institute, 2007).

bridge the existing gaps between the water-focused and climate-focused communities in Africa.

7. In the Implementation Plan, the Parties also welcomed "the consideration, for the first time, of matters relating to funding arrangements responding to loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change". Furthermore, decisions were adopted at the twenty-seventh session on matters relating to funding arrangements that respond to loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change.

8. A critical driver of peace and security in Africa is the way in which the delivery of public services promotes inclusion and resilience and reduces the likelihood of potential conflict. In 2021, in his report entitled "Promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa" (A/75/917-S/2021/562), the Secretary-General highlighted how instability and conflict on the continent can lead to a vicious cycle that exacerbates poverty and weakens institutional infrastructure, which, in turn, decreases resilience and the prospects for achieving durable peace.

9. In the same report, the Secretary-General noted that, in 2020, approximately 500 protests related to water and sanitation took place in 28 African countries, including protests over the lack, interruption, poor provision or price increase of potable water, often alongside the lack of access to electricity. The fact that there were over 320 protests related to water and sanitation in 2021[3] continues to support the view that the lack of adequate service delivery is a driver of social tension and conflict.

II. Progress in implementation

10. The following paragraphs summarize the progress in the achievement of Goal 6 targets, as provided by the custodian agencies and the African Ministers' Council on Water. It also includes discussion, where possible, on the linkages with, and implications of, related policy frameworks on climate (the Paris Agreement), disaster risk reduction (the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030) and trade (the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area).

11. The targets and indicators, in summary form, for Goal 6 are illustrated in figure I, which also shows the custodian agencies for each indicator.

[3] Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project database. Available at https://acleddata.com (accessed in November 2022).

Figure I

Targets, indicators and custodian agencies for Goal 6

Indicator	Description (custodian agency)
6.1.1	Safely managed drinking water services (WHO, UNICEF)
6.2.1	Safely managed sanitation services and hygiene (WHO, UNICEF)
6.3.1	Wastewater safely treated (WHO, UN Habitat, UNSD)
6.3.2	Good ambient water quality (UNEP)
6.4.1	Water use efficiency (FAO)
6.4.2	Level of water stress (FAO)
6.5.1	Integrated water resources management (UNEP)
6.5.2	Transboundary basin area with water cooperation (UNECE, UNESCO)
6.6.1	Water related ecosystems (UNEP, Ramsar)
6.a.1	Water- and sanitation-related official development assistance (WHO, OECD)
6.b.1	Participation of local communities in water and sanitation management (WHO, OECD)

Abbrevations: ECE, Economic Commission for Europe; FAO, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; OECD, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; UN-Habitat, United Nations Human Settlements Programme; UNEP, United Nations Environment Programme; UNESCO, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; UNICEF, United Nations Children's Fund; UNSD, Statistics Division of the United Nations WHO, World Health Organization.

A. Water, sanitation and hygiene for all

12. The two Goal 6 targets that relate to water, sanitation and hygiene for all are 6.1[4] and 6.2.[5] Commitments with respect to the targets for water, sanitation and hygiene for all made by African countries since the adoption of the Africa Water Vision 2025[6] by the African Union are summarized in the table.

African commitments to water, sanitation and hygiene for all and the corresponding Sustainable Development Goal indicator

Continental commitments to water and sanitation under the Water and Sanitation Sector Monitoring and Reporting System	
Reference in African political commitments	**Relevant Sustainable Development Goal indicator**
AWV 2025, PANAFCON 2003	6.1.1. (Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services)
AWV 2025, PANAFCON 2003, N'gor 2015	6.2.1 (Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services, including a hand-washing facility with soap and water)
AWV 2025, PANAFCON 2003, N'gor 2015	4.a.1. (Proportion of schools with access to … (*e*) basic drinking water; (*f*) single-sex basic sanitation facilities; and (*g*) basic handwashing facilities (as per the

[4] Achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.

[5] Achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.

[6] Africa water vision for 2025: equitable and sustainable use of water for socioeconomic development (uneca.org).

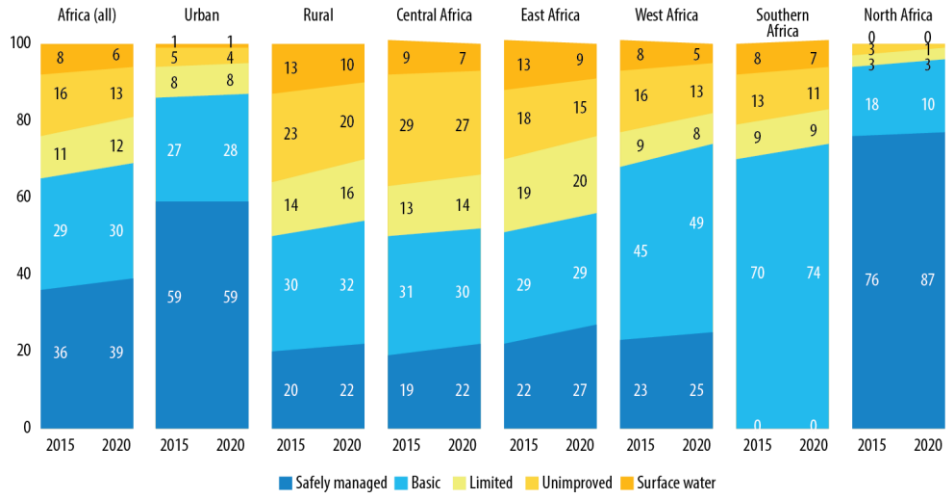
	definitions under the indicator for water, sanitations and hygiene for all))

Abbreviations: AWV 2025, Africa Water Vision 2025; PANAFCON 2003, Outcome of the Pan-African Implementation and Partnership Conference on Water; N'gor 2015, N'gor Declaration on Sanitation and Hygiene.

1. Achieving universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all

13. The progress made by African countries in the period 2015–2020, based on data from the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene, is illustrated in figure II, which shows the trends in the percentages of the populations using safely managed, basic, limited, unimproved and surface sources of water for each subregion and for urban and rural areas. Although there was steady progress at all levels and in all subregions prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the rate of improvement needs to be drastically increased to meet the goal of universal coverage by 2030.

Figure II
Trends in access to drinking water, by water source type and population percentage, 2015–2020



Source: WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene.

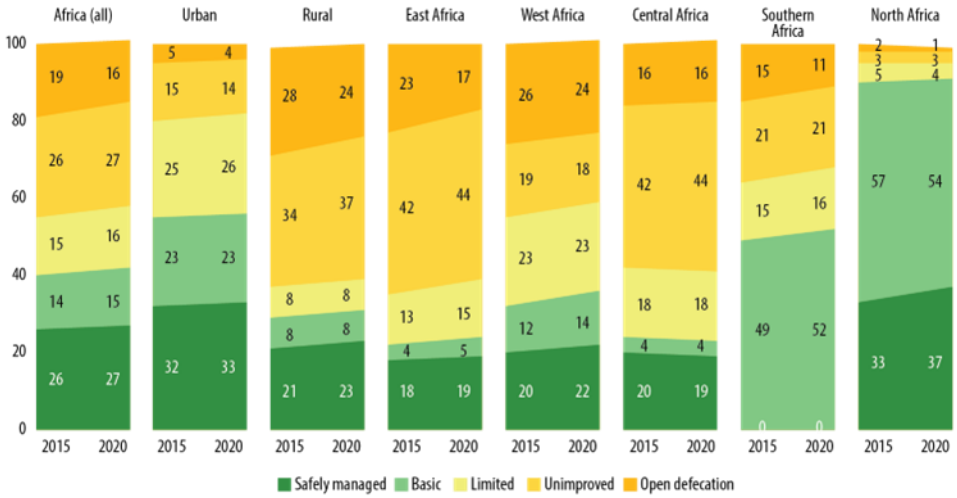
2. Access to adequate and equitable sanitation

14. Figure III shows the trend in the period 2015–2020 in the percentage of the population using safely managed, basic, limited and unimproved sanitation facilities, as well as open defecation, in Africa by subregion and for urban and rural areas. Some 208 million people in African countries practised open defecation in 2020, the largest numbers of whom were in Nigeria (38 million), Ethiopia (20 million), the Niger (16 million), Madagascar (12 million) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (11 million).[7]

[7] WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene.

Figure III

Trends in sanitation practices, by practice type and population percentage, 2015–2020



Source: WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene.

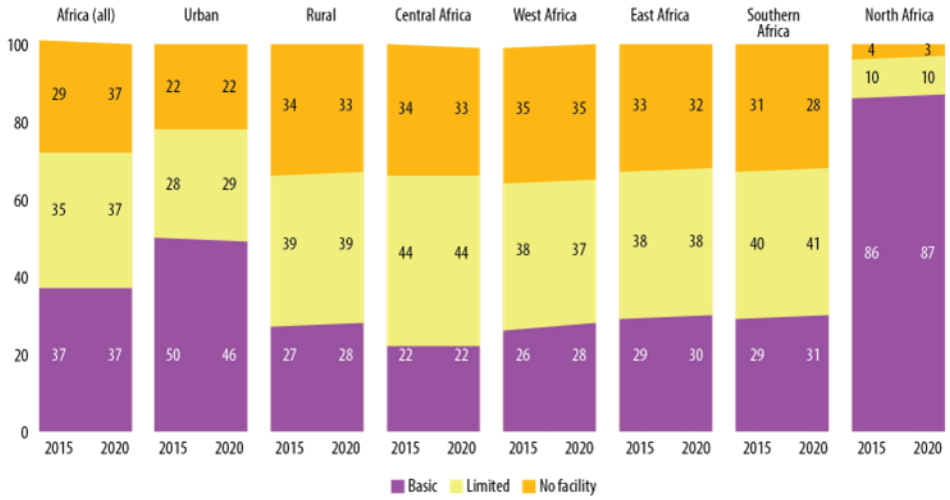
3. Access to adequate and equitable hygiene with special attention to the needs of girls, women and the disabled

15. Figure IV illustrates the trends in access to hygiene facilities in African countries in the period 2015–2020. In 2020, approximately 839 million people on the continent lacked access to basic hygiene services, the largest numbers of whom were in Nigeria (138 million), followed by Ethiopia (100 million), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (72 million), Kenya (39 million) and the Sudan (38 million). Hygiene is essential to reduce the disease burden in Africa and, ideally, all sanitation facilities would have well-functioning and hygiene facilities to break the cycles of common diseases, such as cholera, diarrhoea and dysentery[8].

[8] WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene.

Figure IV

Trends in hygiene facility access, by facility type and population percentage, 2015–2020



Source: WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene.

16. The emergence of COVID-19 highlighted the acute necessity of regular handwashing with soap to limit the spread of the disease. A related and emerging issue is the need for hygiene facilities for the menstrual health of girls and women, especially in rural Africa. Good menstrual health management is an antidote to gender inequity, in general, and to poor adolescent educational outcomes, in particular.

B. Wastewater and water quality

17. Progress towards achieving target 6.3[9] is monitored across two indicators, as described in the following paragraphs.

1. Safely treated wastewater

18. Data collected in 2015 indicated that, globally, less than 50 per cent of domestic wastewater is safely treated in 24 out of 75 reporting countries (where most reporting countries were high-income countries). The only African countries that reported were the Niger, Somalia and Uganda (where no more than 10 per cent of domestic wastewater was safely treated), Senegal (where between 11 per cent and 25 per cent was safely treated), Algeria, Libya and Morocco (where between 26 per cent and 50 per cent was safely treated), and Egypt and Tunisia (where between 51 per cent and 75 per cent was safely treated).

19. An urgent update of data specific to Africa is needed to be able to evaluate the progress and effort that are required to meet the 2030 target.

[9] By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally.

2. Good ambient water quality

20. Data collected between 2017 and 2020 shows that, globally, over 3 billion people were at risk because the health of their rivers, lakes and groundwater was unknown. Only about half of African countries reported on the proportion of their bodies of water that had good ambient water quality. Of those that did report, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Madagascar, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, the Sudan, Tunisia, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Zimbabwe reported that between 90 per cent and 100 per cent of their bodies of water had good ambient water quality.[10] The States that did not report must be encouraged to measure and report on their water quality and must be supported with technical assistance to do so.

21. There is a need for Africa-focused data since anecdotal evidence in countries such as Ghana indicates that the situation is getting worse as a result of activities such as the illegal mining for gold and diamonds and the use of chemicals, including mercury, in that process.

C. Improved water use efficiency and water scarcity

22. Progress towards achieving target 6.4[11] is monitored across two indicators, as described in the following paragraphs.

1. Increase in water use efficiency

23. The agricultural sector is the largest water user (approximately 70 per cent of all water usage) and tends to have a much lower water use efficiency compared with other productive sectors. Increasing agricultural water productivity is, therefore, a key intervention for improving overall water use efficiency. Between 2015 and 2018, the agricultural sector saw an 8 per cent increase in its water use efficiency[12]. Other important steps include reducing water loss by tackling leakage in municipal distribution networks and optimizing industrial and energy cooling processes. Data from FAO on the change in water use efficiency from 2015 to 2018 indicate that there was an improvement across all African countries, with some exceptions, namely Algeria, Angola, the Congo, Kenya, Namibia and South Africa.

2. Level of water stress and scarcity

24. Closely related to the changes in water use efficiency is the level of water stress. Since African economies are mainly agricultural and agriculture is the largest water use sector, the level of water stress within the agricultural sector serves as a good proxy for the level of overall water stress or scarcity. From FAO data on target 6.4.2 on water stress, North Africa, the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and the southeastern Africa have water stress levels of more that 75 per cent. The water stress levels for Central and West Africa are below 50 per cent.

[10] United Nations, Sustainable Development Goal 6 data portal. Available at https://sdg6data.org/en/maps.

[11] By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity.

[12] FAO and United Nations Water, *Progress on change in water-use efficiency. Global status and acceleration needs for SDG indicator 6.4.1, 2021* (Rome, 2021).

D. Integrated water resources management and transboundary cooperation

25. Indicators 6.5.1 and 6.5.2 relate to the degree of integrated water resources management implementation (on a scale from 0–100) and the proportion of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for water cooperation.

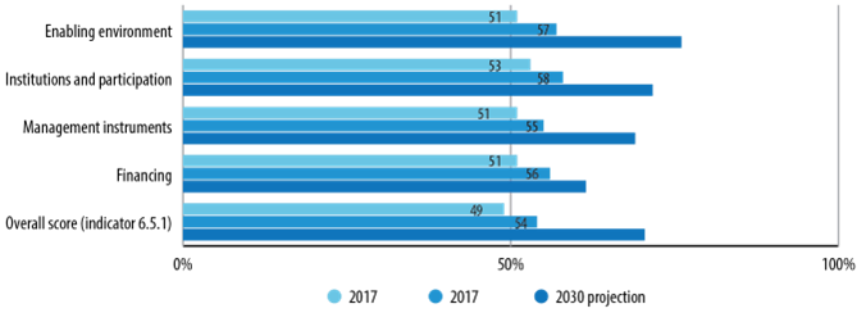
1. Integrated water resources management

26. Progress towards target 6.5 [13] is falling behind in Africa and there are subregional differences in respect of the enabling environment, institutions and participation, management instruments and financing.

27. A particular constraint in implementing integrated water resources management in Africa is the availability of financing at all levels. In this regard, North and Southern Africa have done better than West and Central Africa. Figure V illustrates the fact that, at the global level, financing lagged behind all other dimensions of integrated water resources management implementation in 2017 and 2020 and is projected to continue to do so in 2030.

Figure V

Degree of implementation (0–100) of the four dimensions of integrated water resources management in 2017 and 2020, and projections for 2030 based on the current rate of progress



Source: UNEP, *Progress on Integrated Water Resources Management: Global Indicator 6.5.1 Updates and Acceleration Needs* (2021).

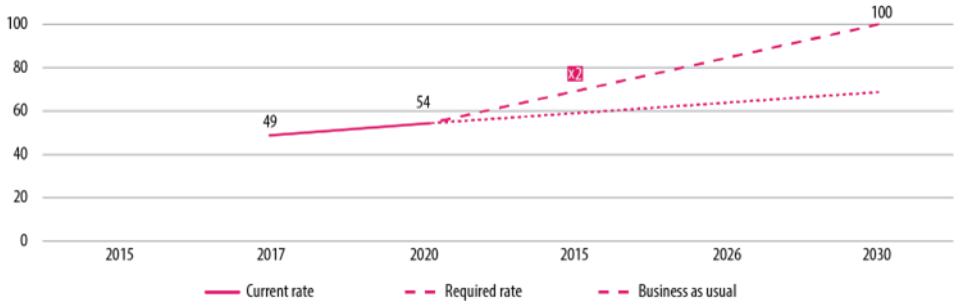
28. Figure VI illustrates the progress that had been made in the implementation of integrated water resources management by worldwide in 2017 and 2020 and shows projections for the period 2020–2030 at a "business as usual' rate and at the accelerated rate that is required to meet the 2030 target.

[13] By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate.

Figure VI

Degree of implementation of integrated water resources management worldwide in 2017 and 2020, and the projected progress from 2020 to 2030

(scale: 1–100)



Source: UNEP, *Progress on Integrated Water Resources Management: Global Indicator 6.5.1 Updates and Acceleration Needs* (2021).

2. Transboundary cooperation

29. Most countries in Africa are situated on one or more river, lake or aquifer basins. Of the 63 transboundary river or lake basins in Africa, only the 14 largest are the subject of cooperative legal and institutional arrangements that confer a degree of responsibility for the development of common resources. Similarly, of the 106 transboundary aquifers, only three of them are covered by operational arrangements. The fundamental problem of the other 49 transboundary river or lake basins is the absence of common and formal cooperative mechanisms that address the use of transboundary water resources for the integrated and equitable socioeconomic development of the associated riparian countries. Even when such mechanisms exist, they almost always fail to address groundwater.

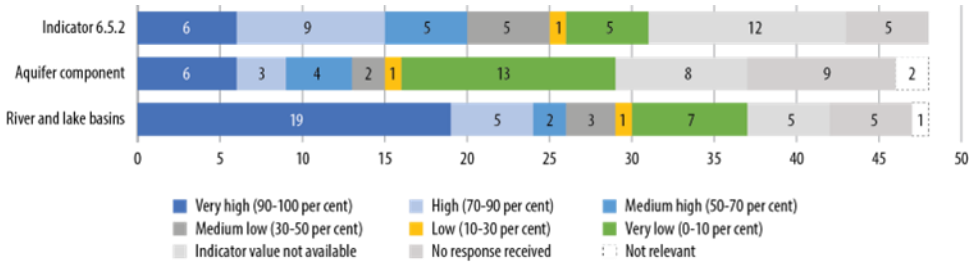
30. Indicator 6.5.2, which measures the proportion of the transboundary basin area of lakes, rivers and aquifers with an operational arrangement for water cooperation in riparian countries, has four criteria which must all be met for the arrangement to be considered operational. In 2020, the second reporting exercise on the indicator was carried out by the co-custodian agencies, the Economic Commission for Europe and UNESCO. In Africa, 43 of 48 countries that share water resources responded, which is an increase from the 37 responses that were received in the first reporting exercise in 2017. An overall value for indicator 6.5.2 was available for 31 countries following the 2020 exercise, compared with 23 countries following the 2017 exercise.

31. The proportion of transboundary river, lake and aquifer basins with operational arrangements for cooperation in place is high in Southern Africa, Central Africa and West Africa (between 90 and 100 per cent coverage). The high level of coverage in Southern Africa may be the result of efforts to promote transboundary cooperation, which started with the Revised Protocol on Shared Watercourses in the Southern African Development Community and has evolved into substantive planning and execution of joint projects. The Congo basin, which is the dominant basin in Central Africa, is administered at the regional economic community level by the International Commission of the Congo-Ubangi-Sangha Basin, of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central African States, which is charged with basin-wide planning. Similarly, for the Niger, Senegal, Volta and Lake Chad basins, which are the major basins in West Africa, long-standing institutional arrangements are in place, but with varying degrees of effectiveness and efficiency in delivering on their mandates. In East Africa, the major basin is the

Nile, which, for planning purposes, has 11 riparian countries and 2 major tributaries, the White Nile and the Blue Nile. In recent years, the Nile basin has been the subject of major disagreements between lower and upper riparian countries, owing to the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile.

Figure VII
Degree of transboundary cooperation in respect of aquifers and river and lake basins among sub-Saharan African countries

(Number of countries)



Source: United Nations and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Progress on Transboundary Water Cooperation: Global Status of SDG Indicator 6.5.2 and Acceleration Needs* (Paris, 2021).

32. Despite the general need to improve the data regarding the 106 shared transboundary aquifers in Africa, the level of information is higher for North Africa and Southern Africa, which are more arid regions and where transboundary groundwater resources have a critical role. Reporting levels for aquifers in the central part of the continent, however, are much lower.

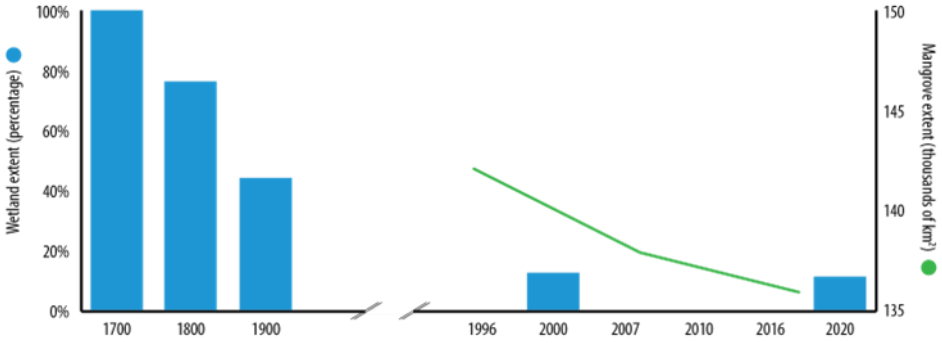
E. Water-related ecosystems

33. Target 6.6 concerns the protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes, and is measured by the increase or decrease in the extent of those ecosystems. In some cases, there have been increases followed by decreases in extent.

34. In Africa, some of the most relevant ecosystems are wetlands and mangroves. Figure VIII illustrates the long-term changes (since 1700) in the global extent of those two types of ecosystems, as presented by UNEP at the African regional consultations in preparation for the midterm comprehensive review of the implementation of the objectives of the international decade for action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028, held in June 2022.

Figure VIII

Change in the global extent of wetland and mangrove ecosystems



Source: UNEP, June 2022.

III. Challenges, constraints and emerging issues

35. There are key drivers of water-related risks. The first are population growth and urbanization. By 2050, the population of urban areas of Africa is estimated to more than double, from 599 million to 1.49 billion, which will result in an increase in slums and poor water and sanitation infrastructure. Second, slow economic growth, in particular in transition countries, which has been exacerbated by the economic losses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the debt distress that many countries are falling into, will result in the underfunding of the required infrastructure in the water and sanitation sector. Third, climate variability and climate change are not only destroying the limited water and sanitation infrastructure but they have also increased the risk for recurrent drought, which will prevent increasing numbers of people from accessing safe drinking water and improved sanitation services.

36. The major challenges and constraints for the achievement of the Goal 6 targets by 2030 are adequate and sustained financing, reliable and accurate data and information for effective decision-making at all levels, equity and social inclusion, and the use of science, technology and innovation for the efficient use of water resources.

37. The main challenges in mobilizing and accessing finance to achieve Africa Water Vision 2025, Goal 6 and other water-related goals include:

(a) Limited access to investment finance. While $13.3 billion was committed to water infrastructure in 2018, Africa had an annual financing gap in that regard of between $43 billion and $53 billion.[14] The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the financing landscape, influenced a change in priorities and diverted financing from areas in which commitments had previously been made. The situation has been exacerbated by the global inflationary cycle resulting from the Ukraine war, which has driven many African countries into debt distress;

(b) An inadequate pipeline of bankable projects;

(c) Limited climate financing;

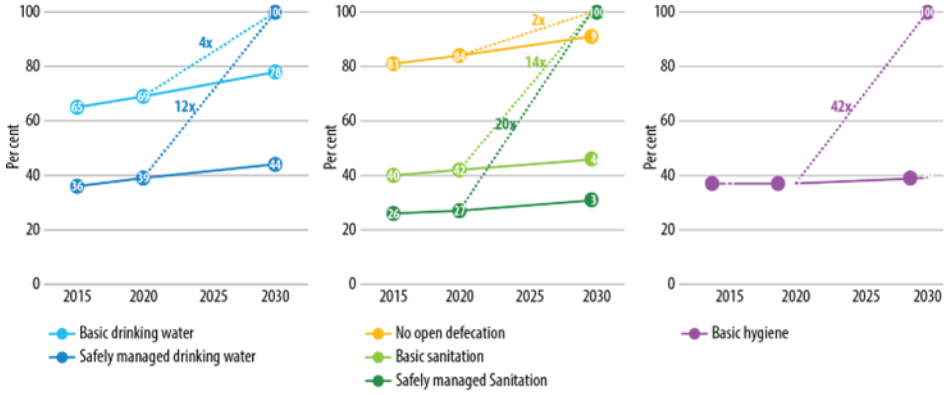
(d) Limited knowledge about the sector's finance trends.

[14] The Infrastructure Consortium for Africa, *Infrastructure Financing Trends in Africa – 2018* (Abidjan, 2018).

38. Figure IX shows the level of effort that is required to achieve the targets relating to water and sanitation for all by 2030. Financial allocations in Africa will need to increase fourfold to achieve universal coverage of basic water delivery and by 12 times for safe water delivery. Similarly, to end open defecation, allocations need to double and to achieve universal basic sanitation and safely managed sanitation, allocations need to increase by 14 and 20 times, respectively, by 2030. With respect to universal access to hygiene facilities, the level of finances will need to be 42 times greater than they are currently.

Figure IX

Extent of water, sanitation and hygiene services in Africa, projections based current rates of progress, and the acceleration required to meet targets by 2030



Source: Presentation in June 2022 by the United Nations Childrens Fund at the first African regional consultations in preparation for the midterm comprehensive review of the implementation of the objectives of the international decade for action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028.

39. The non-financial challenges concerning the achivement of the Goal 6 targets can be summarized as follows:

(a) Varying levels of capacity among Africa subregions to implement integrated water resources management;

(b) The lack of formal cooperation agreements based on United Nations conventions on shared transboundary water resources;

(c) The lack of coordination, communication and advocacy;

(d) A fragmented and silo approach to integrated water resources management governance and operations;

(e) Insufficient transparency, anti-corruption efforts and accountability;

(f) Limited private sector participation;

(g) Insufficient research, knowledge management and capacity development;

(h) Limited translation of science into policy for the benefit of society;

(i) The lack of data on and decision-support tools for integrated water resources management;

(j) Limited participation of young people and gender inequity in education, knowledge management and decision-making in respect of integrated water resources management.

40. Some key emerging issues in Africa that must be considered looking ahead to 2030 are:

(a) Water, sanitation and hygiene systems and utilities should be adapted to make them climate-resilient, especially in rural and peri-urban settings;

(b) The reduce-reuse-recycle approach to managing water and wastewater should be considered in water-scarce areas in Africa;

(c) A shift in focus to domestic and sustainable resource mobilization for water development is needed to achieve the acceleration that is required to meet the 2030 targets of Goal 6;

(d) Renewed emphasis is needed on exploration for and development and sustainable use of groundwater resources;

(e) The capacity of African States to prepare bankable project proposals for climate finance must be improved, building on the recognition at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that water is an important sector for climate-change mitigation and adaptation.

IV. Opportunities, transformative action, partnerships and ambition

41. The UN-Water Sustainable Development Goal 6 Global Acceleration Framework aims to deliver fast results in countries at an increased scale, as part of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development. The Framework will assist countries in raising their ambition to rapidly accelerate progress towards national targets for Goal 6.

42. The multilateral system and its partners will dramatically improve its support for countries under the Framework through swift coordinated action under five accelerator themes to unlock bottlenecks and strengthen accountability:

(a) Financing (optimizing its role in the sector);

(b) Data and information (building trust through data generation and exchange for decision-making and accountability);

(c) Capacity development (focusing on the sustainable delivery of services);

(d) Innovation (using it as a tool to accelerate the achievement of Goal 6);

(e) Governance (promoting effective and well-coordinated institutional structures and processes that enable evidence-based decision-making at all levels and uphold access to water as a human right).

43. The role of the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union Commission, the African Ministerial Council on Water and the African Development Bank, as pivotal organizations that traditionally support national efforts in the water sector in Africa, in close collaboration with other leading United Nations entities, will be essential in implementing the Framework.

44. Revitalizing UN-Water/Africa will contribute to responding efficiently and effectively to country and regional requests by facilitating access to expertise, technical assistance and support.

45. Partnerships should also be scaled up at the subregional level and at river, lake and aquifer basin levels, including through better coordination among regional economic communities, river-, lake- and aquifer-basin organizations, local stakeholders and communities.

46. Ongoing initiatives concerning the protection of water-related ecosystems, the management of water source quality and the assessment and management of African groundwater resources need to be strengthened by mobilizing additional resources and partnerships. Groundwater has the potential to support the climate-proofing efforts of African countries and can supply water for development, if properly assessed, developed and monitored.

47. Despite the continued vulnerability of Africa to water-related disasters, only 18 countries in Africa reported that they were covered by multi-hazard early warning systems, according to a recent report on the subject launched by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).[15] To close the gap, the Secretary-General has called for every person on Earth to be covered by early warning systems by 2027. The action plan to achieve that initiative was launched at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

V. Conclusions and key messages

48. During the COVID-19 pandemic, water, sanitation and hygiene became a critical aspect of global health. Water is also at the centre of the adaptation to and the mitigation of the effects of climate change and should be the focus of accelerated efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

49. Following the conclusion of the two African regional consultations that were held in 2022 in preparation for the midterm comprehensive review of the implementation of the objectives of the international decade for action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028 , the Executive Committee of the African Ministerial Council on Water adopted the following key messages:

(a) Dakar Declaration of the ninth World Water Forum

Endorse for adoption the Dakar Declaration - A “Blue Deal” for Water Security and Sanitation for Peace and Development, and invite the international community and all stakeholders to contribute to the effective implementation of the outcomes of the ninth World Water Forum.

(b) Domestic allocations for and investment in the African water and sanitation sector

Raise the profile and value attached to water and sanitation in national economic planning systems. A key entry point is to make the principles of valuing water the backbone of the action framework that flows from Africa Water Vision 2025. The framework should include increased investment in water infrastructure and prioritized funding for the operation and maintenance of water facilities and sanitation infrastructure, as well as for the research and development of appropriate technologies.

[15] UNDRR and WMO, *Global status of multi-hazard early warning systems: Target G*, (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2022).

(c) Potential of the sanitation economy to benefit African business and society

Realize the untapped potential of private sector participation in the delivery of water, sanitation and hygiene services for all. Of particular urgency is the need to address the sanitation failures associated with the disease burden that constrains labour force productivity and degrades the environment. The African Sanitation Policy Guidelines[16] provide the framework for promoting the sanitation economy.

(d) Water-related disaster-risk reduction and management in Africa

Promote and support the mainstreaming of disaster-risk reduction and management and climate-change adaptation into the plans and policies to manage water resources, with a view to reducing vulnerability and strengthening resilience to water-related disasters, especially floods and drought.

(e) Evidence-based and timely decision-making

Prioritize investment in monitoring, evaluation, knowledge and information management, and learning. Africa countries need to foster research and the application of knowledge and innovation to inform sector interventions.

(f) UN-Water/Africa

Revitalize UN-Water/Africa to efficiently and effectively respond to national and regional requests by facilitating access to expertise, technical assistance and support.

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[16] African Ministerial Council on Water, *African Sanitation Policy Guidelines* (Abuja, 2021).