

The OECD/UCLG-Africa

Roundtable of African Mayors for Water Security

Highlights of the Kick-off Meeting and the Launch of the Roundtable



This note summarises the messages shared during the Kick-off Meeting of the OECD/UCLG-Africa Roundtable of African Mayors for Water Security (19 January 2022, online); the launch of the Roundtable during the Cities, Local and Regional Governments Day at the 9th World Water Forum (23 March, Dakar, Senegal) and the technical session “Towards water security in Africa: the Roundtable of African Mayors for Water Security” (24 March 2022, Dakar, Senegal). After introducing the scope and objectives of the Roundtable, the note focuses on challenges and priorities highlighted by 80+ mayors and local representatives, as well as an overview of existing initiatives carried out in African cities by international organisations. It concludes by illustrating the next steps towards the 10th World Water Forum (March 2024, Bali, Indonesia).

The OECD/UCLG-Africa Roundtable of African Mayors for Water Security

The [OECD/UCLG-Africa Roundtable of African Mayors for Water Security](#) aims to facilitate the design and implementation of robust local water policies that can help bridge the key governance gaps identified in the OECD report on [Water Governance in African Cities](#). Building on a survey of 36 African cities, the report assesses the allocation of roles and responsibilities for water management, the existence and implementation of institutional, policy and regulatory frameworks, as well as the main governance gaps hindering water security in Africa. The report concludes on the need to improve capacities for local decision-making and raise the profile of local initiatives for water security in Africa.

The Roundtable brings together 100+ Mayors from cities of different sizes across the five sub-regions of Africa. It foresees the production of new granular water-related data and place-based evidence about relevant sustainable development goals (especially SDG 6 “Clean Water and Sanitation” and SDG 11 “Sustainable Cities and Communities”). It will also encourage sharing knowledge, experience, and best practices, and enhance peer-to-peer learning and collaboration among Mayors. In particular, four main sets of activities are foreseen:

- **City-to-city partnerships** to share knowledge, experience and best practices on water security across Mayors;
- **Data collection and analysis** with the creation of an online Observatory to track progress on water-related SDGs across the continent;
- **Policy analysis and guidance** on water challenges in African cities to improve water governance;
- **A consultation platform for stakeholders** and policy-makers on how to enhance water security in African cities.

Kick-off and launch meetings of the Roundtable

A **kick-off meeting** of the Roundtable was held online on 19 January 2022 to prepare for the launch of the Roundtable, notably by clarifying expectations, approving the 2022-24 strategic objectives and work plan, and exploring institutional partnerships and synergies for the activities of the Roundtable. The **Roundtable** was launched during the **Cities, Local and Regional Governments Day** held on 23 March 2022 at the **9th World Water Forum in Dakar, Senegal**, gathering 80 mayors, local and regional elected officials. It concluded with the signature of an Action Plan for Water Security (see Annex A and B) that proposes concrete actions for local and regional governments to drive water security at all levels, towards the 10th World Water Forum (March 2024). The Minister of Water and Sanitation of Senegal Serigne Mbaye Thiam highlighted the importance of the Action Plan for Water Security to raise the voices of local authorities in the global discussion and towards the

UN 2023 Water Conference. Additionally, a technical session “Towards water security in Africa: the Roundtable of African Mayors for Water Security” took place within the Forum on 24 March 2022 to further discuss the ways forward to implement the Action Plan with mayors, representatives from international organisations and donors (African Development Bank, World Resources Institute, Water Integrity Network, Uganda Water and Sanitation NGO Network).

Challenges for water security in Africa

During the meetings, Mayors and elected officials raised being confronted with the risks of “too much”, “too little” and “too polluted” water, and a lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation services. These risks are exacerbated by megatrends, notably climate change, population growth and rapid urbanisation, affecting water quality, quantity and the occurrence of extreme water related events, as well as by governance gaps, in particular capacity and financing gaps.

Too much and too little water

In Africa, climate change, population growth and rapid urbanisation are likely to increase water-related problems at the local, basin, national and transboundary levels. In **Assinie, Côte d’Ivoire** climate change is leading to sea-level rise and coastal erosion, damaging the built environment. In addition, rampant urbanisation materialising in the extension of the city’s built-up and paved surfaces as well as a rising standard of living (e.g. growing number of swimming pools) is driving water demand. Demographic growth in **Luxor, Egypt** has a strong impact on water quantity and quality, which are also affected by climate change. In **Dakar, Senegal** floods, access to water and sanitation and coastal management are the main water-related challenges. Similarly, in **Damietta, Egypt** over the past 100 years, coastal erosion and climate change have had major impacts on water resources in the country. In **Nouakchott, Mauritania** repeated droughts provoked the migration of the rural population to urban areas, contributing to the development of informal neighbourhoods on the outskirts of cities and placing further pressure on already scarce local water resources.

Too polluted water

In **Chipata, Zambia** water pollution and ageing infrastructure are the most pressing water-related challenges. In **Brazzaville, Congo** the non-collective sanitation network used by over 85% of the population creates by-products that contribute to water and groundwater pollution. Without a treatment plant, 18 000 m³ of untreated wastewater are discharged into the Congo River every day. In **Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso** anthropogenic pollution threatens water catchments, thereby making (unsustainable) groundwater abstraction one of the main challenges facing the city.

Lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation

In **Nouakchott, Mauritania** 25% of the population is not connected to the formal water network, and strong inequalities in service quality (price, water quality and hours of service) between neighbourhoods remain. The impacts of climate change are likely to increase the magnitude of these challenges since the informal areas are not connected to the grid and access to water is 10 times more expensive there than in the urban core. In **Rwanda**, while 80% of the national population has access to clean water, it is difficult to maintain centralised piped systems in the eastern part of the country, which suffers from regular shortages. In **Monrovia, Liberia** the lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation is the major challenge, in addition to water scarcity, groundwater pollution, urban-rural migration and increased fragmentation of investment. Only 25% of the population has access to drinking water in Liberia ([UNICEF, 2017](#)). A large share of the population is obliged to buy drinking water to meet its needs, which, compounded with water pollution, generates acute social tensions.

Governance gaps

A number of governance gaps hinder water security in the African continent. In particular, Mayors and elected officials highlighted issues related to the lack of funding for investment and capacity to plan and execute projects. In **Maseru, Lesotho** overcoming challenges of poor water quality and inequalities of access to clean water is

conditioned by access to financial support. **Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso**, the second most populous city in the country, is not endowed with enough financial resources to carry out the mission of protecting water resources as assigned by the National Water Office. In **Rwanda**, according to most Mayors, the infrastructure gap is due to a lack of access to sufficient financing at local level and insufficient enforcement of water laws and regulations. The lack of awareness among local communities on how to manage water efficiently and effectively is also an issue. In **Brazzaville, Congo** the main challenge is the mobilisation of sufficient and appropriate funds to implement projects at the right scale. Some projects initiated by the city were not finalised due to the lack of financial support, as was recently the case for a wastewater treatment plant. Similarly, in **Al Hoceima, Morocco** a number of solutions have been promoted for water reuse to respond to the challenge of water scarcity, such as the construction of a seawater desalination plant and a wastewater operation station. However, the lack of financing is preventing the city from scaling up these projects. In **Chipata, Zambia** utilities do not hold the right capacities to handle the sensitivities around establishing an affordable price for water. In **Togo**, geographical, hydrological and infrastructural inequalities and differences between municipalities across the country (in particular between urban and rural areas) widen water risks and impacts across communities. Several mayors pointed out that poor water governance disproportionately affects women and girls, who are responsible for water management at the household level in the majority of African cities.

Priorities for the future

Several initiatives based on collaboration across cities and decentralised co-operation are already in place to build capacities and gather financial resources. Nevertheless, mayors and local officials stressed that good water governance is needed to reach higher levels of water security in the continent. For example, **Nouakchott, Mauritania** is engaged in decentralised development co-operation projects with partners such as Solidarité Eau, through which Lausanne and 19 other Swiss municipalities commit CHF 0.01 per cubic meter of water sold (amounting to around CHF 2 annually for a household of four) to projects aiming to improve access to water and sanitation in Nouakchott. As a response to COVID-19, the city of **Bangui, Central African Republic** created a “cluster” that brought together water stakeholders and initiatives, helping ensure co-ordination of action and policies throughout the pandemic across local police, civil protection, schools, Islamic committees, museums, NGOs, etc. It also enabled the mapping of local actors involved in the water and health sectors. This local cluster was driven by a national strategic committee presided by the Head of State and a technical committee presided by the Minister of Health. The cities of **Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of the Congo)** and **Brazzaville (Republic of the Congo)**, located opposite each other on the Congo River, created a partnership supported by SIAAP, UNESCO and the ECOGLOBAL Foundation to foster transboundary management of sanitation challenges and build two sludge treatment plants on both sides of the river that benefit both cities. In **Dakar, Senegal**, the maritime protected area of Gorée, which includes 9 municipalities, 5 of which are located in Dakar, is an example of alignment between local and national interests.

Mayors proposed concrete solutions to i) build **capacities** for planning development and implementation, as well as operational management, ii) facilitate **access to funding** to develop water-related projects, and iii) foster **multi-level governance** and multi-stakeholder collaboration, such as:

- Build capacities to access funding programmes, ensure ownership of the planning process by engaging the local population and implement the projects. For example in **Sokodé, Togo** a project funded by the AfDB aiming at providing all households in the city with access to toilets and fostering sustainable management of faecal sludge through community-based micro-enterprises was successful thanks to the involvement of the households, who contributed up to one-quarter of the total price of the installation of toilets in their houses, as well as the involvement of women in the management of micro-financing mechanisms.
- Build technical knowledge to manage water resources, operate and maintain water infrastructure to provide access to water and sanitation to the population, and develop strategic plans for urban water investment and financing.
- Bring success stories to the attention of policymakers, private stakeholders and banks.

- Foster co-operation across coastal cities to share experience and knowledge on nature-based solutions to limit the effects of climate change on sea-level rise and coastal erosion (e.g. replanting trees to mitigate flooding and maintain the coastal and saltmarsh ecosystem).
- Strengthen co-ordination between urban and water planning and better include informal settlements in local plans and policies by developing mechanisms to prioritise vulnerable groups.
- Create an African Water Fund or a Blue Fund, accessible to local governments, to finance water-related projects and infrastructure
- Diversify sources of funding for water-related projects in the future.
- Help transfer skills and knowledge related to water and sanitation from the national to the local level. This is all the more important as local communities and national authorities, in many cases, are expected to jointly manage water and sanitation challenges and raise awareness among the population.
- Adapt National Water Plans to local priorities for greater implementation.

International initiatives

Various institutional partners welcomed the Roundtable during the Kick-off meeting, the launch meeting and the technical session at the 9th World Water Forum. They shared views on possible synergies and co-operation with their respective activities in Africa. They recognised the importance of a transversal, high-level platform to connect Mayors and the international water community. A number of projects and programmes are in place in Africa and supported by international partners, as described below.

- The **World Bank**, through [Utility of the Future \(UoF\)](#), aims to materialise and maintain transformation efforts in water and sanitation utilities. The initiative focuses on African cities and includes components on the circular economy, regulation, support to the private sector and financing. The [Program-for-Results \(PforR\)](#), a financing instrument, links funding to the achievement of specific programme results and supports clients in enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of their development programmes to achieve tangible and sustainable results. The [Southern Africa Drought Resilience Initiative](#) aims to build analytical and institutional foundations to catalyse national, local and regional investments in integrated drought resilience. It includes an umbrella programme with three thematic pillars: cities, energy systems, and livelihoods and food security. The initiative aims to: i) assist cities and governments in the Southern region; ii) move beyond reactive, urban drought, crisis management towards a more sustainable proactive approach to drought mitigation preparedness; and iii) address risks and support resilient investments.
- **ICLEI** runs the [Making Cities Resilient 2030](#), a cross-stakeholder initiative that aims to enhance urban resilience through advocacy, sharing knowledge and experiences, establishing mutually reinforcing city-to-city learning networks, injecting technical expertise, connecting multiple layers of government and building partnerships. Another initiative is the [AfriAlliance](#) Platform, which aims to better prepare Africa for key water and climate change challenges by fostering collaboration between African and European stakeholders and supporting existing networks in identifying appropriate social innovations and technological solutions. The [Urban Natural Assets](#) programme supports the daily challenges around protecting and revitalising urban natural assets that local governments experience in Africa. It focuses on mainstreaming nature into urban planning and on governance, planning and finance to foster the link between nature, planning and water. Finally, [CitiesWithNature](#) provides a shared platform for cities and their partners to engage, connect and access training resources.
- The **World Resources Institute (WRI)** launched the initiative [Urban Water Resilience in Africa](#) to help cities overcome water challenges through research and strategic urban water resilience action plans. The initiative aims at building sustainable, adaptive and resilient urban water systems. It engages 6 African cities (Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa, Ethiopia; Kigali and Musanze, Rwanda; and Gqeberha and Johannesburg, South Africa).
- The **Water Integrity Network (WIN)** published in 2021 the [Water and Sanitation Integrity Outlook \(WIGO\)](#) that contains best practices and solutions at city level to tackle challenges and improve integrity

in the water and sanitation sector. Moreover, the [Water and Sanitation Sector Integrity Risk Index \(WIRI\)](#) is a composite index constructed by applying Big Data analytics to administrative data and survey datasets. It offers insight across the public investment projects, recurrent spending supporting ongoing operations, and client-utility interactions. Finally, WIN [Assessment Tools](#) help institutions to define the magnitude of an integrity issue in a sector or region, prioritise risks to be addressed, and measure progress achieved using methods such as problem diagnosis, benchmarking, and monitoring.

- **C40**, through the [Water Security \(WS\) Network](#), aims to support cities to plan for and deliver best practice solutions and holistic strategies and measures on securing water supply and managing water sustainably in a changing climate. The [Water Safe Cities](#) project comprises research and technical assistance to assess the global impacts of flooding and drought at city level.
- **Cités Unies France** is leading the [Water Solidarity Programme](#), a multi-stakeholder network working towards access to water and sanitation for all. The aim is to enhance actions already underway to improve access to water and sanitation in developing countries. The areas of work are research and development, back-up support and promoting international solidarity mechanisms for water.
- The **African Ministerial Council on Water (AMCOW)** is developing the [Urban Groundwater Network](#) with several partners, to shape groundwater resilience strategies and foster needed regulations, since climate change will likely make cities more dependent on groundwater.
- **ENERGIES 2050** launched the report [Challenges and Opportunities for the Territorialization of Nationally Determined Contributions \(NDCs\) in Africa](#). It highlights the essential role of African cities and local governments in the implementation of national strategies for the fight against climate change. Water is one of the main components, linked with land planning, resilience and adaptation.

Next steps

The programme of work of the OECD/UCLG-Africa Roundtable of African Mayors for Water Security will ultimately aim to support cities to effectively implement the 12 recommendations of the Action Plan of Mayors and Local and Regional Governments for Water Security (see Annex B). The next opportunities for dialogue and milestones for output are:

- 9th Africities Summit, organised by the Pan-African Organisation of United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG-Africa) (May 2022, Kisumu, Kenya).
- UN Climate Change Conference 2022 (UNFCCC COP 27) (November 2022, Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt).
- UN 2023 Water Conference (March 2023, New York, United States).
- 10th World Water Forum (March 2024, Bali, Indonesia).

Annex A. List of signatories of the Action Plan of Mayors and Local and Regional Governments for Water Security (May 2022)

City or local government association	Country
Athiême	Benin
Avrankou	Benin
Comé	Benin
Cotonou	Benin
Houéyogbé	Benin
Lokossa	Benin
Gaborone	Botswana
Dschang	Cameroon
Fokoué	Cameroon
Union of Municipalities of Menoua (SYCOME)	Cameroon
Bangui	Central African Republic
Assirie-Mafia	Côte d'Ivoire
Union of Cities and Municipalities of Côte d'Ivoire	Côte d'Ivoire
Brazzaville	Democratic Republic of the Congo
Eswatini Local Government Association (ELGA)	Eswatini
Libreville	Gabon
County of Kisumu	Kenya
Lesotho Association of Local Authorities (LALA)	Lesotho
Malawi Local Government Association (MALGA)	Malawi
Regional Council of Nouakchott	Mauritania
Argana	Morocco
Essaouira	Morocco
Rabat	Morocco
Regional Council of Rabat-Salé-Kénitra	Morocco
Association of National Municipalities of Mozambique (ANAMM)	Mozambique
Outjo	Namibia
Arlette	Niger
Mayahi	Niger
Mirriah	Niger
Yaouri	Niger
Zinder	Niger
Musanze District	Rwanda
Rwandan Association of Local Authorities (RALGA)	Rwanda
Association of Senegalese Departments (ADS)	Senegal
Colobane	Senegal
Diom	Senegal
Enampore	Senegal
Gandiaye	Senegal
Gandiol	Senegal
Guédiawaye	Senegal
Keur Madiabel	Senegal
Latmingué	Senegal
Ning	Senegal
Ronkh	Senegal
Atakpamé	Togo
Golfe 3	Togo
Local Government Association of Zambia (LGAZ)	Zambia

Annex B. Action Plan of Mayors and Local and Regional Governments for Water Security

We, Mayors, local and regional governments officials gathered at the 9th World Water Forum in Dakar, Senegal, from 21 to 25 March 2022, hereby **commit to take concrete actions to raise the profile of water and sanitation in our local public policies in order to achieve the following goals in a shared responsibility with national governments:**

1	2	3	4	5
Guarantee access to water and sanitation for all, especially the most vulnerable groups	Enhance water resources security and resilience	Incentivise multi-level, multi-stakeholder and rural-urban cooperation	Improve governance frameworks for more effective, efficient and inclusive policies	Catalyse needed finance from public and private sources

In our daily endeavours to leave no-one behind through shaping cities and territories resilient to mounting climate, urbanisation and demographic pressures in a post-COVID-19 world, **we consider that better water policies can help us achieve the 2030 Agenda**, in particular the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 on “Clean Water and Sanitation”, SDG 11 on “Sustainable Cities and communities” (SDG 11) and many water-related targets in SDG 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality), 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), 13 (Climate Action), 14 (Life below Water), 15 (Life on Land), and 17 (Partnerships).

In relation to water and sanitation, we recognise:

- Our key role at the local level to engage stakeholders, build trust and manage water at the functional scale, through leveraging our proximity with water users, citizens, utilities, business, civil society and basin organisations;
- Our key role in conserving natural ecosystems and protecting our cities and territories from flooding, sea-level rise, drought and pollution,
- Our common public policy prerogatives on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene regardless of the level of decentralisation and institutional organisation of our countries;
- Our capacity to test, experiment and scale up innovative solutions for resilient, sustainable, inclusive, circular and blue cities and territories that can drive growth and well-being.

As Local and Regional Champions of Water and Sanitation, we will strive to implement the 12 OECD Principles on Water Governance through the following actions:

1. Strengthen our **role and responsibilities** at the local level for water policy making, operational management and regulation, and foster horizontal co-ordination across city departments, and vertical co-ordination across local, inter-municipal, metropolitan, regional/provincial and national levels of government..
2. Set up or strengthen governance structures, partnerships and/or co-operation mechanisms to manage water at the **appropriate functional and territorial scale(s)**, within integrated basin governance systems to enhance rural-urban linkages, and develop place-based solutions that reflect local conditions.
3. Mainstream water and sanitation in our territorial development policies, local climate adaptation and mitigation plans, and circular economy strategies to encourage **policy coherence**, synergies and complementarities with urban planning, land use and nature-based solutions.
4. Facilitate access to **capacity building**, training and upskilling of local officials, utilities, regulators, administrative and technical staff, in order to attract and retain water and related professionals, talents and skilled workers able to cope with the complexity of water and sanitation challenges to be met.
5. Produce, update and share timely, consistent, comparable and policy-relevant local and regional **water-related data**, in particular in relation to cities' and regions' distance to all water-related SDGs, and use related knowledge and information to guide, assess and improve local policies.
6. Set up or strengthen **enabling governance frameworks** to ensure the effective, transparent and accountable use of existing funding and the mobilisation of additional finance to cover the investment, operation and maintenance needs related to water resources and services management in our cities, rural areas and regions.
7. Set up and implement **effective local regulations** and standards safeguarding the public interest and strive to align water-related sectoral policies towards rational, quality and efficient water use.
8. Promote **local innovation** in all its forms - technological, digital, social, financial, institutional – to encourage experimentation and testbeds for better data collection, skills development, and robust methods and tools needed to guide water-related public action.
9. Mainstream **integrity and transparency** principles and practices across local policies and governance frameworks related, but not only, to water and sanitation, for greater accountability and trust of users and citizens in decision-making processes.
10. Set up, review and adapt **participatory mechanisms** to engage water-related stakeholders - from water users, to business, civil society, regulators, utilities, basin organisations, women, youth and indigenous groups- in policy design, implementation and decision-making for greater awareness, conflict prevention, social buy-in and more inclusive, effective and outcome-oriented water policies.
11. Establish governance **frameworks to manage trade-offs** across water users, rural and urban areas, and generations, especially in relation to water resource conservation.
12. Ensure regular **monitoring and evaluation** of local water policies and governance, develop indicators where appropriate, share the results with the public, and make adjustments needed to generate effective and efficient means and tools of implementation for better policy outcomes.

We welcome the **OECD/UCLG-Africa Roundtable of African Mayors for Water Security** launched today, as a powerful vehicle to foster experience sharing and scale up best practices. Going forward, as a follow-up to the 9th World Water Forum in Dakar, we will report back on our progress implementing this Action Plan at COP 27 (November 2022, Egypt), the 2023 United Nations Water Decade Conference (22-24 March 2023, New York, USA), and the 10th World Water Forum to be held in March 2024.