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**Report of the Secretary-General on the International decade for
action, “Water for life”, 2005-2015, and further efforts to achieve
the sustainable development of water resources**

Summary

In 2003, the United Nations General Assembly¹ decided that, in order to meet the commitments on water-related goals and targets, as defined in previously internationally agreed fora, as well as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), and raise the profile of water to both Member States and stakeholders, it was necessary to declare the International Decade for Action, “Water for Life”, 2005-2015. The Decade commenced on 22 March 2005 in connection with World Water Day with the aim of promoting a greater focus on water related issues at all levels and on the implementation of water-related programmes and projects, while striving to ensure the participation and involvement of women in water-related development efforts, and the furtherance of cooperation at all levels. The Assembly called on the United Nations system and its partners to coordinate activities and actions to achieve the Decade’s goals.

In 2014, following a rich and diverse series of activities and achievements and with the Decade coming to a close, the General Assembly, requested² the Secretary-General to report on the evaluation of the Decade, highlighting its successes, lessons learned and recommendations for the future. The present report outlines the activities that have been carried out through the “Water for Life” Decade, the elements and organizations that were key to its success and the key findings to be taken into consideration for future UN-related activities in the promotion and implementation of internationally agreed goals and targets associated with water.

* A/71/100

¹ A/RES/58/217

² A/RES/69/215

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I. Introduction

1. “Water is Life” is a common phrase often heard during speeches on water. It is the foundation of the argument of why water is important to humans, society and the environment that those reside in. Attention to water as a political subject goes back to the Mar de la Plata Action Plan adopted in 1977³, followed by the first International Drinking Water Decade, covering the period from 1981 to 1990. In 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, world leaders dedicated an entire Chapter to water in Agenda 21⁴, by identifying freshwater resources as essential component of the Earth's hydrosphere and as an indispensable part of all terrestrial ecosystems. Increasingly, the role of water and its cross cutting nature acquired support both in the advocacy and policy making spheres, while important decisions in follow-up to Chapter 18 of Agenda 21.were also made in the context of the Commission on Sustainable Development

2. With populations growing, people moving increasingly to cities, climate change taking hold and land-use changes occurring due to changes in economic development, the need to sustainably manage water resources became critical. Public and political awareness about the importance of water for so many of life’s needs (food, energy, health, habitat, transportation, ecosystem, recreation, etc.) gained traction and generated a sense of urgency leading to the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 and new commitments with the adoption of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation in 2002. In 2003, taking the impetus gained from the successful International Year of Freshwater, Member States agreed to launch an entire decade dedicated to raising the awareness of water and improved implementation of water projects and programmes. Efforts were to be made to focus attention on water and fill gaps so that water would be addressed in ways that supported sustainable development. Hence the International Decade for Action “Water for Life”, 2005-2015 was born, recognizing that water not only “is” life, but is also required “for” the many pillars that uphold life.

3. At the end of 2015, the “Water for Life” Decade ended after a broad range of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders and organizations, including the UN system, actively promoted the Decade, successfully raising water on the political agenda. What follows is a review of the elements that aided the efforts of the Decade to achieve the success that it had.

II. Background

4. Water has long been a crucial resource, but one that has been undervalued in terms of its importance for society and planet. This can be traced back to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where, an entire chapter (18) of

³ Report of the United Nations Water Conference:

http://www.internationalwaterlaw.org/bibliography/UN/Mar_del_Plata_Report.pdf

⁴ Chapter 18 of Agenda 21, Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda)

actions was dedicated to water in its main outcome document known as Agenda 21,⁵ which began water's long path to gain attention in the eyes of decision-makers worldwide.

5. Furthering decisions related to freshwater that were made during the sixth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development,⁶ less than 10 years later, in the United Nations Millennium Declaration in 2000,⁷ which outlined the development agenda for the United Nations system, a target was created that aimed at reducing by half the number of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015 as part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Two years later, in 2002, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, the target to reduce by half the number of people without sustainable access to sanitation was added to the MDGs in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.⁸ At the same time, albeit not to be part of the MDGs, it was also agreed that countries should develop integrated water resources management (IWRM) and water efficiency plans by 2005. As a whole, at the time, these were the most recognized internationally agreed upon goals specific to water.

6. It was clear that these years around the turn of the millennium were a turning point for water. With the increased attention around water garnered by these declarations and the work that needed to be carried out to make them reality, the United Nations General Assembly, in resolution 55/196, announced 2003 as the International Year of Freshwater, which aimed to increase awareness of the importance of freshwater and to promote action at the local, national, regional and international levels.

7. The General Assembly, at the end of the International Year of Freshwater, in resolution 58/217, decided that in order to build off the momentum that was created during the year, a Decade would be initiated to achieve a greater focus on the implementation of water-related programmes and projects, while striving to ensure the participation and involvement of women in water-related development efforts, and the furtherance of cooperation at all levels, in order to help achieve internationally agreed water-related goals. The International Decade for Action "Water for Life", 2005-2015 commenced on World Water Day, 22 March 2005, coordinated by UN-Water.

8. After ten years full of activities and actions promoting water, the "Water for Life" Decade ended at the end of 2015. In accordance with Economic and Social Council Resolution 1980/67, and by request of the General Assembly in resolution 69/215, the United Nations Secretary-General is required to report on the evaluation of the "Water for Life" Decade during the General Assembly's seventy-first session to take place in September 2016. The evaluation that follows is based on reporting arrangements designed especially for the subject of the Decade, with the aim to

⁵ Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex I.

⁶ See Commission on Sustainable Development, Report of the Sixth Session, E/CN.17/1998/20

⁷ See General Assembly resolution 55/2. *United Nations Millennium Declaration*.

⁸ Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.

inform and facilitate the follow-up process to the Decade and provide guidance for consideration of a possible future decade.

III. Brief Overview of the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Life”, 2005-2015

9. Pursuant to UN General Assembly resolution 64/198, the Secretary-General was requested to report in its sixty-fifth session on the implementation of the “Water for Life” Decade. In the same resolution Member States invited the President of the General Assembly to host a high-level interactive dialogue in March of 2010 and welcomed the offer by Government of Tajikistan host a high-level international conference in June 2010, both focusing on the implementation of the “Water for Life” Decade.

10. The present report mirrors in many ways the structure of the midterm review report⁹, which outlined activities and actions carried out by the United Nations system, including those at the regional level within its economic and social commissions. A small section focused on the UN’s assistance to country programmes and the communication strategies adopted to support awareness about the Decade. The report noted that the UN worked closely with many partners during the first five years of the “Water for Life” Decade and this was laid out succinctly.

11. The main takeaways and recommendations from the midterm review are what guided the work of the Decade for the remaining five years, leading to the present comprehensive review of the entire period from 2005 to 2015. Three main issues encompassed the outcomes of the midterm review:

1. Resources mobilization: There was a need to mobilize more resources to carry out the implementation of the “Water for Life” Decade. This was to be done with the active involvement of all stakeholders, including Governments, non-governmental organizations and private sources. The report suggested that interested stakeholder groups could support the Decade by providing voluntary contributions to UN-Water for the second five years.
2. Stakeholder engagement: Throughout the recommendations, it was reiterated the necessity to increase the engagement with all stakeholders to implement the “Water for Life” Decade. This included, but was not limited to, supporting development and implementation of national plans for sanitation and drinking water, as well as linking activities that stakeholders were carrying out to the Decade.
3. International-national linkages: While the Decade was known in the international water community, it seemed that this did not translate as well down to the national level and more efforts needed to be focused on making this happen. The findings of the mid-term review suggested the need for greater commitment and

⁹ 65/297 Report of the Secretary-General on the Midterm comprehensive review of the implementation of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Life”, 2005-2015

political push with regards to the sanitation- and drinking water-related goals and proposed the creation of national focal points and mechanisms to facilitate and achieve results related to the “Water for Life” Decade.

IV. Intergovernmental processes during the International Decade, “Water for Life” 2005-2015

A. Friends of Water

12. The Friends of Water is a voluntary association of likeminded countries that come together as a platform to support the implementation of the “Water for Life” Decade’s Midterm Comprehensive Review in 2010. Initiated by the Permanent Mission of Tajikistan to the UN it currently comprises over forty Member States coordinated by a Steering Committee including Finland, Hungary, Switzerland, Tajikistan and Thailand, with the common goal of promoting the UN water agenda. The group played a key role in facilitating the preparation of the High-Level Interactive Dialogue of the Sixty-fourth Session of the UN General Assembly and the High Level International Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the International Decade. Both processes focused on taking stock of the first five years of the “Water for Life” Decade.

B. High-Level Interactive Dialogue

13. As was carried out at the mid-point of the “Water for Life” Decade, the President of the General Assembly, as invited in resolution 69/215 during its sixth-ninth session, convened a high-level interactive dialogue in March 2015 towards the end of the Decade on the comprehensive review of progress achieved on the implementation of the Decade. The dialogue highlighted best practices and lessons learned as a way to help achieve sustainable development. During the interactive dialogue, it was emphasised that major progress had been made during the last five years of the Decade. Water is now recognized as not only one of the highest priorities for sustainable development, but also as important to achieve the other SDGs. This requires enhanced cooperation, capacity-building and adequate technology. This stressed the cross-cutting nature of water to sustainable development and because of this, more sophisticated, quantifiable and clearer indicators were necessary in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In addition, more investment was needed as well as a human rights-based approach to water and sanitation requiring participatory governance, addressing financing and pollution and improved monitoring and data.

C. High-Level Conference

14. Also in resolution 69/215, the General Assembly welcomed the Government of Tajikistan to host a high-level international conference, as they did at the mid-point of the “Water for Life” Decade, as a contribution to the comprehensive review of the Decade. The international conference took place in June 2015 in Dushanbe and consisted of two High Level Implementation Panels and six High Level Roundtables in addition to pre-conference and side events, which included a “Women Water Forum.” The conference highlighted the importance of the “Water for

Life” Decade in promoting the efforts to achieve international water-related goals and called for the improved coordination between stakeholders at all levels to achieve these ends supporting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The main outcomes of the conference suggested that the global community work towards a greener economy, resilience in the face of global changes, increased funding for water projects and programmes, improved water governance, strengthening cooperation, especially in a transboundary context and take steps to address emerging water problems.

V. Programmes and activities of the United Nations system including through Country Programmes

A. UN-Water (Coordinator)

15. UN-Water was the overall coordinator of activities related to “Water for Life” Decade during nearly the entirety of its 10-year duration, utilizing its programmes, projects, Members and Partners to implement the Decade. UN-Water is a coordinating mechanism for UN system bodies and external stakeholder partners. Created by the UN Secretary-General in 2003, UN-Water was originally comprised of UN Senior Programme Managers in UN organizations who then elected one of their peers to serve as Chair. With the UN General Assembly relying increasingly on UN-Water for coordination and technical advice around water issues, UN-Water’s role became increasingly relevant. In 2011 the Chair position was elevated to a Chief Executive of a UN entity, and this in turn helped better support Member States during the latter part of the Decade. UN-Water facilitated a series of activities and actions for the Decade that helped achieve the goals of the Decade and further progress on sustainable water management worldwide. A more in depth look at these activities can be found in section VII below.

B. UN-Water Decade Programmes on Capacity Development (UNW-DPC) and Advocacy and Communication (UNW-DPAC)

16. Two UN-Water Decade Programmes were created shortly after the launch of the “Water for Life” Decade in order to support the activities related to the Decade. UNW-DPC was made to strengthen coherence and effectiveness around the capacity-building elements related to the Decade and support the Members and Partners of UN-Water in helping national governments achieve the internationally agreed goals and targets related to water. UNW-DPAC’s role was to maintain and increase attention to the themes of water and sanitation at all levels, local to global, throughout the duration of the Decade. More about the UN-Water Decade Programmes and their activities for the Decade can be found in section IIX.C below.

C. World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP)

17. The World Water Assessment Programme, created shortly before the start of the “Water for Life” Decade in 2003 and hosted by UNESCO, is charged with monitoring the world’s water resources. Bringing together Members and Partners of UN-Water as well as experts from around the world, WWAP regularly contributes recommendations, develops case studies, enhances

assessment capacity at a national level and informs the decision-making process. Amongst a variety of publications that WWAP disseminates consistently, the World Water Development Report is a flagship UN-Water publication that, since 2014, comes out on a yearly basis delving deep on a specific water-related subject to help inform decision makers on key issues of sustainable water management.

D. WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation (JMP)

18. Given the “Water for Life” Decade’s focus on helping implement international water-related goals, over the course of the Decade, JMP has been the primary mechanism to monitor the targets related to drinking water and sanitation for the MDGs and will continue to do so for the water and sanitation access-related Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets, 6.1 and 6.2

E. United Nations Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB)

19. UNSGAB was created in 2004 by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to give him advice on issues of water and sanitation, spur action both within and outside the water community and mobilize funds for water and sanitation. The Board was made up of eminent persons and experts engaged with water issues from national governments, civil society and the private sector. UNSGAB’s work on water and sanitation issues helped underpin the efforts made during the “Water for Life” Decade to achieve agreed upon water-related targets. Most notably, UNSGAB facilitated and then supported the initiative “Sustainable sanitation: the five-year drive to 2015”, codified in resolution 65/153 in 2010, which focused efforts on trying to close the gap in order to meet the MDG target on sanitation. UNSGAB closed its activities through the hand-over of a final report¹⁰ to the Secretary-General during their final meeting 20 November 2015.

VI. Regional initiatives

A. Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

20. During the “Water for Life” Decade, Africa made significant progress towards the objectives that were laid out for the period of 2005-2015. Water rose on the political agenda of the continent, higher than it’s ever been, becoming a key issue even at the level of Head of State. Using the foundation of the African Water Vision 2025 (2000), the African Minister’s Council on Water (AMCOW) was founded in 2002 to promote cooperation, security, social and economic development, and poverty eradication as well as help drive political will towards the meeting of the targets of the water-related MDGs.. In 2008, national governments agreed to the eThekweni Declaration, which focused on sanitation and hygiene, and this was followed by the Sharm-el-Sheikh Declaration later that same year, an agreement by the Heads of State of Africa committing to the MDGs and water security. Further action and implementation of Decade-related goals were galvanized by AMCOW through such initiatives as AfricaSan, Africa Water Week and the African Water Facility (in collaboration with the African Development Bank).

¹⁰ See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/water/unsgab/finalreport>

B. Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)

21. The focus of the Decade in the ECE region is primarily through the lens of the UNECE Water Convention, where it has not only been an official mechanism through which policy is established at the regional level, but also has been critical to the implementation of those policies on the ground through the parties of the convention. The Convention has been successful at more than just transboundary river basin cooperation. It has been effective at furthering cooperation between countries through project implementation and knowledge and experience exchange. It has also fostered national-level policy development, through National Policy Dialogues, that has improved water resources management in the region, as well as meeting the goals of the “Water for Life” Decade. Climate change adaptation and work on the water-food-energy/ecosystem nexus have also been a key focus of the UNECE Water Convention that have promoted the goals and principles of the Decade.

C. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

22. Since the inception of the “Water for Life” Decade, Latin America and the Caribbean have made substantial progress in the achievement of internationally agreed water- and sanitation-related goals and targets. While headway has been made more significantly with regards to drinking water supplies rather than sanitation, ECLAC has put forth efforts to address the gaps, specifically in institutional frameworks, to ensure economic efficiency, social equality and environment sustainability, the pillars of sustainable development, in order to promote water security, cooperation and integrated water resources management. Through the World Water Fora of the latter half of the Decade, the Water Forum of the Americas has started a path to bring together the diverse stakeholders and actors from the different sub-regions of the continent to work towards a common vision for sustainable water resources management.

D. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

23. Asia is one of most diverse regions of the world, both in terms of demographics and geography. Today’s most critical water related challenges and opportunities are being faced on the continent. Some of the largest gains towards the water-related Millennium Development Goals were made because of progress on the continent, with China and India making significant progress towards meeting the water and sanitation targets. While much work remains, Asia has carried out a substantial amount of efforts on improving water security, increasing the implementation of integrated water resources management and promoting cooperation at the national and regional level through mechanisms such as UNESCAP and the Asia-Pacific Water Forum. A large focus of the “Water for Life” Decade concentrated on water-related disasters, as Asia has unprecedented damage occur through such disasters during this time period. This has invigorated the work in the region on the Hyogo Framework for Action as well as the High-Level Experts and Leaders Panel on Water and Disasters.

E. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

24. Western Asia is the most water-stressed region on the planet, with 18 of its 22 countries below the “water poverty line” of 1,000 m³/person/year. The region has been adversely affected by population growth, urbanization, climate change as well as conflict over the period of the “Water for Life” Decade that has had a negative impact on water resources in many areas of the region. Only a small amount of progress has been made with regards to the MDG targets of access to water sanitation and the region remains under the global average since the Decade started. Effort is not lacking, however, and ESCWA works hand in hand with the Arab Water Council to achieve its Arab Strategy for Water Security in the Arab Region to Meet the Challenges and Future Needs for Sustainable Development (2010-2030).

VII. Achieving the Decade’s Goals

A. Overall objective: Achieving of water-related goals

25. Pursuant to resolution 58/217, which launched the “Water for Life” Decade, the primary objectives of the Decade were all focused on helping achieve internationally agreed water-related goals that were found in Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and, as appropriate, those identified during the twelfth and thirteenth sessions of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development.

26. The most visible of these goals were the targets included in the MDGs concerning drinking water and sanitation. In MDG target 7.C, Member States called to “halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation”. For the target on drinking water, the effort was a success. Five years ahead of schedule, in 2010, the target was achieved with 2.6 billion people gaining access since 1990 and 91% of the world now using an improved drinking water source.¹¹ While this was a significant achievement, 663 million people were still living without an improved drinking water source by the end of the MDG period in 2015.¹²

27. Sanitation was not as successful in that Member States were not able to achieve the MDG target of halving the population without sustainable access to basic sanitation. While access was extended from 54% to 77% between 1990 and 2015, with 2.1 billion gaining access, by the end of the MDG period in 2015 2.4 billion people still lacked access to improved sanitation facilities and nearly a billion still practiced open defecation.¹³ A significant gap remains for both sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation, which is why Sustainable Development Goal targets 6.1 and 6.2 focus on universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

¹¹ WHO/UNICEF, *Progress on Sanitation and Drinking Water: 2015 Update and MDG Assessment*, Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP), 2015.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

28. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation committed to “develop integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans by 2005, with support to developing countries, through actions at all levels”. The goal of developing such plans within three years of the Johannesburg Summit was overly ambitious, but through concerted efforts, especially by UNDP and UN-Water Partner Global Water Partnership (GWP), substantial progress was made during the Decade towards achieving this target. According to the 2012 Status Report on “The Application of Integrated Approaches to the Development, Management and Use of Water Resources”, “80% of countries have embarked on reforms to improve the enabling environment for water resources management based on the application of integrated approaches as stated in Agenda 21 and affirmed in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation”.¹⁴

29. One of the other goals set out in twelfth and thirteenth sessions of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development was a call to “shift emphasis from a needs-based to a rights-based approach” when it comes to improving access to safe drinking water in urban and rural areas. While a framework has not been set up to monitor and evaluate progress on this movement towards a rights-based approach to access to safe drinking water and sanitation, significant progress was made when in 2010, the General Assembly, in resolution 64/292, recognized the human right to drinking water and sanitation.

B. Greater focus on water-related issues

30. In the latter five years of the Decade, the campaigns have become one of the major success stories of UN-Water, raising awareness about water to a wider public than ever seen before from the UN system. This included (1) the Decade itself, which is discussed in this present document, (2) World Water Day,¹⁵ an event taking place yearly on 22 March that galvanizes the water community and beyond through a specific water-related topic, (3) the “Drive to 2015: Sanitation for All” campaign, which aimed to make sanitation a global development priority and (4) World Toilet Day,¹⁶ celebrated every 19 November starting in 2013, intended to raise awareness about sanitation issues worldwide.

31. UN-Water’s informational materials have also been ubiquitous throughout the “Water for Life” Decade, providing knowledge on a multitude of water-related subjects that supported the Decade. These range from UN-Water’s Technical Advice on a Dedicated Water Goal in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which proved critical in making the case for a dedicated goal on water to be included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG 6), to the now annual World Water Development Report (WWDR) that is designed to give decision makers evidence-based information to implement the sustainable management of water resources across different thematic areas. These are backstopped by UN-Water’s Analytical and Policy Briefs. On the

¹⁴ UN-Water, *Status Report on the Application of Integrated Approaches to Water Resources Management* (United Nations Environment Programme).

¹⁵ See General Assembly resolution 47/193. *Observance of World Day for Water*.

¹⁶ See General Assembly resolution 67/291. *Sanitation for All*.

drinking water and sanitation side, both WHO/UNICEF's Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) annual progress reports and the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) provide the data and analysis to monitor the international targets related to these areas.

C. Implementation of Programmes/Projects¹⁷

i. UN-Water Decade Programme on Capacity Development (UNW-DPC)

32. Hosted by the United Nations University in Bonn, Germany, UNW-DPC facilitated the capacity building aspect related to the "Water for Life" Decade. Capitalising on the efforts of over 30 UN-Water Members and Partners, UNW-DPC carried out more than 100 capacity development activities dating back to 2007. In addition to carrying out capacity building projects, UNW-DPC managed the UN-Water Activity Information System (UNW-AIS) as a platform that shared information on water-related projects and learning activities from UN-Water's Members and Partners.

ii. UN-Water Decade Programme on Advocacy and Communication (UNW-DPAC)

33. Mandated with supporting the implementation of the Decade through advocacy and communications, UNW-DPAC, managed by UN-DESA and based in Zaragoza, Spain, carried out a series of activities focused on raising awareness about the "Water for Life" Decade and water in general. UNW-DPAC did this through a variety of ways, most notably through their Annual International Zaragoza Conference, which helped UN-Water and its Members and Partners prepare for World Water Day of the upcoming year. UNW-DPAC also coordinated the "Water for Life" UN-Water Best Practices Award, directly linked to the Decade, which highlighted best practices that help fulfil international commitments made on water and water-related issues. Two other important activities led by UNW-DPAC were the management of the "Water for Life" Decade website,¹⁸ through which progress on the Decade could be tracked, and the UN Documentation Centre on Water and Sanitation,¹⁹ which was a compilation of materials from the UN system related to water.

iii. Other UN-Water Featured Projects

34. Other UN-Water projects that supported the "Water for Life" Decade included the (1) UN-Water Federated Water Monitoring System and Key Water Indicator Portal, (2) UN-Water Country Briefs Project, (3) Safe Use of Wastewater in Agriculture Project and (4) Capacity Development to Support National Drought Management Policies.

¹⁷ See the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life" 2005-2015 website for further information contained in the reports and documents of the Programmes at <http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/>

¹⁸ See <http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/>

¹⁹ See http://www.zaragoza.es/ciudad/medioambiente/onu/en/ultimasPer_Onu

D. Participation and involvement of women in water-related development efforts

35. In resolution 58/217, which set forth the specific goals of the “Water for Life” Decade, the General Assembly clearly stated that with “a greater focus on water-related issues at all levels and on the implementation of water-related programmes and projects”, the Decade should “strive to ensure participation and involvement of women in water-related development efforts”. Including women in these types of actions in the water community has historically been a challenge, despite the benefits that this provides to society, livelihoods and water itself. Part of the purpose of the Decade was to bridge this gap by facilitating the inclusion of women in its activities.

36. The first half of the Decade saw an effort to include women in water-related development efforts through UN-Water’s creation of the Task Force on Gender and Water, which, until 2010, promoted gender mainstreaming in implementation of international agreed upon goals related to water and sanitation. The Task Force was very active in terms of producing policy briefs, organizing workshops, side events, trainings and panels on the subject. While the Task Force disbanded in 2010, many UN-Water Members and Partners continued the work of the Task Force in their own activities. For example, the World Bank Group, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Gender and Water Alliance (GWA), UN-Habitat, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) and the Women for Water Partnership (WfWP) all have produced materials arguing for gender mainstreaming in water and sanitation activities.

E. Furthering water cooperation

37. In resolution 65/154, the General Assembly designated 2013 the “International Year of Water Cooperation” in order to increase and improve water cooperation globally due to the growing pressure on water resources and on societies and nature. Given that one of the “Water for Life” Decade’s focus areas was to further cooperation over water resources, as called for in resolution 58/217, this international year provided a concentrated effort to increase water cooperation among Member States during the latter half of the Decade. As noted in the Secretary-General’s report on the Year, it was effective in enhancing knowledge about water cooperation and reinforcing the idea that “political will, legal frameworks, accountability and institutional structures can provide a solid foundation for cooperation over water”.²⁰ The “International Year of Water Cooperation” was a success in that it created impetus for collaborations worldwide and a strong engagement from the youth.

38. Examples of such cooperation ranged from the Republic of Moldova and the Ukraine signing the Treaty on Cooperation on the Conservation and Sustainable Development of the Dniester River Basin in 2012 to the over 500,000 people who were engaged in activities related to

²⁰ Report of the Secretary-General on the International Year of Water Cooperation, A/69/326.

the “International Year of Water Cooperation” to the various Members and Partners of UN-Water collaborating on the “A Post-2015 Global Goal for Water”, which justified a standalone water goal in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

39. Resolution 58/217 calls for the “furtherance of cooperation” at all levels for the “Water for Life” Decade. Another aspect of this that is often neglected is how UN-Water itself has promoted cooperation, both externally and internally, since its inception. The lifetime of UN-Water has almost mirrored the Decade and the progress it has made as a coordination mechanism for UN entities and external stakeholder partners during this time, fostering cooperation between these entities, albeit not without difficulty, to raise the profile of water on the political agenda, must not be discounted.

VIII. Lessons learned and the way forward

40. The Decade for Action has accomplished many things and has seen more activities and achievements on water than any other ten-year period in the history of the United Nations.

41. One of the traits of this successful Decade came through its consistent ability to achieve milestones over the course of the ten years. From the founding of two time bound UN-Water Programmes to support the “Water for Life” Decade in 2007, to the International Year of Sanitation in 2008, to the recognition of the human right to water and sanitation by the UN General Assembly in 2010 - it took just halfway through the Decade to accomplish these. The second half started with a UN General Assembly resolution on the “Sustainable Sanitation: The Five-Year Drive to 2015” in 2011 and continued going from Rio+20 Conference outcome document’s highlighting of water to the International Year of Water Cooperation in 2013 to a standalone Sustainable Development Goal on water just before the close of the Decade.

42. These were just the highlights. With sustained campaigns around World Water Day, World Toilet Day, the Sanitation Drive along with the dissemination of information materials and stakeholder engagement at events, trainings and seminars, the Decade helped maintain momentum, provided impetus for continued actions and activities and helped water achieve a greater focus than ever seen before.

43. Even with all the positive outcomes of the “Water for Life” Decade, there is still much work to be done. Approximately 1.8 billion people lack access to a safe sustainable supply of drinking water and this does not reflect the widespread inequalities that exist in countries that have high levels of coverage. Around 2.4 billion lack access to basic sanitation; among them are almost 950 million people who continue the practice of open defecation. The unsafe management of fecal waste and wastewater continues to pose a major risk to public health and the environment. There is always room for improvement on cooperation. This is not only the case for countries cooperating over transboundary waters, but also cooperation between ministries at the national level and the implementation of integrated water resources management, which is in process of development in most countries, but with still much progress to go. Women and stakeholder participation are still far behind where they should be in the sustainable management of water resources and the

implementation of the human right to water and sanitation is far from being realized in a majority of countries. The Decade has been a success, but also a reminder about how much work there is to be done.

44. The Decade also showed where the shortfalls are in terms of what slows down progress on water-related goals and targets. There are still a myriad of constraints with regards to human, institutional and financial resources. For drinking water and sanitation, discrimination and inequalities still pervade many societies, with marginalized populations denied the opportunity for sharing the achievements made under the Decade.

45. To advance progress, there needs to be more investment in the sustainable management of water resources. This is not only in the financial sense, as was also noted in the Decade mid-term review, but also in terms of improving knowledge, research and innovation, which should all be accompanied by policy and adequate means of implementation with a focus on funding, capacity development, technology and good governance. Consistent and continuous monitoring, evaluation and reporting are required to maintain commitment and need, as they will be, extended to other areas beyond drinking water and sanitation. Special attention still needs to be paid to stakeholder engagement and participatory approaches, especially in the case of women. While progress has been made during the Decade on women's engagement in projects and programmes related to water, one of the goals of the Decade, the gap is still large.

46. It was shown during the "Water for Life" Decade that leadership is needed at the highest of levels. When this occurs, action happens. With future activities on water within the UN system, more leadership and action is needed from Member States. High priority issues, with such leadership, as witnessed in the Drive to 2015, on Sanitation, and World Toilet Day, do produce results.

47. At the beginning of the Decade, the MDGs had only been launched a few years before and it was impossible to predict at that point that the UN system would agree upon a new set of water-related goals in 2015 that would go beyond drinking water and sanitation. With the SDGs now in place, and a much more comprehensive development agenda for water, the way forward is both ambitious and appropriate, as they take into consideration the many facets of water associated with livelihoods and ecosystems.

48. The "Water for Life" Decade proved that with consistent milestone achievements over the course of time, results, at many levels, can occur. Where the global water community is now after ten years of concerted effort is much different, and more positive, than it was in 2005. While much work remains to be done, it is clear that much can be accomplished by building on steps taken during the "Water for Life" Decade.