

Mayors, Local and Regional Governments'



ACTION PLAN FOR WATER SECURITY



Water security: a major issue in cities, towns and villages

Water is the biggest and most essential resource around. The “blue gold” sustains healthy ecosystems, communities, cities and rural areas, economic growth, agriculture, energy production and industry. Water is even a human right, and yet we do not have equal access to it. The COVID-19 pandemic magnified the extent to which how we govern water affects billions of people's lives, especially where it is in too much or too little quantity and/or too polluted .

While water challenges have long been seen through a rural lens given their implications on agriculture and food security, they have increasingly become a prominent urban issue. By 2050, 55% of the global population is expected to live in cities above 50 000 inhabitants ([OECD, 2020](#)). Water demand is expected to increase by 55% by then, especially due to growing demand from manufacturing (+400%), power generation (+140%) and domestic use (+130%) ([OECD, 2012](#)). As a consequence of climate change, population growth and rapid urbanisation, cities of different sizes, towns and villages will continue to face multiple pressures linked to deteriorating water quality and hygiene, increasing natural hazards (floods, droughts, sea-level rise), conflicts over water allocation, and ageing infrastructure ([OECD 2012](#); [OECD, 2015](#)).

Cities, local and regional governments, in coordination with national governments, have a key role to play in managing efficiently water resources, providing access to quality drinking water and sanitation services, and preserving ecosystems and biodiversity, including through combined actions on governance, public investment, urban planning, and infrastructure. Because water crises are often governance crises, it is crucial to adopt a multi-level water governance approach, involving all stakeholders, alongside mayors and elected representatives of local and regional governments.

The essential role of mayors, local and regional governments

In this context, at the 9th World Water Forum in Dakar, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG-Africa) co-convene the **Cities, Local and Regional Governments Day for water security**, as one of the [four key policy segments of the Forum](#) in cooperation with many institutional partners and city networks such as UCLG-World, Eurocities, ICLEI, *Association Internationale des Maires Francophones* (AIMF) and *Partenariat Français pour l'Eau* (PFE). This event aims to discuss and highlight the key role of cities, local and regional governments in each of the four thematic priorities of the Forum, namely i) Water and Sanitation Security, ii) Water for Rural Development, iii) Co-operation, and iv) Means & Tools of Implementation.

The "**Action Plan of Mayors, Local and Regional Governments for Water Security**" proposes concrete actions for local and regional governments to drive water security at all levels. It builds on commitments and declarations from the past editions of the World Water Forum, including the [Local Authorities Declaration](#) (Mexico City, 2006), the [Istanbul Water Consensus](#) (Istanbul, 2009), the [political messages of local and regional authorities](#) (Marseille 2012), the [Daegu-Gyeongbuk Water Action for Sustainable Cities and Regions](#) (Daegu, 2015), the [Brasilia Local and Regional Governments' Call to Action for Water](#) (Brasilia, 2018), as well as the [Ekurhuleni Declaration on Water and Sanitation in Cities](#) adopted on the World Water Day, 22 March 2017 as the outcome of the *Local Climate Solutions for Africa* (LoCS4Africa) Congress organised by ICLEI-Africa.

Through these declarations, Mayors, local and regional governments committed to:

- ◆ Ensure a sound, sustainable and integrated management of water resources by fighting against water pollution ([Local Authorities' Declaration on Water, 2006](#)).
- ◆ Make water security one of the political priorities, based on the principle that water resources must be shared rationally and equitably among users, for social and public health reasons, to support employment and the economy, foster cultural development and recreation, as well as to preserve a pleasant and healthy environment ([Istanbul Water Pact for Local and Regional Authorities, 2009](#)).
- ◆ Develop local, regional, national and international solidarity policies, in particular through decentralised cooperation projects and the mobilisation of innovative financing, for the achievement of universal access to water and sanitation and the protection of water resources ([Messages from Local and Regional Authorities, Marseille, 2012](#)).
- ◆ Support the development of innovative, decentralised, nature-based solutions that would help preserve the ecosystems on which we all depend ([Ekurhuleni Declaration on Water and Sanitation for Cities, 2017](#)).
- ◆ Promote an integrated approach to water resources management, taking into account human rights and gender equality, making access to quality water and sanitation services a priority in the water agenda ([Brasilia Local and Regional Governments' Call to Action for Water, 2018](#)).

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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-covid19 world, **we consider that better water policies can help us achieve the 2030 Agenda**, in particular the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) n°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 coordination across city departments, and vertical coordination across local, inter-municipal, metropolitan, regional/provincial and national levels of government..
2. Set up or strengthen governance structures, partnerships and/or cooperation 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 striving 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, in Egypt (November 2022), the 2023 United Nations Water Decade Conference in New York (22-24 March 2023), and the 10th World Water Forum to be held in March 2024.

Dakar, Senegal, 23 March 2022