Welcome to the SWA 2017 High-level Meetings (HLM)!

The meetings consist of a Finance Ministers’ Meeting (FMM) and a Sector Ministers’ Meeting (SMM). They attract global leaders in the sector and their format places an emphasis on facilitating free-flowing discussions to exchange experiences, generate ideas, and find workable solutions. They also encourage greater interaction between ministers of finance and ministers of sanitation and water in the lead up to the meetings and afterwards.

This year’s FMM and SMM will focus on financing the achievement of universal, sustainable access to sanitation, water and hygiene. The two meetings and their preparatory process are a critical opportunity for countries to ensure that their domestic policy and practice is fit for purpose, and, that international cooperation supports and aligns to these refined policy positions.

These meetings build on previous SWA High-level Meetings of ministers of Finance (in 2010, 2012, and 2014) and of ministers responsible for sanitation, water and hygiene (in 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2016). The 2016 meeting was the first occasion for the sector to come together after the SDGs were agreed.
Interviews

A question for the meetings conveners:

What are your expectations for the 2017 HLMs?

Sanjay Wijesekera, Chief of WASH, Unicef
(UNICEF is the convenor of the SMM)

“The SWA High-Level Meetings provide us with a once-in-a-generation opportunity for countries to work through the real policy choices, and trade-offs they face in order to achieve SDGs.

One of the biggest challenges of the new Sustainable Development Agenda will be achieving universality whilst leaving no one behind. These meetings will be critical to for countries to set out how to reach everyone with at least a basic level of access to water, sanitation and hygiene, whilst we also make progress on the higher level of safely managed services – which is essential to sustaining the gains we have made over the past 20 years.

To generate action now and in the future, the building blocks of the sector must be in place. Results can only be achieved when the foundations for development are laid. This is why UNICEF is privileged to convene Sector Ministers on behalf of the SWA partnership. We look forward to working with our colleagues in partner organization to take forward this agenda, not just at the meetings, but in years to come.”

Guangzhe Chen, Senior Director of the World Bank Water Practice
(The World Bank Group is the convenor of the FMM)

“Our main goal is to recognize the critical importance of investment in water, and its tremendous economic benefits. Equally important is to better understand how we can use existing resources more effectively, and make service providers more efficient in utilizing their existing financial and technical resources, while also operating under more transparent governance arrangements.

Another difficult question which we would like to tackle is how to tap additional sources of financing, particularly domestic private resources. While we recognize the need to increase public and donor finance in the water and sanitation sector, we also know this can be leveraged to catalyze local capital markets to help close the financing gap, which is over $100 billion per year, to attain the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.”

2017 HLM Preparatory process

In order for finance and sector ministers to arrive fully prepared to the High-level Meetings, and for them to be better equipped to take follow-up action, the SWA Secretariat facilitated an intense preparatory process which ran from November 2016 until the HLM. The process involved several webinars, bilateral calls and the development of support materials, such as a tool for countries to calculate the investments needed to fulfill the SDG targets as well as the financing gap associated with them. A total of over 40 countries participated in the process, with hundreds of individual partners from all constituencies working together at country and local level.
**Significant progress on more than half of commitments made at 2014 High-level Meetings**

Thirty-eight of the 43 countries and all 12 external support agencies reported back for the last time on the commitments made at the SWA 2014 High-level Meeting. The global report was just published by SWA, with these main conclusions:

- Significant progress reported on almost half of the country commitments. Donors report significant progress on 80% of all commitments made.
- Countries reported significant success towards commitments relating to coordination and alignment, and to the development and enhancement of national policies and plans.
- Countries reported slow or no progress on 68% of their commitments relating to financing.
- Donors have been particularly successful in completing commitments relating to political prioritization, specifically in increasing financing and visibility of water and sanitation.

- Significant progress is reported on half of the commitments related to the 2014 HLM themes of sustainability and inequality.

SWA partners attending the High-level Meeting made a total of 383 commitments, to eliminate inequalities, ensure sustainability and remove barriers to progress on water and sanitation services. Forty-three developing countries made 313 commitments, and 12 donor and development agency partners made 70 commitments. These commitments were developed through government-led, consultative processes, often engaging multiple stakeholders. Fifteen of the countries, for instance, reported involving civil society in developing their commitments.

*Full Report available for download on SWA’s website*

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The **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation** made and met commitments to improve treatment of faecal waste, and strengthen private sector participation in the water, sanitation and hygiene sector.

By the end of March 2016, **Japan** had contributed to increasing the capacity of over 2,000 engineers around the world.

**Nepal** developed a web-based water, sanitation and hygiene data collection system run by its central National Management Information Program.

**Paraguay** made good progress in prioritizing populations vulnerable due to their rural and peri-urban location and indigenous communities, using a human rights and social equality perspective.

**Uganda** reports good progress on its commitment to ensure sanitation ordinances and bylaws are enacted and enforced in 25% of the districts by 2016.

**Rwanda** partnered with the private sector to increase water production capacities for the city of Kigali.
A question for the constituencies

A common challenge across many SWA countries and other constituencies, is the financing gap that exists between the funds the sector currently has and what is needed to achieve universal access to water, sanitation and hygiene by 2030.

According to the World Bank, this amounts to US$114 billion globally per year until 2030, or three times current investment levels. Addressing this challenge, by both attracting more resources and using existing ones more effectively, is a priority for SWA and the focus of the 2017 HLMs.

How can your constituency contribute to bridging this financing gap?

Research & Learning

We must pave the way and encourage effective and sound public water policies at country level. The IWA Lisbon Charter for public policy and effective regulation recommends a methodology. A public policy needs an integrated approach and includes, among others: the adoption of strategic plans; definition of the legal framework; definition of the institutional framework; definition of the governance of the services; definition of the tariff policy; provision and management of the financial resources; human resources; capacity building; promotion of research; and provision of information.

The successful implementation depends on the ability to manage at relatively the same time all these components. Yes, a huge amount of money is needed to provide adequate water infrastructure across the globe. How can we attract it to the sector? This depends on the trust that financial organizations have in the sector, and for that it’s key to implement sound and credible public policies.

Jaime Melo Baptista, Investigator–Coordinator, National Laboratory of Civil Engineering (LNEC)

Civil Society

The many formal and informal members of WIN could make a crucial contribution to the challenge of bridging the finance gap. New financiers need to have trust that their investments are used efficiently and responsibly. Too often this is still hampered by lack of integrity or risks of corruption in any of its many forms, including not only "simple" bribery, but also diversion of funds, nepotism and (lack of control on) sub-standard practices. Integrity in decision making is crucial for the required trust and stability and is therefore a key challenge. As the Water Integrity Global Outlook (WIGO) 2016 demonstrated (www.waterintegritynetwork.net/WIGO), adequate control systems need to be in place BEFORE new investment programmes start to be implemented. WIN can contribute tools and capacity development for such systems, provided that stakeholders agree to take on these issues and invest in resolving them. In this way a better investment climate develops.

Frank van der Valk, Executive Director, Water Integrity Network Association (WIN)

Private Sector

While it is incumbent upon governments to both enact good WASH policies and budget for WASH, the private sector can also help foster investment in WASH. To be clear, governments should not approach the private sector as a panacea to fill funding gaps. But, the private sector, through partnerships, innovative financing mechanisms, and investments can assist in funding WASH projects. I believe that this is just one of many ways that collaboration amongst different sectors can yield better potential returns.

It is my hope that during the upcoming High-level Meetings, governments—and representatives from the private sector and civil society—will be able to identify how to make this collaboration a reality. Because it is essential that we don’t neglect this great opportunity that we have—to make clean water, sanitation, and hygiene a reality for all, always and everywhere.

Hanna Woodburn, Director, Global Public Private Partnership for Handwashing

Resources

SWA Collaborative Behaviour Country Profiles

SWA has worked with the WHO-led UN–Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking–Water (GLAAS) on the development of a monitoring strategy for the SWA Collaborative Behaviours. As part of the monitoring strategy, Country Profiles are being produced and shared with countries ahead of the 2017 HLM. The profiles provide an overview of how both the government and development partners are performing on the four Behaviours. Profiles for all SWA partner countries will be produced in the coming months.