

June 10, 2018

Dear UN-Water colleagues,  
Dear Prof. Stefan Uhlenbrook, Coordinator of the UN-Water Task Force to produce the SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2018,  
Dear colleagues in the fields of water and beyond,

We are writing to you on behalf of **GRIPP, the global [Groundwater Solutions Initiative for Policy and Practice](#) alliance representing about 30 partners** globally with a common aim to **advance the agenda of sustainable groundwater management** at a local to global scale to contribute to achieving the SDGs.

With this strong support from a major international initiative, we would like to submit and register our comments on the recently prepared draft [SDG 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation](#) (version 02 May 2018) from the perspective of the underlying groundwater and aquifers.

It is with great appreciation that we notice the **increasing recognition of the importance of groundwater for the overall achievement of SDG 6** as well as many other water-dependent SDGs. This has been reflected at global level in various reports as well as in the current draft SDG 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation. The importance of adequate and sustainable management of groundwater can be seen as a pre-requisite to ensuring that the SDG 6 targets 6.1 (drinking water), 6.5 (integrated management), 6.6 (ecosystems), 6.a - 6.b (cooperation and participation) can actually deliver and finally achieve the intended goals. Conversely, it is crucial to be aware of the interlinkage between SDG 6.2 (sanitation) and groundwater, as sanitation can pose a threat to available groundwater resources through pollution, if not appropriately developed.

Noting this positive development, we feel the need to carry this recognition of the importance of groundwater into the **Key messages of the SDG 6 Synthesis Report** and recommend the inclusion of a specific bullet point on groundwater under the Executive Summary, Section F.2 (p.20):

- **“Pro-active groundwater management is key to water security and resilience.** Groundwater, the largest freshwater reserve on earth, supplies one third of the global population with drinking water, and up to half of water for irrigation globally and it supports innumerable rivers, lakes and wetlands. Groundwater was instrumental in the progress made on safe drinking water and sanitation targets under Goal 7 of the Millennium Development Goals. Due to its reliability of access, groundwater is a strategic resource for climate change adaption and disaster risk reduction. Water security, food security, and critical ecosystem health are increasingly undermined by groundwater depletion and degradation, especially where groundwater is sparingly replenished. Goal 6 and other cross-cutting targets within SDG framework cannot be achieved without developing pro-active measures for groundwater management at all levels, including enhanced replenishment, demand management, protection, monitoring, reporting and enforcement.”

as well as under Key messages, Section B (p. 192):

- **Pro-active groundwater management is key to water security and resilience.** Groundwater, the largest freshwater reserve on earth, supplies one third of the global population with drinking



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water, and up to half of water for irrigation globally and it supports innumerable rivers, lakes and wetlands. Water security, food security, urban security, drought resilience and critical ecosystem health are increasingly undermined by groundwater depletion and degradation, especially where groundwater is sparingly replenished. Poor groundwater quality from inherent arsenic, fluoride and chloride and anthropogenic pollution from agriculture, waste disposal, unsafe sanitation and industrial effluents create long-term irreversible hazards that call for preventative approaches. Developing pro-active measures for groundwater management at local, national and international level, including recharge enhancement, conjunctive management with other water sources, demand management, appropriate land-use measures, monitoring, reporting and enforcement, is imperative and will support sustainable growth and enhancing resilience.

We further recommend and **call upon the representatives of the respective custodian agencies** to make an extra effort to further improve the step-by-step methodologies for the monitoring of SDG 6 target indicators - especially with regard to 6.3.2, 6.4.1, 6.4.2, 6.5.1, 6.5.2, 6.6.1 as well as 6.a.1 (with more focus on capacity development), and 6.b.1. The currently proposed methodology generally recognizes the role of groundwater but may **need to clearly specify the contribution of groundwater in the weighted calculations and include adequate groundwater measurement and monitoring methodologies** to collect necessary data on a regular basis and in a way that can easily be applied at national level.

GRIPP with its broad coalition of international and national partners is ready and best positioned to provide the necessary **technical inputs and assistance** in consultation with the **respective custodian agencies to further advance the step-by-step methodologies, taking into account** groundwater-sound methodologies, and welcomes their initiatives in this regard.

GRIPP partners also welcome initiatives by national institutions and agencies to assist in the development of **nationally adapted processes** to develop the needed **monitoring infrastructure and data acquisition approaches** as well as the **capacities to investigate** the status of national groundwater assets.

With this groundwater perspective, we appreciate your efforts to improve progress towards achieving the SDG 6 targets by 2030 and wish to extend our support to the international community as well as to national institutions to improve sustainable groundwater management, importantly through better understanding, reporting and monitoring of groundwater quantity and quality at local to global levels.

On behalf of GRIPP:

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Dr Karen Villholth, IWMI  
GRIPP Coordinator

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GRIPP - UN liaison



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British Geological Survey  
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL



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