

UNSGAB Closing Ceremony
Panel 1 on the global water institutional architecture



**Introductory Speech by Gerard Payen,
Member of UNSGAB**

With the presence of his Majesty the King of the Netherlands, his Imperial Highness the Crown Prince of Japan, the President of the UN General Assembly, the Deputy Secretary General and the UNSGAB Chair.

Your Majesty, your Imperial Highness, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

With the adoption of a Sustainable Development Goal dedicated to Water and Sanitation, Water is now elevated to a high official UN status. 14 SDG targets are related to Water and Sanitation. They SDG Targets are far more ambitious and holistic than the 2 MDGs targets. All the major water challenges are addressed by the post-2015 Agenda.

In order to reach these targets and to maintain this balanced vision of water challenges, an adequate global architecture is needed.

However, the water sector is highly fragmented. Up to now, water-related global institutions have evolved in a piecemeal manner. Global water governance is diffuse. Coherence of actions is not guaranteed. It is high time to consider an architecture that is “fit for purpose”.

Key elements of a global thematic architecture organized within and around the UN are typically:

- An intergovernmental platform that meets regularly on the matter to ensure coordinated leadership by governments;
- A UN structure that supports this platform and coordinates all UN actors on the matter.
- Groups of technical experts, including those from within the UN, from academia, national governments, the private sector and civil society that feed the political UN debates with the appropriate knowledge;
- Regular interactions with civil society through multi-stakeholder dialogues and ‘major groups’.
- Appropriate monitoring mechanisms, mechanisms to review progress on actions decided by governments.

These elements do not currently exist about Water, or where they do, they are only partial, they do not include all governments and do not address all water challenges.

In particular, several Ministers told us that they need to discuss water challenges at the UN but have no opportunity to do so. I remind you that the last time when governments had a UN meeting dedicated to Water and Sanitation policies was in April 2005 with the 13th meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), more than a decade ago.

This is why, after having interacted with many people, we formulate 5 recommendations that are presented in page 15 of our report:

- To establish a UN Intergovernmental Committee on Water and Sanitation This intergovernmental platform would meet regularly to discuss all water-related challenges, to review progress towards SDG targets, to guide UN action and to make further political decisions if needed.
- To form a UN Scientific and Practice Panel on Water and Sanitation mandated to gather global evidence on major challenges, water management and uses, and to stimulate external research on knowledge gaps
- That UN-Water is strengthened by mandating it to serve as the Secretariat and support entity for both the UN Intergovernmental Committee on Water and Sanitation and the UN Scientific and Practice Panel on Water and Sanitation
- Set up a comprehensive global monitoring mechanism. More comprehensive than today. For example, today, there is no global knowledge of wastewater management and pollution resulting from human activities although there is a SDG target on these issues.
- Make sure that there is an independent voice in the future. Independent means independent from geographical, national, institutional or sectoral interests.

These are our 5 structural recommendations. Most of them are directed to country governments, the UN Member States.

UNSGAB identified institutional gaps. The need of SDG reviews creates an opportunity to act.

It is now up to UN Member States to decide how they want to improve the global water architecture and to maintain their balanced vision of all water challenges that they adopted 2 months ago.

Thank you