



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Regional Centre
on Urban Water Management
(under the auspices of UNESCO)

Agreed Minutes

Thirteenth Governing Board Meeting (GBM13) Regional Centre on Urban Water Management (RCUWM-Tehran)

(Under the auspices of UNESCO)

23 February 2023 (09:00- 12:00),
Tehran– Iran



The Thirteenth Governing Board Meeting (GBM) of the Regional Centre on Urban Water Management (RCUWM) was held on 23rd February 2023 based on the approvals of the 12th GBM held virtually on 26 May 2021. This hybrid event involved a mixture of in-person and remote attendees. Remote attendees joined the meeting via Microsoft Teams platform while in-person attendees sit together in the Conference Hall of Ministry of Energy HQ, Tehran, Iran.

List of Participants (In-person and Remote)

RCUWM	H.E. Mr. Ali Akbar Mehrabian, GB Chair and Minister of Energy, Iran Mr. Mohammad Hajrasouliha, Director, RCUWM-Tehran
Member States	Afghanistan, H.E. Mr. Mujeeb-ur-Rehman Omar, Deputy for Water Affairs, Minister of Energy and Water (Online)
	Armenia, Mr. Vahagn Gevorgyan, Chairman of Water Committee
	Bangladesh, H.E. Mr. Muhammad Tajul Islam, Minister of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives (Online)
	India, Mr. John Mai, Deputy Ambassador of India to Iran
	Iran, Mr. Javanbakht, Deputy Minister of Energy for Water and Wastewater Affairs
	Iraq, H.E. Mr. Awn Theab Abdullah, Minister of Water Resources
	Lebanon, H.E. Hassan Abbas, Ambassador of Lebanon to Iran
	Oman, Mr. Naser Al – Battashi, Director of Water Resources
	Oman, Ibrahim bin Ahmed Almuaini, Oman Ambassador in Iran
	Pakistan, Ms. Zaib Tayyab, Counsellor of the Embassy
	Sri Lanka, H.E. Mr. G.M.V. Wishwanah Aponso Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Iran
	Switzerland, Mr. Kim Sitzler, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Switzerland to Iran
	Syria, Mr. Ali Ahmad Khamis, Consul, Embassy of Syria in Iran
	Tajikistan, H.E. Mr. Delir Juma, Minister of Energy and Water Resources
Turkey, Ms. Ozge Imamoglu, Head of Department for International Organizations of Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (online)	
Member Organizations	UN Resident Coordinator, Mr. Farzin, Representative of Iran Office
	UNDP, Ms. Nematova, Deputy of UNDP Representative in Iran
	UNESCO, Mr. Abou Amani, Director of the Division of Water Sciences and IHP Secretary (online)
	IsDB, Mr. Farshad Kalivash, Field Representative in Iran
	FAO, Ms. Nazi Tavakoli, Representative in Iran
	ECO, Mr. Khusrav Noziri, Secretary General
	Oman Water Society, Mr. Saif Rashid Al Shaqsi, President



Opening Remarks

H.E. Mr. Ali Akbar Mehrabian, the Chair and Minister of Energy, Islamic Republic of Iran as the host welcomed the participants to the 13th Governing Board (GB) meeting of RCUWM-Tehran. The Chair pointed out the cooperation formed by Iran and RCUWM's member states and organizations which has been well promoted during the past 20 years and has provided an appropriate base to address water challenges in the region. As cited this success is due to political mobilization of the governing board member states which have gathered together while being totally aware of the vital role of water in the region.

Agenda

The draft agenda was put to the floor and it was unanimously adopted as follows:

No.	Time	Items
1	09:10 – 09:25	Opening, Minister of Energy & RCUWM GB Chair
2	09:25 – 09:35	Presentation by UNESCO representative (IHP Secretariat)
3	09:35 – 09:50	Speeches by GB Members at the ministerial level (5 minutes/member)
4	09:50 – 10:05	Director's report on the activities between the 12 th and 13 th GBMs and work plan of 2023
5	10:05 – 10:15	Comments and approvals on the director's report
6	10:15 – 10:45	Presenting New proposals by RCUWM
7	10:45 – 11:15	Interventions & Contributions by GB Members
8	11:15 – 11:45	Speeches by other GB members (3 mins/member)
9	11:45 – 11:55	Determining the venue and tentative date of the 14 th GBM
10	11:55 – 12:00	Closing and visiting the exhibition

Presentations / Speeches

UNESCO representative (IHP Secretariat)

Mr. Abou Amani expressed his thanks for RCUWM tremendous works by asking member states to collaborate with the Centre to implement IHP IX. He also pointed out that UN 2023 conference on "Our watershed moment: uniting the world for water" will be held in New York in March 2023 and it will be a good opportunity for all RCUWM members to attend. He also mentioned that water issues are at the Centre of the SDGs and other related international agendas which demonstrates how important it is. A new agenda entitled "international committee on new global framework for biodiversity" has been recently discussed and approved in Montreal, Canada. Mr. Amani described IHP phase IX (2022-2029) and stated that it is based on member states' needs and challenges, therefore RCUWM and its member countries could play an important role in IHP working group "Groundwater and Human Settlements", in particular. He also mentioned that as the centre is hosting the International Drought Initiative (IDI), it should play a key role to revive this flagship initiative.



Iraq, Minister of Water Resources

H. E. Mr. Awn Theab Abdullah stated that water is a key element for sustainable development and there is a need for taking sound water consumption into account in the region which is of arid and semi-arid climate. He also mentioned that regional cooperation, management and efforts through RCUWM capacities and capabilities are necessary to address regional challenges. H.E. mentioned that it is necessary to develop a collaborative platform including scientific ideas at regional scale for achieving water-related objectives of UNESCO and his country is ready to collaborate.

Tajikistan, Minister of Energy and Water Resources

H.E. Mr. Delir Juma stated that UN General Assembly has adopted 10 resolutions on water which were initiated by Tajikistan during the past two decades. One of the major resolutions is the ongoing International Decade for Action: Water for Sustainable Development which Tajikistan initiated to govern and support and accelerate access to achieve the goals of the global development agenda. He also mentioned that the UN Water Conference (March 2023) is an excellent opportunity to review and evaluate the progress made in realizing the goals of the Water Decade. Tajikistan and the Netherlands will be leading the preparation of this global event.

Qatar, President of Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation

Mr. Al Kawari addressed some water challenges and issues in Qatar while his country has achieved the SDG6 (i.e., ensure access to water and sanitation for all) by taking benefit of modern practices on wastewater treatment. He stated that the 13th GB meeting would be a step to discuss water solutions, improve our capabilities in coping with ongoing regional water and food challenges.

Armenia, Chairman of Water Committee

Mr. Gerigurian mentioned that Armenia presented three proposals in the 12th GBM (21 May 2021) that could be raised again and followed up as stated below:

- Enhancing the efficiency of water systems energy-saving facilities
- Financial mechanisms implementing wastewater treatment plant
- The protection of settlements, areas of economic value and the property of the population from the risk of floods and mudflows

Oman, Ambassador of Oman to Iran

H.E. Mr. Al Moeini highlighted the necessity of cooperation for supporting RCUWM activities through organizing educational workshops and conducting research projects. He also raised the importance role of RCUWM in fulfilling water management objectives at regional and global scales and Oman's preparedness to closely work with the Centre and its members for achieving its goals.



Lebanon, Ambassador of Lebanon to Iran

H.E. Mr. Hasan Abbas highlighted the importance of the SDGs and its targets such as improving water quality by reducing its pollution, increasing water use efficiency, practicing integrated water resources management by taking into consideration transboundary cooperation and protection and restoration of water related ecosystems. He also stated that in order to reach these goals regional and international cooperation is required. Mr. Abbas also mentioned that lack of funding has resulted in exacerbating water challenges. As for being involved in RCUWM activities he stated that new proposals should be forwarded to relevant ministries of the GB member states to be further investigated and decided.

Bangladesh, Minister of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives (Online)

H.E. Mr. Tajul Islam presented a short speech on the water conditions of his country focusing on floods, exploitation of groundwater resources, necessity of revising water plans to address current challenges our world is facing. He also mentioned that collaboration between UNESCO and GB member states in running joint relevant projects is required.

Afghanistan, Deputy Minister for Water Affairs, Ministry of Energy and Water (Online)

H.E. Mr. Mujeeb- ur- Rahman Omar highlighted the importance of water in his country by describing the water shortage condition in Afghanistan, climate change impacts such as droughts and floods and demand growth due to population increase, instabilities and political conflicts as well as economic sanctions which have all made water accessibility a challenge. He also stated that interbasin water transfer is a solution for supplying water for mega cities. Mr. Omar also highlighted the role of water diplomacy in a fair and dynamic manner for effectively solving water problems among countries.

Sri Lanka, Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Iran

By expressing his pleasure in attending the GB ministerial meeting on behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka, H.E. Mr. Wishwanah Aponso stated that Sri Lanka is quite prepared to collaborate with RCUWM and its member states in solving water challenges.

Oman Water Society, President of Oman Water Society

Mr. Saif Rashid Al Shaqsi addressed the water resources condition in Oman which is located in an arid region. He also highlighted the importance of preventing unauthorized groundwater resources exploitation. He suggested to determine the parties which are jointly planning to run RCUWM proposals by taking into consideration that the outcomes of project proposals should be practical.



Director's Report

Mr. Hajrasouliha as RCUWM new director who stepped on board since September 2022 described the activities of the Centre between the 12th and 13th GBMs and pointed out the most important activities which the Centre is planning for 2023.

The director mentioned that the Centre has defined 8 proposals to be carried out with its member states within the coming years. The senior advisers of the Centre will further present the proposals by demonstrating the expected outcomes.

Comments and Approvals on the Director's Report

The member representatives presented their comments and suggestions on the director's report and it was finally approved by the board members.

Presenting New Proposals by RCUWM

RCUWM senior advisers presented a short overview on the project proposals, their objectives, method of implementation and expected outcomes and the floor was put to the Centre's member states and organizations for receiving their interests to be involved in running the projects jointly with RCUWM.

Interventions and Contributions by GB members

The board members were then expected to present their interest to contribute to the proposals in general during this meeting and in detail by nominating their focal persons within 2 weeks time.

The following proposals were accepted to be run by the nominated members as follows:

- Mr. Zaib Tayyab, the counsellor of the Embassy of Pakistan to Iran stated that groundwater management is a key to achieve water and food security. So, Government of Pakistan endorses execution of proposal No. 1 on groundwater management at the regional scale. Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR) has done an exceptional job by investigating and mapping of the entire Indus Plain Aquifer. Ministry of Resources of Pakistan would be happy to introduce a focal point for contributing to this proposal.
- Mr. Javanbakht as the Deputy Minister of Energy for Water and Wastewater Affairs declared that proposals 3 and 5 on water governance and drought management, respectively would be supported by the Water Sector of the Ministry of Energy, I.R. Iran as a contribution to RCUWM activities including conducting research project and capacity building.
- Mr. Matkan as the Secretary General of the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO stated that the Iranian Commission will collaborate with RCUWM in implementing proposals presented in the meeting. He also highlighted the need for renovating old water



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network systems for reducing water leakage (Non-accounted water). Mr. Matkan mentioned that specific measures should be taken for improving water quality and mitigating climate change impacts for which the Iranian Commission is prepared to work with RCUWM and its member countries.

- Ms. Sarantuyaa from UNESCO headquarters stated that the proposals are all in line with IHP IX strategic plan. UNESCO-IHP supports proposals 3 (water governance), 4 (adaptation of urban water systems with climate change) and 6 (wastewater treatment and recycling which is in line with the circular economy in urban water management) in particular, through joint implementation with contribution of IHP secretariat and in collaboration with RCUWM.
- Mr. Noziri as ECO Secretary General stated that the optimal utilization of natural resources especially water remains on the top of ECO agenda for regional cooperation. The ECO member states have long been collaborating on water management issues. ECO believes in an integrated, well-coordinated and harmonized approach for governance of regional water resources. We support all those initiatives which are aimed at efficient and optimal utilization given the fact the water remains at all-time creating a need and requirement for the continuity of our existence. In this regard, ECO secretariat welcomes RCUWM and any proposals to work on joint regional projects, programs and mechanisms for developing an integrated system to ensure efficient water management in the region.
- Ms. Ozge Imamoglu as the Head of Department for International Organizations of Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Online) stated that the proposals should be elaborated more carefully by taking into consideration the mandate of RCUWM (i.e., urban water management). She mentioned that they would need to discuss the proposals with their experts for presenting concrete comments in due course for further collaboration and fruitful dialogue with RCUWM.
- Ms. Mehrdadi as the Director of Natural Sciences, UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office (UTCO) stated that UTCO is prepared to support RCUWM for the proposals presented in the meeting and future cooperation.
- Mr John Mai as the deputy Ambassador of India to Iran stated that all areas presented in the proposals are important ones in India and they have been working on them for a long time. It would be fruitful to consider a timeline to provide their technical comments on the proposals through determining a focal point with whom RCUWM could communicate.
- As an observer Mr. Torkzaban from Japan Cooperation Centre for the Middle East (JCCME) stated that Japan has great experience in the water and wastewater sector. They have already had cooperation with Iran Water Resources Management Company (WRMC) regarding proposal No. 2. JCCME holds valuable experience on proposals 6, 7, and 8 with National Water and Wastewater Engineering Company (NWVEC).

Minutes of Thirteenth Governing Board Meeting (GBM13)

Other members presented their interest in being involved in RCUWM project proposals as shown in the table.

No	Proposal Title	RCUWM Counterpart	Involved RCUWM Members
1	Best Practices in Groundwater Management and Developing Standards for Water Sector		Oman, Pakistan, Qatar
2	Transferring experiences and technical knowledge about integrated river management based on restoration, rehabilitation and maintenance of river balance		Bangladesh, Pakistan
3	Preparation of a report/book on “Water Governance in RCUWM Governing Board (GB) Member States”	UNESCO-IHP	Iran
4	Development of a Regional Collaborative Platform for Adaptation of Urban Water Systems to Climate Change	UNESCO-IHP	Armenia
5	Development and Implementation of a Regional Drought Monitoring, Prediction and Risk Management System		Iran, Pakistan
6	New Technologies in Water and Wastewater Treatment and Recycling	UNESCO-IHP	Bangladesh, Iran, Pakistan, Qatar
7	Skill Improvement for Urban Water Practitioners and Technicians		Iran, Iraq, Tajikistan
8	Improving Water Quality in the Region: from Capacity Building to Capacity Development		Bangladesh

Determining the venue and tentative date of the 14th GBM

As mentioned by Mr. Alireza Salamat, RCUWM Deputy, as per the agreement signed and exchanged between the government of I. R. Iran and UNESCO, the GB meeting shall be held once per annum ordinary in one of RCUWM GB member states who will to host the event. The members were asked to correspond their interest in holding the 14th Governing Board meeting in 2024 to RCUWM secretariat so that further arrangements could be made.

Closing

The Chair thanked all representatives from RCUWM member states and organizations as well as the observers for participating in the 13th Governing Board meeting.

All members attending the 13th Governing Board meeting expressed their appreciations for attending the board meeting and further expressed their gratitude for the hospitality shown by the Ministry of Energy during their stay in Tehran-Iran.