



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



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

13th Governing Board Meeting 23rd February 2023, Tehran



Final Report

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

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1. Introduction

The Governing Board is the most important decision-making constituent of the Regional Centre on Urban Water Management (RCUWM) at the highest level, which takes part in ordinary sessions once a year. Within the third period of the activities of RCUWM (2019 to 2024), Tehran was host to the 13th Governing Board Meeting (GBM 2023) in Ministry of Energy of I.R. Iran on 23rd February, 2023 from 09:00 to 12:30.

Promoting and expanding relations among RCUWM's member states and organizations on water related issues have been discussed during the 13th Governing Board Meeting (GBM-2023). A water and wastewater exhibition was also held which was highly received by the attendees of the GB meeting. Besides, a technical and/or sightseeing tour has been arranged for the attendees on the second day.

2. Participants and Membership Notifications

A) Member countries at State Level: 15 representatives from Afghanistan, Armenia, Bangladesh, India, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Syria, Tajikistan and Turkey

B) International Organizations: UNESCO representative and the representatives of international and regional organizations including UN offices in Tehran (UN Resident Coordinator, UNDP, FAO), along with IsDB, ECO and OMS.

C) Observers: Representatives of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Japan Cooperation Center for the Middle East (JCCME) and Oman Water Society (OWS)

The list of participants including their contact details is presented in **Annex 2**.

3. Opening Remarks

H.E. Mr. Ali Akbar Mehrabian, Minister of Energy, Islamic Republic of Iran as the chair welcomed the participants to the 13th GBM of RCUWM and addressed the participants on the history of RCUWM's establishment being launched in 2002. Dr. Mehrabian expressed his condolences to the authorities and people of Turkey and Syria for the loved, lost in the recent earthquake (February 2023).

He mentioned that today, RCUWM is at the third period of activities (2019-2024) with representatives of 18 Member States and several international/regional organizations. The Centre's activities are based on three main pillars of Training and Capacity Building, Joint Research and Technology Transfer, and Networking and Information Sharing. So far, 12 RCUWM Governing Board Meetings have been held for which Dushanbe and Muscat have hosted one and two meetings, respectively. The most important issues and highlights pointed out by the Chair are as follows:

- Holding the last two GBMs virtually due to COVID-19 Pandemic which was spread out all over the world
- Promoting cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Centre's member states and organizations for the future and providing an appropriate base to exchange experiences on

water challenges like flash floods, prolonged droughts and use of non-conventional water resources at regional scale

- Emphasizing on the vital role of water in the region and the essence of promoting activities related to water management in general and particularly urban water management to facilitate and support providing services through rational decisions
- Mentioning that climate change and its impacts including water disasters like irregular flash floods and droughts as well as inappropriate water governance has increased concerns in the field of water security in the 21st century
- As for Iran, presenting the challenges consisting of huge consumption of surface and groundwater resources, losing water resources quality, water contaminations and overexploitation of groundwater resources due to prolonged droughts during the two past decades leading to a significant decrease in aquifer levels
- Emphasizing on developing RCUWM capacities especially during responsibility period of Mr. Hajrasouliha (new director of RCUWM as of September 2022) to provide solution for water management related issues and problems through using region capacities and attracting international cooperation
- Balancing water supply and demand could be a solution to overcome the present and future challenges in water management in different aspects and also reach social justice and economic development
- Addressing regional and global water challenges at the highest diplomatic level through localizing traditional methods and successful experiences compatible with religious, cultural, socio-economic conditions of the countries in order to come up with suitable strategies
- Inviting member states and organizations to cooperate in and contribute to the Centre's activities as well as new proposals and regional projects which could result in solving water challenges via carrying out research projects and holding training and capacity building events by the GB members.

4. Adopted Agenda

The tentative agenda was put to the floor and was unanimously adopted. The final agenda is presented in **Annex 3**.

5. UNESCO Statement

Mr. Abou Amani, director of the division of water sciences and secretary of the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (UNESCO-IHP) delivered UNESCO Statement online which is presented in **Annex 5**.

6. RCUWM Director's Work Plan and Statements

The Director's work plan and statements were presented according to article 7.2 of the Agreement as in **Annex 4** and approved anonymously by the GB Members.

7. Discussions and Highlights

The Member States representatives presented their remarks and comments. The highlights of their remarks are presented in **Annex 5**.

8. Proposals for Cooperation

The Chair briefed the participants of the meeting on 8 new proposals for which the members could be potentially involved in. The project proposals were fully described and discussed during the Meeting and GB Members were invited to submit new proposals with respect to RCUWM Scope of Activities. All proposals are presented in **Annex 6** of this report.

9. Concluding Remarks

H.E. Mr. Ali Akbar Mehrabian, the Minister of Energy and RCUWM GB Chair, deeply expressed thanks and appreciations to the honorable participants for attending this important meeting and wished them a pleasant stay in Iran. He thanked Mr. Hajrasouliha and his colleagues for organizing the meeting as well.

In addition, he stated that water should be considered as an axis of the unity and cooperation on socio-economic development among GB member states. In this regard, the Centre should be activated for exchanging information, knowledge and experiences for taking advantage of technologies. We should adopt a big step forward in terms of water governance and management in the region.

Finally, he asked member states to introduce and appoint a focal point for following the proposals through correspondence with the Centre. Moreover, The Director of the RCUWM should be in a sustainable manner and keep contact with the GB member states to receive their points and comments on the proposals and other issues of interest.

As for the venue and tentative date of the 14th RCUWM Governing Board Meeting (GBM-2024), proposals could be received from RCUWM member states. The Secretariat will investigate the suggestions and announce the venue and date subsequently.

10. Annexes

Annex 1: Invitation Notifications

Annex 2: List of GBM 2023 Participants and Contacts

Annex 3: Adopted Agenda

Annex 4: RCUWM Director's Work Plan and Statements

Annex 5: Discussions and Highlights

Annex 6: Proposal Details (Comments/Commitments initially raised by RCUWM Governing Board members and International Organizations in the Meeting)

Annex 7: Photos of 13th Governing Board Meeting

Annex 1: Invitation Notifications

Member State	Relevant Authority	Notification Date
Afghanistan	Ministry of Water and Energy	7 Nov. 2022
Armenia	Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure	7 Nov. 2022
Azerbaijan	Azersu OJSC	7 Nov. 2022
Bangladesh	Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives	7 Nov. 2022
Egypt	Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation	7 Nov. 2022
India	Ministry of Jal Shakti (Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation)	7 Nov. 2022
Iraq	Ministry of Water Resources	7 Nov. 2022
Lebanon	Ministry of Energy and Water	7 Nov. 2022
Oman	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources	7 Nov. 2022
Pakistan	Ministry of Water Resources	7 Nov. 2022
Qatar	Ministry of State for Energy Affairs	7 Nov. 2022
Sri Lanka	Ministry of Water Supply and Estate Infrastructure Development	7 Feb. 2023
Switzerland	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	7 Nov. 2022
Syria	Ministry of Water Resources	7 Nov. 2022
Tajikistan	Ministry of Energy and Water Resources	7 Nov. 2022
Turkey	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	7 Nov. 2022

Annex 2: List of GBM 2023 Participants

Members	Participant(s)
GB Chair	H.E. Mr. Ali Akbar Mehrabian Minister of Energy, I.R. Iran
Afghanistan	Mr. Mujeeb – ur – Rehman Omar Deputy for Water Affairs on behalf of Ministry of Energy and Water (Online)
Armenia	Mr. vahagn gevorgyan, President of Water Committee Mr. Arsen Avakian, Armenia Ambassador in Iran Mr. Garik Gerigurian
Bangladesh	H.E. Mr. Muhammad Tajul Islam Minister of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives (Online)
India	Mr. John Mai , Deputy of Ambassador of India in Iran
Iran	Mr. Masoud Khashaee, Deputy of Planning and Economical Affairs of the Water and Wastewater Engineering Company
Iraq	H.E. Mr. Awn Theab Abdullah Minister of Water Resources
Lebanon	H.E Mr. Hassan Abbas Ambassador of Lebanon in Iran
Oman	Mr. Saif Rashid Saif Al Shaqsi, president of Oman Water Society Mr. Naser Al – Battashi, Director of Water Resources Ibrahim bin Ahmed Almuaini, Oman Ambassador in Iran
Pakistan	Ms. Zaib Tayyab, Counsellor of the Embassy Mr. Muhammad Edris
Qatar	Mr Essa Hilal Al-Kuwari, President of Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation "KAHRAMAA") Mr Abdullah Aljassim Mr Mohamed Ali Almuhammad Mr Fahad Yousuf Tolefat
Sri Lanka	H.E. Mr. G.M.V.Wishwanah Aponsu Ambassador of Sri Lanka in Iran
Switzerland	Mr. Kim Sitzler, Deputy Head of Mission Embassy of Switzerland in Iran
Syria	Mr. Ali Ahmad Khamis, Counselor
Tajikistan	H.E. Mr. Delir Juma, Minister of Energy and Water Resources Mr. Parviz Atoev, Head of Foreign Affairs Department Mr. Zahedi, Ambassador of Tajikistan in Iran
Turkey	Ms. Ozge Imamoglu Head of Department for International Organizations of Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Online)

Organization	Participant
UN Resident Coordinator	Mr. Farzin Danesh, Representative of UN Resident coordinator
UNDP	Ms. Nematova, Deputy of UNDP Representative in Iran Mr. Alireza Mohammadi
FAO	Ms., Nazi Tavakoli , FAO Representative
Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)	Mr. Khusrav Noziri , ECO Representative
Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)	Mr. Farshad Kalivash IsDB Field Representative
Japan Cooperation Centre for the Middle East (JCCME)	Mr. Torkzaban,
Oman Water Society	Mr. Saif Rashid Saif Al Shaqsi, chairman
UTCO Representative	Ms. Mehrdadi OIC, UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office (UTCO)
UNESCO IHP	Mr. Abou Amani, Director of the division of water sciences and IHP Secretary. Ms Sarantuyaa Zandaryaa, Programme Specialist (Water for Human Settlements), Division of Water Sciences
RCUWM Director	Mr. Mohammad Hajrasouliha Director

Annex 3: Adopted Agenda

First day, 23 February 2023, Tehran Time

No.	Time	Items
1	09:00 – 09:10	National Anthem and Reciting the Holy Quran
2	09:10 – 09:25	Opening, Minister of Energy & RCUWM GB Chair
3	09:25 – 09:35	Presentation by UNESCO representative (IHP Secretariat)
4	09:35 – 09:50	Speeches by GB Members at the ministerial level (5 minutes/member)
5	09:50 – 10:05	Director's report on the activities between the 12 th and 13 th GBMs and work plan of 2023
6	10:05 – 10:15	Comments and approvals on the director's report
7	10:15 – 10:45	Presenting New proposals by RCUWM
8	10:45 – 11:15	Interventions & Contributions by GB Members
9	11:15 – 11:45	Speeches by other GB members (3 mins/member)
10	11:45 – 11:55	Determining the venue and tentative date of the 14 th GBM
11	11:55 – 12:00	Closing
12	12:00 – 13:00	Visiting the exhibition
13	13:00 – 14:30	Lunch
14	14:30 – 19:00	Transfer to the Hotel
15	19:00 – 21:00	Dinner Reception Venue

Second day, 24 February 2023, Tehran Time

No.	Time	Items
1	09:00 – 13:30	Technical Tour / Sight Seeing Tour

Annex 4: RCUWM Director's Work Plan and Statements

I. Context and Type of RCUWM Activities

The Director of the Centre, Mr. Mohammad Hajrasouliha started his report by indicating the Context of the center's activities which is **Sustainable and Integrated Management of Urban Water** at local, national and regional levels as well as raising public awareness through international capacities.

II. According to Centre's Agreement, Four Objectives of its Activities are:

- Providing and presenting scientific and technical information
- Conducting and supporting scientific research
- Training and capacity building
- Regional and international collaborations and networking

Also, Centre should perform seven duties based on UNESCO Intergovernmental Hydrologic Programme (IHP) including:

1. Promoting Joint Scientific Research
2. Networking for the exchange of scientific and technical information
3. Scientific cooperation with relevant UNESCO - IHP networks
4. Conducting Information transfer activities
5. Utilizing information and communication technology
6. Providing technical consulting and advisory services
7. Producing technical publications and other media items

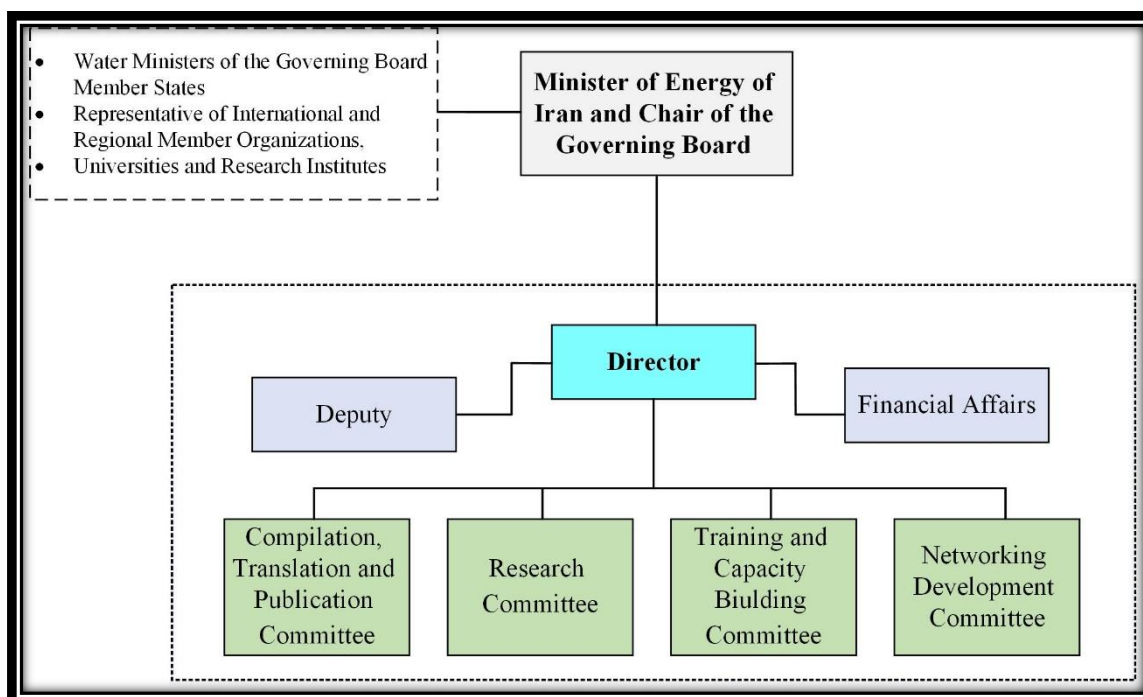
III. Compendium of the 13th Governing Board Meeting

All of the issues aforementioned above are presented in article 6 of the agreement of the center which is elaborated in the Annex 3 of the compendium. Also, the Center's introduction, activities, structure, plans, Governing Board introduction, history of Governing Board Meetings, functions and members and etc. have been illustrated in the compendium.

Mr. Hajrasouliha continued that within his new role in the center some changes have been made in the titles of the structure of the center and 4 professional committees including Networking Development, Training and Capacity Building, Research and Compilation, Translation and Publication Committees are developed. Mr. Hajrasouliha mentioned that each of the committees have a secretary that will write down GB members comments and suggestions about implementing centers objectives in 2023 during the meeting.

As mentioned by the director, RCUWM has managed to hold two workshop series on "Data and Information for Integrated Urban Water Management" in collaboration with International Center for Water Resources and Global Change (ICWRGC) in June and November 2021. The workshop serial (2021-2024) aims to highlight the importance of quality assured data and products at the basin level. These workshops were highly received by RCUWM GB member states and organizations. The third workshop is under investigation to be held in 2023 combined with the German project entitled "Development of an Operational, mUITi-sectoral global

drought hAZard forecasting SysTem, OUTLAST”. The organizational chart was presented as the follows:



RCUWM Organizational Chart

Furthermore, the staffs working at the RCUWM were reported to be 25, 11 holding PhD degree and 11 holding master of science degree and 1 as bachelor of science degree.

Mr. Aliakbar Mehrabian	GB Chair and Minister of Energy, I.R. Iran									
Position	Sex		Education				Years of Experience			
	M	F	PhD	MS	BS	N/A	<5	5~10	10~20	>20
Director	1			1						1
Deputy	1			1						1
Senior Advisers (part-time)	11	1	9	3						12
Experts	2			2			1	1		
Program Specialists / Researchers	2	2	2	2				3		1
Financial Affairs (part-time)		2		1	1				1	1
Supporting Staff	3			1		2			3	
Total	20	5	11	11	1	2	1	4	4	16

IV. 2023 Projects

The director reported that RCUWM published a book entitled “National Strategies for Adaptation to Climate Change in Water Sector”. He continued that members can find this book in their package. Moreover, packages contain printed version of proposals to be discussed in the following.

V. New Proposals

Mr. Hajrasouliha reported that RCUWM new proposals which are mentioned in the table below requires the members’ attention, Suggestions and support. Then, each proposal was elaborated by the RCUWM Committee members. The contributions of GB member states will be presented in **Annex 6**.

1	Best Practices in Groundwater Management at regional scale
2	Transferring Experiences and Technical Knowledge about Integrated River Management based on Restoration, Rehabilitation and Maintenance of River Balance
3	Preparation of a Report/Book on “Water Governance in RCUWM Governing Board (GB) Member States”
4	Development of a Regional Collaborative Platform for Adaptation of Urban Water Systems to Climate Change
5	Development and Implementation of a Regional Drought Monitoring, Prediction and Risk Management System
6	New Technologies in Water and Wastewater Treatment and Recycling
7	Skill Improvement for Urban Water Practitioners and Technicians
8	Improving Water Quality in the Region: from Capacity Building to Capacity Development and Developing Standards for Water Sector

Annex 5: Discussions and Highlights

*Sorted according to the meeting record

UNESCO-IHP (Mr. Abou Amani, Director of Division of Water Sciences and Secretary of UNESCO-IHP) - *Online*

- Expressing thanks for RCUWM tremendous works and asking member states to work with the Centre to implement IHP IX
- The UN conference on “Our watershed moment: uniting the world for water” will be held in New York in March 2023
- From UNESCO perspective, transdisciplinary approach and new water culture at all levels should be implemented to address the complex interrelated water challenges the world has been facing
- Water connects and is at the centre of SDGs and other related international Agendas such as Paris Agreement on Climate Change (2016), the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030), and water-related SDGs. A new agenda entitled international committee on new global framework for biodiversity that has been recently discussed and approved in Montreal, Canada.
- Therefore, addressing water-related issues is a prerequisite in achieving such important agendas. We cannot address water issues without utilizing a comprehensive and holistic approach which is followed by UNESCO-IHP programme since 1975 focusing on better understanding of hydrological system including all different components including environment, ecosystems, etc. in order to better manage water resources and build capacity.
- IHP is looking for a new interdisciplinary approach in addressing complex interrelated water challenges.
- Introducing IHP IX (2022-2029) approved by IHP council based on member states’ needs and challenges. The title of the ninth phase of IHP is “Science for a Water Secure World in a Changing Environment”, emphasizing on how to utilize science for evidence-based decision-making for water resources management.
- IHP has three interrelated documents including strategic plan (2022-2029), operational implementation plan, and a financial plan that all comprises ninth phase of IHP.
- IHP IX has five priority areas and 34 expected outputs that are interrelated for contribution by UNESCO member states. The priority areas are as follows:
 1. Scientific research and innovation

We need to use new technologies such as remote sensing, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning, etc. to better understanding the hydrological cycle to address hydrological extremes, water quality, urban and rural water management, etc.

2. Water Education in the Fourth Industrial Revolution

New generation of water professional is needed to help member states to address water issues. We also need a new culture of water aspects that should be taught at all levels from

kindergarten to high-level educational plans to everybody that can recognize the importance of water.

3. Bridging the data-knowledge gap

If the member states can discuss the climate change, they should collect necessary data and information to make a sound decision and put the adaptation measures into agenda. Therefore, they should consider to spend money for integrated data collection network which is an investment.

4. Inclusive water management under conditions of global change

Climate change, land use changes, economic growth and all rapid changes should be understood better through new tools and methodologies to help member states to better manage water resources. This also needs cooperation between member states sharing a water system.

5. Water Governance based on science for mitigation, adaptation and resilience

This highlights evidence-based governance. Member states should put institutional structure, laws and so on in evidence and science-based by integrating aspects related for building resilience.

- Expertise and capacities and specialization of RCUWM has a key role to contribute in implementing IHP IX.
- Some proposals and activities are directly in line with some of IHP IX activities. So, there is an opportunity to work together to have a joint implementation.
- At global level, RCUWM is an active member of UNESCO water family to contribute to implement IHP IX. The Centre could play a key role in one of the IHP working group on “Groundwater and Human Settlements”. So, we acknowledge that the Centre to be a member of this working group to work with IHP secretariat. Worth mentioning that IHP has 8 thematic working groups.
- At regional level, RCUWM as a key player support member states to address water challenges like climate change.
- As the centre is hosting International Drought Initiative (IDI), the centre should play a key role to revive this flagship initiative. In this regard, we encourage the Centre which is also a potential advisor to governments in the region for some highlighted issues, so the centre should a key role for capacity building at regional scale.
- Member states has an opportunity to attend the upcoming Water Intergovernmental Conference in New York in which all water committees are gathered together. So the member states could raise their key messages to be followed by UNESCO. In this regard, there are four important messages in addressing water issues as stated below:
 1. Critical importance of science for transdisciplinary approach in addressing water challenges to form an intergovernmental mechanism for science-based water assessment
 2. Groundwater is a missing component of water. UNESCO emphasizes conjunctive water management including both surface and groundwater.
 3. To fill urgently the capacity gap in terms of expertise and human resources in water resources management as came up in the UN-Water SDG 6 Capacity

Development Initiative (i.e., the inter-agency coordination platform on freshwater, sanitation, and hygiene-related capacity)

4. Role of gender aspect in water management and governance

- Inviting all member states to highlight IHP program. UNESCO would mobilize all the expertise and capacities of the UNESCO water family like national IHP committees to accompany member states to address water challenges.

Iraq (H.E. Awn Theab Abdullah, Minister of Water Resources)

- Thanking the Iranian government as well as GB Chair for inviting us to the GBM 2023.
- Water is a key element for sustainable development and the need for taking sound water consumption into account in the region which is of arid and semi-arid climate. In this regard, there is a lack of public education and awareness raising.
- Urban water is an important element of water management and its supply is a key mission of water authorities.
- Water revenues sometimes reached levels of scarcity and drought, that affect even the provision of water needed for urban areas, as well as the securing of urban water requires securing the necessary water within the course of common rivers with reasonable and appropriate quantities
- Urban water is one of the particular interests of the RCUWM located in this part of the world facing with droughts and water resources reduction and simultaneously increasing population and average raising rate of water consumption in all sectors.
- Urban water particularly requires sound management and development and consumption optimization extensively. Optimal consumption of the existing water resources is a necessity from RCUWM viewpoint.
- Regional cooperation, management and efforts through RCUWM capacities and capabilities are necessary to address regional challenges including optimum use of water, coping with consecutive droughts and overcoming the impacts of climate change.
- Iraq as the Al – Rafedin (Tigris and Euphrates) country has faced an extreme reduction of water resources in recent years which is turning to a prevalent event. To elaborate more, the level of drought severity and water deficit in Iraq which is located downstream of the mentioned rivers imposed some problems on Iraq in recent years. Moreover, impacts of the macro-scale and unlimited projects in upstream countries in transboundary river basins besides impacts of climate change in our region have caused several adverse impacts in Iraq.
- Supplying urban water requires supplying fresh water on a common and appropriate scale. Rivers originate from headwaters in an integrated unit covering the river basin. No matter if it is a basin covering several countries and different settlements that profit from this common river, it is required to implement the rules of operating transboundary rivers. Achieving this target requires joint practices and common

permanent collaborations between all of the countries located in the transboundary river basin to surpass problems and decrease negative impacts.

- We have been receiving low water resources from transboundary rivers mainly Tigris and Euphrates. In order to cope with drought in urban areas, it is necessary these rivers are managed and operated in a collaborative manner by all involved countries according to common and international laws and treaties. In this regard, conjunctive data and information management is required to overcome such challenge.
- It is necessary to develop a collaborative platform including scientific ideas at a regional scale for achieving the water-related objectives of UNESCO.
- Comments on Proposals:
 - We will contribute to proposal 7.

Tajikistan (H.E. Mr Daler Juma, Minister of Energy and Water Resources)

- Thanking the GB Chair for invitation and providing the opportunity to attend the GBM 2023.
- Water plays not only sustaining life but also in progress the overall socio-economic development of nations.
- Access to water becomes a huge challenge for all especially given the devastating impacts of climate change and control population growth, management of existing water resources and lack of funding for water sector.
- Tajikistan is one of the top five most vulnerable nations to the impacts of climate change in which all of energy production depend on water. Therefore, Tajikistan government has been active to promote water issues through national and international arenas.
- UN General Assembly has adopted 10 resolutions on water which were initiated by Tajikistan during past two decades. One of the major resolution is the ongoing “International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development (2018-2028)” which Tajikistan initiated to govern and support and accelerate access to achieve the goals of the global development agenda. In this regard, a water biannual conference was launched to review the progress made addressing the existing challenges in achieving the goals of the Decade in Dushanbe in June 2022. It was marked an important milestone to prepare for reviewing the mid-term of the Water Decade in 2023.
- The reviews of water issues and the outcomes of the Second Dushanbe Water Conference helped governors most needed action and provided important data for the UN Water Conference which will be taken place in New York in March 2023 in which international communities gather to discuss on water issues.
- As one of the key messages of the Second Dushanbe Water Conference was to call on international community to unite the efforts, renew the commitments and setup the actions to achieve the SDG goals of the Decade.

- The UN Water Conference is an excellent opportunity to review and evaluate the progress we made, review the gaps and obstacles we have encountered in realizing the goals of the Water Decade and strength cooperation and partnership to increase the efforts to achieve international and agreed water related goals and targets including those contained in 2030 development agenda.
- Tajikistan and the Netherlands will be leading the preparation of this global event.
- As for Tajikistan government, we are committed to build reforms and actions in the water sector at local and national levels. We also committed to improve water legislation, creating institutional mechanisms for managing water resources at national and basin levels and restoring and developing water management infrastructure.
- We planned to adopt the national water strategy, launching national water supply and sanitation program and implemented national program for the development of our education sector. These domestic programs are aimed to improve the energy resources management and irrigation efficiency by 2030.
- Comments on Proposals:
 - In terms of education, we are ready to cooperate and share our experiences with other member states.

Qatar (Mr. Essa Hilal Al-Kuwari, President of Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation "KAHRAMAA")

- Thanking the RCUWM achievements and providing new proposals including sharing knowledge and experiences between member states in the field of water management especially non-conventional water resources (proposal 6)
- Presenting some water challenges and issues in Qatar as follows:
 - In 2022, water resources volume was estimated 1,100,000,000 m³ of which 56% was supplied through exploitation of sea water by desalination plants. The remaining part was belonged to rain water and treated wastewater. Therefore, Qatar has achieved the SDG6 (i.e., ensure access to water and sanitation for all)
 - Using modern practices on wastewater treatment in three stages as well as utilizing the most part of treated wastewater in irrigation and agriculture and cooling areas
 - Decreasing the groundwater resources due to shortage of rainfall (there is no river and lake in Qatar)
 - The only approach is to optimize available water consumption. In this regard, each drop of water is used through optimum operation of treated wastewater, treating industrial wastewater, harvesting rain water, and aquifer recharge
 - Food security has been linked and interrelated to water security. Hence, each effective measure should be implemented to achieve these two goals which will be resulted in national security in the region.

- In Qatar, water security interconnecting to energy security has been strategically followed.
- The 13th GB meeting would be a step to discuss water solutions, improve our capabilities in coping with ongoing regional challenges that water and food security are facing with and utilizing advanced technologies to achieve the common goals.
- Comments on Proposals:
 - In Qatar, we conducted good researches and we support the Centre in terms of water management
 - The Government of Qatar gives great importance on this issue and we are ready to share our experiences and capacities. Therefore, we request the Centre to invite us to participate in the next workshops.

Armenia (H.E. Mr. Vahagn Gevorgyan, Chairman of Water Committee)

- Thanking the GB Chair for invitation and providing the opportunity to attend the GBM 2023 for regional cooperation.
- Announcing the preparedness for sharing knowledge and experiences in terms of scientific and technologic with GB member states concerning the challenges of urban water management
- GB is of high importance that could be as a tool for developing regional cooperation to overcome the water-related challenges and find innovative solutions for management of water and environment
- Armenia presented three proposals in 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
- The policies of Armenia government will be along with the adopted resolution and approved proposals of the GBM

Oman (Mr. Ibrahim bin Ahmad bin Mohammad Al-Moeini, Ambassador of Oman to Iran)

- Mentioning the approvals of the recent RCUWM GB meeting which are activating views and perspectives of member states in the Center's framework of activities. Also, the companionship and cooperation of member states to achieve the center's targets in the future will be discussed at the current meeting chaired by the chairperson of the governing board.
- Announcing that the Sultanate of Oman and on behalf of it, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources support the Center's targets and plans for the next steps through organizing educational workshops and conducting research projects

- We are aware of the water conflicts in our countries. Some phenomena have affected our countries that require to development of mechanisms for conducting studies and research to evaluate and control socio-economic impacts of them.
- Emphasizing the necessity of regional cooperation to exchange knowledge, studies, research, and transfer technology on optimal water consumption.
- Creating a planned and correct structure for national and regional capacities in the fields of management, evaluation, and development of water which is a basis and fundamental aspect of identifying water problems, feasible solutions and initiatives, and assurance of the sustainable supply of these resources.
- Appreciating the role of the Centre in fulfilling water management objectives at regional and global scales and developing national capacities via conducting workshops and training courses and other activities (through recalling actions of the Sultanate of Oman about the cooperation of the mentioned ministry with the Centre).

Lebanon (Mr. Hassan Abbas, Ambassador of Lebanon to Iran)

- Expressing appreciation to I.R. Iran and Ministry of Energy for hosting the GB meeting
- Regular international meetings are of utmost importance which serve a platform to exchange views and expertise on one of the sustainable development topics (i.e., urban water management) during the 21st century. The significance of this issue was highlighted by the international community within the context of agenda 2030 for sustainable development, SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation) including 8 agreed targets which collect a call for achieving the access to safe and affordable drinking water and access to equitable sanitation
- Highlighting some common targets like improving water quality by reducing pollution, increasing water use efficiency, implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) including through transboundary cooperation and protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems. Naturally in order to achieve these targets, there is an essential need for extension of international cooperation and capacity building support for developing countries in water and sanitation related activities and programs as clearly stated in Target 6.a (i.e., By 2030, expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water- and sanitation-related activities and programmes, including water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse technologies).
- In Lebanon, we have traditionally faced many compound and complex challenges in the water and sanitation sectors such as inefficient water use, due to network leakages, and agricultural waste and unaccounted for water which have been exacerbated by the influx of more than 1 million of refugees during the past decade exerting extra pressure on the under-capacitated water and sanitation across the country.

- The lack of adequate international and development of funding and the financial crisis in the country in 2019 have further exacerbated these challenges and prevent the government from addressing them appropriately.
- It is of utmost necessity to expand regional and international cooperation in the field of water management as in many other fields due to the simple fact that many of the challenges faced by our countries are cross-boundary. The cross-boundary challenges are not exclusively political while they are increasingly becoming environmental and climatic and nature that must be addressed correct.
- Comments on Proposals:
 - It is suggested the proposals are forwarded to the relevant ministries of the GB member states that could be more investigated through communicating with RCUWM for method of contribution and adoption of a sound decision.

Bangladesh (H.E. Mr. Muhammad Tajul Islam, Minister of Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives) - Online

- Thanking the GB Chair for invitation and providing the opportunity to present the status of Bangladesh in the GBM 2023
- The last one and half decade the economy of the country has collapsed and migration has increased from rural to urban areas.
- Groundwater quality is decreasing and the water table is declining seriously due to over abstraction. We are trying to decrease exploitation of groundwater resources.
- We have a commitment to shift from groundwater to surface water by 2030 to at least 70 percent.
- Government has a plan to equip all rural areas with water facilities similar to urban areas.
- Measures are being taken for controlling water and using it in urban areas
- Necessity of revising the plans along with using future planning and world advanced solutions to address the current challenges
- Water supply is crucial and difficult in rural areas which is very expensive in populous countries. In this regard, international entities can dedicate some funds.
- Necessity of taking measures for all people to access clean and safe water through collaboration with UNESCO and GB member states by investing on the relevant projects
- It is required to invest on desalination projects with affordable price. In this regard, we can engage scientific community
- Expressing those decisions adopted in the GB meeting could be beneficiary for Bangladesh
- Comments on Proposals:
 - We would like to be involved in the proposals 2 (i.e., river restoration), 6 (i.e., new technologies in water and wastewater treatment and recycling), and 8 (i.e., criteria in the water sector and improving water quality)

Afghanistan (Mr. Mujeeb – Al – Rehman Omar, Deputy for Water Affairs,
Ministry of Energy and Water)- *Online*

- Thanking the GB Chair for the inviting all member states for attending the GBM 2023 as well as UNESCO for providing this opportunity for finding water solutions at a regional scale
- Water has been considered in the national and regional agendas due to limited resources and lack of fair access to it
- Water is of high importance for the world and Afghanistan due to reduction in precipitation, climate change effects (droughts and floods), and demand growth in water resources
- During the four past decades, instabilities and political conflicts have caused an obstacle to sound and comprehensive water management for all people to have access to water in Afghanistan. In this regard, economic sanctions have made it more difficult to access water
- In Afghanistan, climate change has made water management hard and water resources have significantly decreased
- Due to population growth in large cities in Afghanistan including Kabul, Herat, and Kandahar, water supply has been converted to a major challenge so Kabul has faced water shortage. In addition, there are water resources pollution and a reduction of recharge of aquifers. Some projects to solve drinking water problems in Kabul have remained unfinished due to sanctions
- One of the solutions for solving the water problem in largest cities is the inter-basin transfer. For example, transferring water from Panjshir valley to Kabul city that requires friendly and neighboring countries to be completed
- We ask friendly countries in the region and world to assist Afghanistan in transferring successful practices and lessons learned on water crisis management, urban water and wastewater management, measures for adaptation to climate change and river basin management as well as sharing technical and professional experiences on water and environment sectors
- Water diplomacy in a fair and dynamic manner could be effective and useful for solving water problems among countries and bringing countries closer to each other
- Solving problems due to water shortage in transboundary and river basins and shared water resources need mutual or multilateral cooperation between countries having such shared river basins that require collaboration of international organizations
- The policy of Afghanistan has been the policy of understanding and friendship with neighboring countries in the field of water through constructive negotiations, increasing cooperation and transfer of experiences in the field of water and wastewater management, measures for adaptation to climate change based on mutual benefits, so that fair and sustainable sharing of water would be possible for all beneficiary countries.

ECO (Mr. Khusrav Noziri, ECO Secretary General)

- Thanking the GB Chair for the invitation and hosting the participants and giving the opportunity to present the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in the GB meeting
- Thanking RCUWM for providing necessary assistance to organize this vital event
- Sustainable water management is essential to conserve and protect the existing water resources which are limited on the earth. To meet such goal, the extensive water partnership is highly recommended to make the distribution of water resources for our joint welfare, well-being
- We appreciate the efforts, activities and achievements of RCUWM in promoting and facilitating the relevant studies, research, projects and programs as capacity building, partnerships and networking at regional and international levels.
- Given population growth, climate change, and environmental challenges, the RCUWM role is becoming increasingly crucial for efficient water management in the region.
- ECO is one of the oldest intergovernmental regional economic organizations which brings 10 member countries under the umbrella of its cooperative framework expanding over 8 million km² of lands connecting Asia to Europe including half a billion inhabitants.
- The fundamental goal of ECO is to promote supportive working conditions and create conducive environment for collective progress and prosperity in the region. Relevant organizations are engaged in a variety of activities and inclusive multi-faceted regional development.
- The optimal utilization of natural resources especially water remains a top of the ECO agenda of regional cooperation. The ECO member states have long been collaborating on water management issues.
- We are also in process of establishing the ECO center of excellence for efficient water utilization for agriculture especially expecting early and favorable outcomes to this end
- Based on the ECO vision 2025 and in line with UN SDGs, the ECO is developing its targets through the adoption of prescribed standards and criteria to improve the relevant regional infrastructures. Within this context we are trying to ensure consolidated and effective national and regional policies in close coordination with the participation of all ECO member states as well as in collaboration with regional and global partners.
- 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, the ECO secretariat welcomes the 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.

- This interactive and fruitful gathering would give productive outcomes for making advancement, aims and objectives of RCUWM.

IsDB (Mr. Farshad Kalivash, Field Representative)

- Expressing privilege and honor on behalf of IsDB to attend the 13th GB meeting
- Describing IsDB's background, performance, activities and future plans
- The IsDB as a financial institution works for promoting socio-economic development of people in 57 member countries and Muslim communities
- The IsDB Board of Governors in its 47 annual meeting in June 2022 endorsed the IsDB strategic realignment for the period 2023-2025. This has three focus areas including: i) boosting recovery, ii) tackling poverty and building resilience and iii) driving green economic growth
- The bank's interventions in the next three years will be driven by two key pillars which are as follows:
 - The first pillar aims at supporting green resilient and sustainable infrastructure. It will cover six critical infrastructure sectors namely clean and renewable energy, sustainable multi-modal transport, agriculture and rural development, information and communication technology, social infrastructure and urban development water and sanitation
 - The second pillar will cover promoting inclusive human capital development focusing on five complementary sectors and thematic areas namely universal health care and services, resilient and quality education, nutrition and food security, social protection, micro, small and medium enterprises and job creation
- IsDB approved its first comprehensive urban sector policy (USP) in September 2020 which is intended to guide all IsDB urban programs and operations focusing on the overarching goal of achieving a sustainable and inclusive urban development in its member countries. It is underpinned by five pillars each of which contributes to the achievement of sustainable and inclusive urban development in different ways. These pillars are urban economy, urban mobility, urban housing and slum upgrading, urban water and sanitation, and disaster climate and environmental resilience
- The Bank has also developed its urban sector operational strategy in April 2021 serving as a guiding framework for implementation of the USP over the coming five years. This strategy is designed to align the actions and practices of urban sector with global and corporate urban development policy goals specifically SDGs 6, 11 and 13
- IsDB prepared a document called "Urban Technical Studies Report of IsDB Member Countries" in February 2021 which would be beneficial for the participants of this event. All these three documents are accessible on IsDB website
- Announcing that IsDB is ready to support the activities of the Centre through transferring knowledge and expertise in the field of urban water management and participants especially those from the member countries
- Expressing sincere thanks and appreciation to the organizers for the excellent preparations made for this event

Sri Lanka (H.E. Mr. G.M.V. Wishwanah Aponsu, Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Iran)

- Expressing pleasure to join the GB ministerial meeting on behalf of Sri Lanka
- Declaring sincere appreciation to the Government of Iran for consistent efforts and bringing us to the meeting
- With respect to the agenda items, Sri Lanka delegation will intervene the discussion believing that outcomes of the meeting would be productive
- Recalling that Sri Lanka is ready to continue engaging with all GB member states
- Comments on Proposals:
 - Expressing appreciation to send the compendium to the member states for contribution to the RCUWM future plans and activities and contributing to the proposals
 - Sri Lanka delegation after the consultation will communicate with RCUWM to send the comments on the proposals

OWS (Mr. Saif Rashid Saif Al Shaqsi, president of Oman Water Society)

- We cannot specify water management in one project, because water management has different dimensions including:
 - Water resources development which is very important for us especially in the countries like Oman located in arid and semi-arid region and facing with floods and droughts. We need to exchange the information and experiences in this regard.
 - Water demand management specifically on groundwater resources. Because sometimes groundwater resources are exploited in an unauthorized manner and are not used optimally. Therefore, we need to make proper use of groundwater resources scientifically
- It is recommended to determine parties that would implement the proposals. In other words, the practitioners or experts from specific countries who are going to implement the proposals should be specified clearly.
- It sounds climate change has been included in most of proposals. How can we consider it in those proposals? How would it be possible for taking advantage of experts on these issues? We need the proposals to be elaborated more on the implementation phase, in particular.

Pakistan (Ms. Zaib Tayyab, Counsellor of the Embassy)

- Thanking Government of Iran for arranging this meeting
- Expressing gratitude for valuable support of UNESCO and RCUWM secretariat on this regional cooperation in the water management issues
- The groundwater management is a key to achieve water and food security. So, Government of Pakistan endorses execution of proposal 1 on groundwater management at the regional scale. Pakistan council of research in water resources has done an exceptional job by investigating and mapping of the entire Indus Plain Aquifer.

Ministry of Water Resources of Pakistan would be happy to introduce a focal point for contributing to this proposal.

Iran (Mr. Mohammad Javanbakht, Deputy Minister of Energy for Water and Wastewater Affairs and CEO of Iran Water Resources Management Company)

- He declared that proposals 3 and 5 on water governance and drought management, respectively would be supported by Water Sector of Ministry of Energy of I.R. Iran as a contribution to RCUWM activities including conducting research project and capacity building.

Iranian National Commission for UNESCO (Mr. Ali Akbar Matkan, Secretary General of the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO)

- Expressing appreciation to Mr. Hajrasouliha and his colleagues for organizing this meeting
- Iranian National Commission for UNESCO will collaborate with RCUWM to implement all proposals presented in the meeting.
- Water network system in some countries is quite old, so they need renovation and restoration of such system in terms of infrastructural aspect and water loss through leak detection.
- Water quality and climate change are important issues as well. Each country should take some policies and measures to adapt with this phenomenon. In this regard, different countries should collaborate together based on their requirements to mitigate impacts of climate change.
- We have limited facilities and capacities to assess water resources in terms of rainfall and snowfall amounts by stations in our countries that should be measured by online and real-time monitoring. Also, we have some problems with our dams in terms of non-proper assessment which will result in environmental problems. So, we should take advantage of the facilities and potential which exist in the global community.

UNESCO-IHP (Ms. Sarantuyaa Zandaryaa, Representative of Division of Water Sciences, Secretary of IHP and in charge of IHP Activities on Water Security for Human Settlements and Urban Water Management) - *Online*

- Expressing pleasure to see the fruitful proposals including very crucial issues and declaring that all proposals are in line with the IHP IX strategic plan.
- IHP is in the process of launching Megacities Alliance for Water and Climate: sustainable water management for resilient cities
- 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 synergies and opportunities for joint implementation collaboration between the IHP secretariat and RCUWM.

- IHP secretariat already sent an invitation to Member States and UNESCO Water Centres and Chairs to be part of the IHP IX working groups, particularly invited RCUWM to be part of the one on groundwater and human settlements.

Turkey (Ms. Ozge Imamoglu, Head of Department for International Organizations of Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry), *Online*

- The vice minister of agriculture and forestry missed the GB meeting because of a recent unexpected natural disaster (earthquake) occurred in Turkey
- Expressing sincere thanks to the international entities and organizations who demonstrated solidarity and conveyed their condolences
- Presenting thanks to the RCUWM secretariat for valuable efforts for developing the new proposals
- The proposals should be elaborated more carefully by taking into consideration of the mandate of RCUWM (i.e., urban water management) and discussing with our experts for presenting our concrete comments on them in due course for further collaboration and fruitful dialogue with RCUWM

UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office, UTCO (Ms. Mehrdadi, Director of Natural Sciences, UTCO)

- The RCUWM as a category II center is one of the most active centers under the auspices of UNESCO in Iran
- UTCO as always is full prepared to support the RCUWM for the proposals presented in the meeting and future cooperation

Ministry of Energy of I.R. Iran (Mr. Mohammad Ali Farahnakian, Adviser to the Minister of Energy in International Affairs)

- One of the GB meeting objectives as well as RCUWM's objectives is to assist improving urban water management
- Since some GB member states are suffering from earthquake, it is proposed that the experiences on water supply to those earthquake-affected areas are collected and shared to each other and published as a specific document under supervision of UNESCO. To do this, a research team should follow the procedure to obtain the lesson learned, practices and outcomes on water supply in the prone-areas against incidents and natural disasters. According to the results of the document, we can make a proper policy and decision in order to promote the resilience of the water supply network for member states and global community.

Japan Cooperation Centre for the Middle East, JCCME (Mr. Torkzaban, Senior Assistant Manager of Tehran Office)

- Expressing thanks to Ministry of Energy for inviting JCCME to this meeting which is the second time JCCME is participating as an observer member

- JCCME is a subsidiary of the Ministry of Economic, Trade and Industry (METI) of Japan. The main goal of JCCME is to be like a bridge between Japanese government and the Middle East countries governments to make a safe investment for Japanese companies in the Middle East countries.
- We have been working in Iran since 2013. During the past decade we invited more than 13,000 of Iranian experts to participate in training courses in Japan. We also held more than 20 webinars during the pandemic of COVID-19 so that 13,000 participants attended these webinars.
- Japan has a great experience on water and wastewater sector. We already had cooperation with Iran Water Resources Management Company (WRMC) regarding proposal 2. We also had experience on proposals 6, 7, and 8 with National Water and Wastewater Engineering Company (NWWEC).
- Since we are not as a member of RCUWM, we cannot cooperate directly with RCUWM. However, we have a MOU with MOE. Hence, it is possible for JCCME to share its information and technologies and hold seminars and training courses in Japan and Iran as well as organizing webinars with cooperation of MOE through the international division.
- The JCCME information might be possible to be shared with RCUWM GB member states, since we have offices in Oman, Iraq and some other countries in the Middle East.

India (Mr. John Mai, Deputy of Ambassador of India to Iran)

- All areas presented in the proposals are important ones in India that we have been working on them for a long time.
- It would be fruitful to consider a timeline to give our technical comments on the proposals. This will be followed up through determining a focal point with whom RCUWM could communicate.

Annex 6: Proposal Details (Comments/Commitments initially raised by RCUWM Governing Board members and International Organizations in the Meeting)

No	Proposal Title	RCUWM Counterpart	Involved RCUWM Members
1	Best Practices in Groundwater Management at regional scale		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 collaboration opportunity to be explored	Iran
4	Development of a Regional Collaborative Platform for Adaptation of Urban Water Systems to Climate Change	UNESCO-IHP collaboration opportunity to be explored	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 collaboration opportunity to be explored	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 and Developing Standards for Water Sector		Bangladesh

Annex 7: Photos of 13th Governing Board Meeting



2023 Governing Board Meeting Final Report



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