



Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (IHP)

2nd Extraordinary Session of the IHP Intergovernmental Council

Online meeting, 30 November – 1 December 2020

REPORT

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1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

1. The Second Extraordinary Session of the Intergovernmental Council of the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (IHP) of UNESCO took place online on 30 November and 1 December 2020. The meeting was attended by 73 Member States of UNESCO, of which 34 IHP Intergovernmental Council members and 39 observers. Representatives of ten (10) UNESCO category 2 water-related Centres, three (3) UNESCO Water Chairs, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and five (5) non-governmental organizations attended the meeting as observers. The list of participants is provided in Annex 3.

1.1 Welcoming remarks by Ms Shamila Nair-Bedouelle, Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences, UNESCO

2. Ms Shamila Nair-Bedouelle, Assistant Director-General of UNESCO for Natural Sciences, welcomed the participants to the Second Extraordinary Session of the IHP Intergovernmental Council and thanked all for their attendance under the difficult circumstances imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. She noted that the purpose of this extraordinary online session is to consult the Member States on the preparation of the ninth phase of IHP (IHP-IX) for 2022-2029, whereas the next ordinary session of the IHP Council will be held *in presentia* next year, when it will be possible to do so and if Member States decided so.

3. Highlighting that the IHP is a 'programme of the Member States', Ms Nair-Bedouelle stressed that contributions of the UNESCO Water Family to the preparation of the IHP-IX Strategic Plan are of the utmost importance to ensure that the IHP-IX phase reflects water priorities at all levels—national, regional and global—in the most appropriate and forward-looking manner. She also emphasized the need for UNESCO to work with other UN agencies to ensure the success of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; in particular, to support actions on capacity development, as highlighted by the UNESCO Director-General at the official launch of the UN SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework in July 2020. Recalling the inclusive process taken, the Assistant Director-General noted that a 3rd order draft of the IHP-IX Strategic Plan will be provided to the IHP Intergovernmental Council for further consultation and approval before its submission to the Executive Board at the 2021 spring session and then to the UNESCO General Conference in fall 2021.

1.2. Address by Mr Fadi Comair, Chairperson of the IHP Intergovernmental Council

4. Mr Fadi Comair, Chairperson of the IHP Intergovernmental Council, welcomed the participants to the extraordinary online session of the IHP Council. He thanked the Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences and the IHP Secretariat for their excellent work despite the challenges brought by the Covid-19 pandemic. He pointed out that water has a special role to play in these difficult circumstances and IHP needs to be reinforced even more.

5. Mr Comair recalled that the session's objective is to discuss the way forward to develop the IHP-IX Strategic Plan for the preservation and better management of water resources and invited all to provide comments and contributions to it. He emphasized the importance of IHP National Committees as pillars of the IHP, highlighting the need to bring national and regional priorities at the centre of the IHP action. He furthermore stressed the relevance of IHP-IX to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction, and the need for IHP to support the UN SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework.

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA OF THE SESSION

6. The agenda was adopted without modification.

3. EXAMINATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE IHP-IX STRATEGY

3.1. The process and 2nd Order Draft of IHP-IX Strategic Plan

7. Mr. Abou Amani, Director *a.i.* of Division of Water Sciences and Secretary *a.i.* of the IHP, presented the ongoing process of the IHP-IX Strategic Plan preparation, stressing the inclusiveness beginning with the zero-order draft in January 2019. He noted that the current 2nd order draft of the IHP-IX Strategic Plan, as outlined in document IHP-IC-XXIV-Ref.1 (Annex 1), builds on IHP-VIII and previous phases, comparative advantages of IHP and the UNESCO Water Family in the sciences and education. He outlined the proposed structure of the draft IHP-IX Strategic Plan and its strategic objectives and five priority areas. He, furthermore, emphasized the need to align IHP-IX results chain to the overall results chain of the Organization and to the Strategic Objectives of the UNESCO Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41 C/4). The Secretariat will be working with BSP on this and the refinement of the wording of outputs in line with RBM language to be considered within the 3rd order draft.

3.2. The development of the IHP-IX Priority Areas

8. The five priority areas proposed in the 2nd order draft of the IHP-IX Strategic Plan, as outlined in document IHP/IC-XXIII/Ref.1bis (Annex 2), were presented by the members of the IHP-IX Taskforce.

9. Mr Shinjiro Kanae (Japan, Region IV – Asia and the Pacific) presented **Priority Area 1: Scientific Research and Innovation** and its ten expected outputs, focusing on: citizen science, socio-hydrology, ‘unsolved problems in hydrology’, hydrological predictions and forecasting, ecohydrology and nature-based solutions, water quality and water pollution, impacts of global changes on water resources, non-conventional water resources, water-related disasters, and new technologies. He stressed the particular effort made to adopt a cross-cutting and holistic approach and the links to the SDGs.

10. Ms Agatha Tommasi (Brazil, Region III – Latin America and the Caribbean) presented **Priority Area 2: Water Education in the Fourth Industrial Revolution**, which is divided in the following topics on: education for a better understanding of the role of water; implementation of water education for sustainable development; developing and applying new tools to improve education; understanding the value and difficulty of behavioural transformation towards a more eco-conscious society; and water education in support of governance success. She noted the linkages of the priority area to the SDG 6 (water and sanitation), SDG 4 (education), SDG 9 (industry and innovation) and SDG 12 (sustainable production and consumption).

11. Mr Mark Honti (Hungary, Region II – Eastern Europe) presented **Priority Area 3: Bridging the Data-Knowledge Gap** and its five expected results on: data on water quantity, quality and use; the development and use of scientific research methods to collect, analyse, and interpret data; the development, dissemination, and capacity building on scientific tools (like modelling, forecasting, data assimilation and visualization, quality assurance protocols to connect existing databases and outreach protocols); experimental basins for hydrological research and holistic water management; and new methods for translating scientific information for decision-making and policy formulation. He noted that the objective of this Priority Area is to improve data accessibility and transparency to foster open science.

12. Ms Sandra de Vries (the Netherlands, Region I – Western Europe and North America) presented **Priority Area 4: Inclusive water management under conditions of global change**, which focuses on: increasing inclusive water management; enhancing water cycle management, including non-conventional water resources; and managing water resources while recognizing global changes. The linkages to the SDG 6 (water and sanitation), SDG 11 (cities), SDG 15 (ecosystems) and SDG 17 (partnerships) were highlighted.

13. Ms Agnes Mbugua (Kenya, Region Va – Africa) presented **Priority Area 5: Water Governance Based on Science for Mitigation, Adaptation and Resilience**, which focuses on: good water governance for sustainable water management; the comprehensive nature of water governance; science as the foundation for sustainable water governance; adaptive governance based on science, as a key to future management; participation and partnership for water governance; and water cooperation and diplomacy. The crosscutting nature of water governance was emphasized, noting the linkages to several SDGs.

3.3. Questions and answers

14. Following the IHP-IX Taskforce presentations, specific questions relating to the presentations were addressed.

15. The representative of Poland indicated that the draft document still needs improvements, stressing the critical relevance of resilience and the importance of understanding ecosystems.

16. Several countries asked clarifications about the term of “inclusive water management”. Mr Manuel Menéndez Prieto, Vice-Chairperson of Region I – Western Europe and North America, noted that the term “inclusive” is restrictive and focuses on people only, and suggested that terms such as “holistic” or “integrated” water management would be more appropriate and comprehensive. Mr Zhongbo Yu, Vice-Chairperson of Region IV - Asia and the Pacific, stated that “inclusive” and “integrated” are good terms to consider and asked whether the five priority areas be integrated. France asked clarifications and definitions of the terms “inclusive” and “integrated”, as well as whether the objective of the meeting was to negotiate and discuss the text of the draft IHP-IX strategic plan. The IHP-IX Taskforce indicated that Priority Area 4 intends to include both people and systems and added that the wordings of specific terms are for further discussion. The IHP Secretariat noted that the objective of the meeting is to listen to views of the Member States on the draft IHP-IX Strategic Plan, upon which basis the 3rd order draft, incorporating all comments, will be prepared and circulated to the IHP Intergovernmental Council for its consideration and approval.

17. The representative of the IHP National Committee of China asked about the linkages between the current IHP-VIII and next IHP-IX phases, stressing that IHP-IX should build on IHP-VIII achievements. Highlighting UNESCO’s mandate on culture, he asked how “water and culture” is reflected in IHP-IX draft strategy. The IHP Secretariat recalled the IHP-VIII mid-term evaluation, which was carried out in 2018, and noted that its recommendations will be incorporated to develop relevant elements in IHP-IX. It was noted that water and culture is currently included in IHP-VIII Theme on water education and will be continued in IHP-IX.

18. Ms Úrsula Zozaya Jiménez, Vice-Chairperson of Region III — Latin America and the Caribbean, asked about the focus of IHP-IX on translating scientific information and data to support decision-making. The IHP-IX Taskforce pointed out that the effective translation of scientific information to support decision-making and science-based water governance are encouraged in IHP-IX.

19. Mr Mitja Brilly, Vice Chairperson of Region II - Eastern and Central Europe, asked about differences between water management and water governance and how Priority Areas 4 and 5 are defined in terms of their focuses on water management and water governance, respectively.

20. The representative of Argentina sought clarification about how the concepts presented in the draft IHP-IX Strategic Plan can benefit water users and people on the ground, pointing out that the document needs to be understandable for them. The IHP Secretariat noted the emphasis on outreach and communication in order to provide knowledge and information to those making decisions and stressed the role of IHP National Committees in the implementation of the programme at the national level. It was noted that simpler language needed to be used in IHP-IX and that the IHP Secretariat has taken note of it.

3.4. Statements by IHP Intergovernmental Council Member States

21. Several delegations appreciated that the written comments by the IHP Council members and observers are made available on the UNESCO website, which is useful for future discussions on the draft IHP-IX Strategic Plan, as well as for transparency and keeping track of how Member States' comments are reflected and incorporated in the subsequent version. Many delegations, including China, Turkey, Argentina, El Salvador and Germany, recommended that further consultation meetings are useful and necessary to discuss the next draft, with Turkey highlighting that the process has to be transparent and driven by the Member States and requesting that sufficient time to be given for Member States' inputs. China, Argentina, Mexico and Paraguay noted that they would provide further written comments on the draft document.

22. The representatives of France and Germany, supported by other delegations, stressed that science should remain at the core of IHP and its future IHP-IX phase, noting that political issues, such as water diplomacy, are not within the IHP mandate. They underlined that IHP should not go into the domain of politics and expressed concern against IHP becoming too political. The representatives of Germany and United Kingdom recommended that duplications with other UN agencies should be avoided, whereas IHP needs to bring its added scientific value and complement their work on scientific issues.

23. Several delegations expressed concern that the draft document of the IHP-IX Strategic Plan needs a clearer formulation of its structure, objectives, topics and outcomes, with Morocco requesting to redraft the strategic objectives and Libya suggesting to include indicators to monitor its implementation. Some delegations further pointed out that linkages between the proposed priority areas were not clear. Several delegations, including the representatives of China, Germany and Zambia, stressed that the draft IHP-IX Strategic Plan needs improvements to make it more operational, by defining concrete objectives and actions to operationalize it.

Region IV - Asia and the Pacific

24. The representative of China stressed that the world is facing increasing water challenges and the Covid-19 has affected the achievement of the SDGs, emphasizing that the IHP's role and tasks are ever more challenging and relevant. He recommended the need to further improve the IHP-IX draft strategy document to make it more operational.

25. The representative of Japan noted its satisfaction with the proposed strategic objectives and priority areas.

26. The representative of Pakistan pointed out that the draft strategy should include institutes, data management, and the human component with adequate education, not just hardware and software, stressing that humans manage the tools to generate and manage data. He noted that nature-based solutions have been less sustainable in the past. He underlined the need for science for more sustainable solutions and noted priorities on wastewater treatment and desalination.

27. The representative of the Republic of Korea recommended more focus on open science and open data in line with UNESCO's work on open science. He highlighted that 'water security' must include strategies for global water security. Furthermore, he emphasized that water education is essential for achieving the SDGs, including formal and informal education, Artificial Intelligence, biotech and big data, and suggested that UNESCO's online coursework is an important platform to be used for this. He proposed the development of a UNESCO online open access tool to address knowledge gaps, based on big data in water education.

Region I: Western Europe and North America

28. The representative of Austria suggested strengthening the component on groundwater and rivers. He recommended that integrated approaches to water management, such as the source-to-sea, should be taken into consideration. He pointed out that “inclusive water management” should not reduce the component of integrated water resources management (IWRM), noting that a component on IWRM should be kept. He supported the inclusion of data and modern technologies. incorporate the source to sea for IWRM, including component of groundwater. Inclusiveness can include innovation.

29. The representative of France expressed concern that the draft IHP-IX Strategic Plan is no longer an experts’ document, but also includes political issues such as “hydro-diplomacy” and “conflict resolution” over water resources. He cautioned that IHP should not engage in these topics. He highlighted that the IHP’s added value is its scientific aspect and therefore providing data and knowledge to those who apply it. He furthermore stressed a more clarity on how IHP fits into the broader work and mandate of UNESCO and how the IHP-IX draft strategy addresses increased cooperation with other UNESCO programs and conventions.

30. The representative of Germany highlighted more emphasis to be given on missing issues such as groundwater and the source-to-sea approach. She stressed that IHP should respond to the needs at the country level and be more decentralized and responsive to Member States’ priorities and support the SDG 6 achievement. She underlined the need to formulate concrete activities that will allow IHP to achieve its objectives and to operationalize the IHP-IX strategy.

31. The representative of the Netherlands noted satisfaction that the role of governance and governments is incorporated into the draft IHP Strategic Plan, as well as the prominence provided to the youth and inclusion, and the focus on groundwater. On water policy, she noted that the right wording should be used to make clear that the focus is on tools for policy, rather than on politics or on policy itself. She underlined the need for a clearer formulation and elaboration of outcomes and a further clarity in relation to resilience. She suggested that capacity building and data components need to incorporate the UN SDGs Global Acceleration Framework.

32. The representative of Spain noted its satisfaction that the document is not merely academic, but also focuses on social, ecological, economic and cultural dimensions of water. He noted that the draft strategy should seek not only to improve knowledge, but also practical applications of such knowledge, in a very dynamic and rapidly changing world, with climate change and uncertainties.

33. The representative of Turkey underlined that the draft should define more clearly its objectives, topics and expected results, as well as with clear linkages to the 2030 Agenda. She noted that water terminologies should be used in accordance with relevant UN resolutions. She underlined that IHP’s expertise on transboundary groundwater should be better highlighted in next draft. She emphasized that IHP doesn’t have the mandate to address transboundary surface waters. She asked that the concepts of “citizen science” and “unsolved problems in hydrology” should be clarified.

34. The representative of the United Kingdom agreed with other delegations that the language and the structure of the draft strategy needs to be improved and simplified. He stressed that IHP-IX outcomes and impacts are still unclear and that the IHP-IX strategy should clearly define in terms of what it aims to achieve. Emphasizing that the linkages between priority areas need to be enhanced, he suggested that each priority area should be revised to build on previous IHP phases. He furthermore highlighted that science should remain at the core of all aspects of IHP-IX as a cross-cutting element, but not confined to only one priority area, i.e., Priority Area 1 on scientific research and innovation.

Region II: Eastern and Central Europe

35. The representative of Moldova noted with concern that the current draft strategy is moving IHP from its focus on hydrology as a science and highlighted that hydrological sciences should be kept at the centre of the IHP-IX strategy.

36. The representative of the Russian Federation stressed the need to improve the consistency within the draft document of the IHP-IX Strategic Plan. He highlighted that hydrology as a science should be kept at the centre of the IHP-IX strategy and more emphasis is necessary on scientific hydrology, the hydrological cycle, and its relation to climate. He furthermore pointed out that the concept of “unsolved hydrological issues” should be clarified. He underlined that political and water diplomacy issues should be excluded. He considers that Priority Areas 4 and 5 of the draft plan are beyond the IHP’s mission, noting also duplications between them. In particular, he stressed that Priority Area 5 encompasses political issues, which are not adequate for IHP as a platform for science and research and suggested that it should rather focus on best practices and standards. On education, he noted that more water professionals are needed and the Member States should be encouraged to train more hydrological experts.

37. The representative of Slovakia expressed particular interest in priority areas on science and data gaps, including innovative technologies and hydrological research. He mentioned that this area can provide tools to address climate change impacts, highlighting also the role of experimental basins. He further noted the importance of the international river basins, such as the Danube River, and the strategic plan should support them more clearly. He also underlined the need to use to clarify new or unusual terms used in the current draft plan. He recommended that each output/outcome of the priority areas should have a summary and a title for greater clarity.

38. The representative of Slovenia suggested that the concept of a “water master plan”, which emerged long ago in the United Nations Conference on Water (Mar del Plata 1977), should be developed in the IHP-IX strategy and would be particularly useful, noting that such a plan exists in the Netherlands, but is lacking in many countries. He underscored a greater emphasis to be given on scientific aspects and recommended, for instance, that the focus to be changed from water governance to scientific approaches and disciplines, such as hydro-sociology and water economics. He also recommended a link with medical sciences, given the vital role of water for humans. He recalled that the IHP Bureau, during its previous session, requested the inclusion of all nexus into the IHP-IX draft strategy—not only the water, food and energy nexus, but also with jobs, real-state, health and others key areas. He highlighted that we live in the Anthropocene and freshwater sources are increasingly related to infrastructure, such as desalination plans, which are related to technological development and economic aspects.

Region III: Latin America and the Caribbean

39. The representative of Argentina expressed his agreement on the need to focus on scientific aspects and water education. He supported Slovenia’s recommendation to add references to the Mar del Plata Conference. He expressed general support for the draft strategy and stated that it is essential to include educational materials such as documents and videos to reach more water users at the country level.

40. The representative of El Salvador emphasized the impact of climate change and of surface water pollution in his country, leading to the increasing use of groundwater resources. There is a need to improve groundwater management and the experiences and knowledge of other countries are valuable. He agreed with the need for a greater focus on the technical character of the document, including an emphasis on water education.

41. The representative of Mexico noted that it is an ambitious strategic document. She recommended that the IHP-IX strategy needs to be adaptive; for example, to ensure that it can

be used as a tool in the Covid-19 era, and also to respond to climate change, by linking to other initiatives such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Agreement on climate change. She furthermore stressed that water should be considered in a holistic manner and linked with other key subjects. She expressed appreciation for the inclusion of references to socio-hydrology and citizen science, and the focus on young professionals and women, which should be strengthened along with water education. She further highlighted ensuring the role of IHP National Committees and the need to develop more concrete actions, which should be explicitly defined in the strategy. She noted that Mexico will provide further written comments.

42. The representative of Chile expressed general satisfaction with the draft document, noting in particular the importance of integrating issues such as water management, education and climate change. Recalling the linkages to other frameworks and programmes, Chile then questioned whether reference to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction would be required. Stressing the importance of inclusivity in the UNESCO Water Family, Chile recommended that the IHP-IX strategic plan should enable contributions and engagement of all UNESCO Water Family members in its implementation. Taking note of water's holistic nature and its integration with political processes, Chile stressed linking scientific achievements with decision-making.

Region Va: Africa

43. The representative of Senegal stressed the importance of bridging the gap between data and knowledge – in particular, the importance of translating data into information accessible to decision-makers and the general public. He underlined the need for IHP to address the digital gap between the global North and South, considering that progress to date had not met expectations, and called for a stock-taking and strategy to achieve this goal, while making a full use of best practices.

44. The representative of Zambia, speaking also as Vice-Chairperson for Region Va, expressed satisfaction with the draft document and suggested that Member States to operationalize the IHP-IX strategy through the development of action plans. Emphasizing the need for an increase by 200 percent of water professionals in Africa, Zambia emphasized water education, both formal and non-formal, and called for a deliberate strategy to address this shortfall. Finally, he stressed the importance of bridging data and knowledge gaps through enhanced cooperation with centers of excellence and professionals.

45. The representative of Ethiopia expressed agreement with the statement made by Zambia, calling for a strong strategic intervention to enhance capacity building of the water sector in Africa.

Region Vb: Arab States

46. The representative of Egypt welcomed the draft document, noting that while the IHP, the only intergovernmental scientific water programme in the UN system, should not duplicate the work of other agencies, other organizations at times also duplicate UNESCO's work and undertake activities in IHP's areas of expertise. In agreement with previous delegates representing Africa, he called for stronger linkages in IHP-IX to the Agenda 2063 "The Africa We Want" of the African Union. He stressed that the 41C/4 and C/5 be aligned to the IHP-IX Strategic Plan. He agreed with the concerns expressed by some Council members concerning the terminologies used in the draft IHP-IX strategic plan and the need to maintain a scientific focus. He also recalled that terminologies such as "water diplomacy" were used in the IHP-VIII Strategic Plan and would therefore not represent a change in the IHP focus. He recalled that the experts from the Member States contribute to the process of the development of the IHP-IX strategic plan, which has provided opportunities for comments and feedback.

47. The representative of Lebanon highlighted the importance of promoting research in key priority areas such as food security, climate change, desalination, sustainable technologies,

renewable energy and non-conventional water resources, among others. She further recalled that water diplomacy includes a significant technical dimension that is essential for transboundary water management.

48. The representative of Iraq noted the importance of public information relating to water, recalling that water security is a major concern in the country. He further called for international cooperation towards efforts such as mapping of transboundary resources and stressed the need for support to access technologies in areas such as rainfall and flood forecasting.

49. The representative of Libya noted the comprehensive nature of the draft document, but stressed the importance of focusing on implementation. Noting the country's limited supply of freshwater for agriculture, he highlighted the key importance of exploring non-conventional water resources. Stressing the significance of scientific research for water governance, he underlined the region's water scarcity challenges and the importance of international exchange and sharing of knowledge and technologies. He called for the inclusion of indicators in the draft IHP-IX Strategic Plan, through which its implementation can be monitored.

50. The representative of Morocco sought further clarification on how the IHP-IX Strategic Plan results framework should be aligned with the 41C/4. He recommended the redrafting of the strategic objectives. He furthermore asked for clarification about how the inputs received from Member States during the present session of the Council would be incorporated into the draft document. Finally, he suggested that the sustainable management of water resources should be given further prominence, as an issue that underpins all five proposed priority areas.

51. The representative of Sudan¹ recommended that the approved final version of the IHP-IX Strategy should be monitored and adapted every two years to address unforeseen circumstances. He agreed with other delegates on the importance of the ownership of IHP-IX by the scientific community. He underlined the importance and relevance of the UNESCO Water Family such as networks of scientists created by IHP Initiatives, for example G-WADI and FRIEND, and UNESCO water centers and Chairs, which could enhance the implementation of IHP-IX.

52. The representative of France sought clarification concerning the intergovernmental nature of the IHP, in particular as to whether representatives of IHP National Committees under the Programme's new name are considered political or scientific in nature. France further stressed that IHP should focus fully on scientific contribution towards diplomacy and conflict resolution. The representative of Egypt, responding to the question from France, reiterated his support to the scientific nature of IHP. Sharing the comments by France, he indicated that the water-related political issues raised by France existed in the eighth phase of IHP and did not impact the scientific nature of IHP.

3.5. Statements by Observers

53. Several observers, including Chile, Netherlands, Russia and Switzerland, asked for transparent online publication of the comments on the IHP-IX draft Strategic Plan submitted by the Member States to the IHP Secretariat.

54. The representative of the Holy See thanked UNESCO for organizing this online session of the IHP Council under the present difficult conditions. He underlined that the ongoing efforts should be accelerated to allow the fulfillment of common goals related to water, emphasizing that water is an indispensable element of human development and peace. He underlined that who better than UNESCO could promote the social and cultural values of water and the value of this common good.

¹ Sudan provided a written statement by e-mail, following technical problems which did not allow audio and video connection for his statement to be made orally.

55. The representative of Poland reiterated that the draft document of the IHP-IX strategy needs further clarifications and improvements such as the incorporation of the missions of UNESCO, the enhancement of transdisciplinary sciences and of approaches to address the shrinking global resources. He stressed that IHP IX should emphasize the translation of science into innovative solutions, including low energy and nature-based solutions, and should further promote networking.

56. The representative of Switzerland commended the non-silo approach undertaken. She recommended consultations and discussions with other UN agencies to achieve more impact on the ground. Moreover, she reminded that the SDG 6 is off the track, so it is necessary to act. She underlined that Switzerland strongly advises against the IHP to embark on new activities and broaden the spectrum of its action, for example on political issues such as hydro-diplomacy. She pointed out that the draft document of the IHP-IX strategy should reflect better the role of IHP and the partners in each specific domain.

57. The representative of the International Association of Hydrological Sciences (IAHS) recalled IAHS's scientific cooperation since the inception of IHP on hydrology and cryosphere. He stated that the societal needs are well captured in the draft strategy and indicated IAHS's readiness to continue common efforts to address future challenges, including addressing unsolved problems in hydrology, socio-hydrology, innovative approaches, and citizen science, all in the framework of open science.

3.6. The way forward

58. The IHP Secretary *a.i.* thanked the participants for the richness in the discussions and comments provided and assured that the IHP Secretariat took note of all comments and recommendations made by the IHP Council Members and Observers. He reassured that future steps to prepare the next drafts and finalize the IHP-IX Strategic Plan would be undertaken with an inclusive and participatory approach, in line with the relevant decision of the IHP Council in 2018. He underlined that the whole process for the drafting of IHP-IX strategy is a Member States driven process. In terms of the timeframe for the next steps, he informed that the draft IHP-IX Strategic Plan should be submitted to the Executive Board of UNESCO at its 2021 spring session and then to the General Conference in fall 2021, for approval. He also underlined that the timeframe, also needs to allow the Member States to provide their written comments on the draft IHP-IX Strategic Plan, and asked the Council Members to determine the appropriate timeframe for the next steps of the IHP-IX preparation process.

59. The Chairperson invited suggestions on the way forward and timeframe for the next steps of the IHP-IX Strategic Plan preparation.

60. The representative of Germany welcomed the prolongation of the consultation period on the 2nd order draft of the IHP-IX Strategic Plan to allow comments from other Member States. She also highlighted the importance of consultations with other UN agencies and partners, suggesting the involvement of UN-Water as the UN coordinating mechanism for freshwater issues. She emphasized also the need to reinforce the links and synergies of IHP with other UNESCO initiatives and programmes.

61. The representative of France supported the comments made by Germany and expressed concern that no other UN agency was present in the meeting, stressing the importance of the involvement of other UN agencies in the future steps of the IHP-IX preparation process. Spain asked for a precise timeline allowing the involvement of UN-Water and international associations in the next phase of consultation on the IHP-IX preparation and a list, which indicates who will be consulted on the 3rd order draft of the IHP Strategic Plan. The IHP Secretary *a.i.* informed that official invitations were not sent to UN agencies and partners due to time limitations, but e-mails were sent inviting them to the meeting. He assured that the draft document of the IHP-IX strategy will be sent to UN agencies and UN Water for

their comments; in particular, with key partners such as WHO, FAO, WMO, UNEP and UN-Habitat.

62. The representatives from Egypt and Morocco requested that the next revised draft of the IHP-IX Strategic Plan should be submitted one month in advance of the Executive Board session. The representative from Libya suggested that the end of December is a good deadline to gather comments from Member States and partners on the 2nd order draft.

63. The representative from Chile highlighted that all documents should be circulated to the Member States in a timely manner and all comments on the draft IHP-IX Strategic Plan should be published online. The representatives from Russia, Zambia and Mexico also underlined the importance of ensuring the transparency of the process of receiving comments from all Member States and their integration in the IHP-IX Strategic Plan.

64. The representative of Mexico, speaking as Vice-Chairperson of Region III — Latin America and the Caribbean, proposed the end of January 2021 as the deadline to circulate the new 3rd order draft of the IHP-IX Strategic Plan to all Member States and allow for their comments on the 3rd order draft during the month of February 2021. She reiterated that transparency needs to be ensured regarding publishing the comments on the UNESCO website and their incorporation in the draft document of the IHP-IX strategy.

65. The IHP Secretary *a.i.* explained that the comments received so far were published online and the IHP Secretariat will continue to update the website as new comments will be provided by Member States. He noted that the current deadline for providing comments on the 2nd order draft of the IHP-IX Strategic Plan will be extended to allow further comments by Member States.

Decision on the next steps and timeframe of the IHP-IX Strategic Plan preparation

66. Considering the need to allow a sufficient time for Member States' comments on the current 2nd order draft of the IHP-IX Strategic Plan and also taking into account the schedules of the next session of the UNESCO Executive Board, prior to which a revised new draft of the IHP-IX Strategic Plan should be discussed and approved by the IHP Intergovernmental Council for subsequent submission to the Executive Board and the General Conference of UNESCO, the IHP Council decided that the following steps and timeframe should be respected in the IHP-IX Strategic Plan preparation process:

- 03 January 2021: The deadline for Member States' comments on the 2nd order draft extended until this date;
- From 04 January until the end of January 2021: With the support of the Secretariat, the IHP-IX Taskforce and the experts of the Member States integrate all comments on the 2nd order draft provided by the Member States and other partners and prepare a new 3rd order draft of the IHP-IX Strategic Plan;
- 31 January 2021: The IHP Secretariat will circulate the 3rd order draft of the IHP-IX Strategic Plan to all Member States inviting them to make further comments on it by 15 February 2021;
- 22-24 February 2021: The IHP Intergovernmental Council will convene an extraordinary session to allow for consultations on the 3rd order draft of the IHP-IX Strategic Plan.

67. The representative of Spain urged to consider the sanitary conditions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic and suggested that the next extraordinary session of the IHP Council to be held in February 2021 to consider only the draft IHP-IX Strategic Plan, in the case it will be conducted online. The representative of Japan proposed that the meeting to be held online due to the unpredictable and difficult circumstances. The representative of Slovenia, speaking in his capacity as Vice-Chairperson of Eastern and Central Europe, highlighted the importance

of organizing the next ordinary sessions of IHP Intergovernmental Council and its Bureau to address other agenda items as well.

68. The IHP Council decided that the next extraordinary session of the IHP Council, to be held from 22-24 February 2021, will be conducted online (virtually) to discuss the 3rd order draft of IHP-IX.

4. DATES OF THE 24th SESSION OF THE IGC OF IHP AND 59th SESSION OF THE IHP BUREAU

69. The Chairperson proposed to the IHP Council Members the consideration of a possibility for organizing the 24th ordinary session of the IHP Intergovernmental Council *in presentia* in June, or July, 2021, depending on the Covid-19 pandemic evolution. Russia proposed to hold the 24th session of the IGC in May or June and proposed to resume this discussion during the extraordinary session in February. Morocco noted the opportunity to take advantage of the Executive Board meeting for future IHP Council sessions in case they are organized in physical format. Morocco proposed to prepare for an *in presentia* meeting, but to change it to an online meeting, if future conditions require.

70. The Council decided that the 24th ordinary session of the IHP Intergovernmental Council will take place in a face-to-face format, if the conditions allow, in mid-June 2021 (tentative dates).

5. OTHER MATTERS

71. No requests on other matters were made for the consideration by the Council.

6. CLOSING OF THE SESSION

72. The Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences provided closing remarks and thanked the IHP Council Chairperson for his significant contribution and leadership during the meeting. She highlighted that water is an essential element for human lives and noted that without water, the Covid-19 pandemic cannot be addressed properly. She thanked all UNESCO Member States for their contributions to the debate and highlighted that their active participation demonstrated their commitment, not only to improve the draft IHP-IX Strategic Plan, but also to ensure that UNESCO can advance in this field, putting science at the centre of water management. Ms Nair-Bedouelle recalled that IHP is a science programme, with innovation at its core. By noting that SDG 6 is off-track, she informed the participants of the launch of the UN SDG 6 Global Accelerator Framework in 2020. She further stated that UNESCO fully supports the SDG 6 Accelerator Framework and contributes to it through its science programmes. She highlighted that one of the themes of the SDG-6 Accelerator Framework focuses on innovation and that UNESCO is ready to contribute to it. She highlighted the strength of the UNESCO Water Family, which includes IHP National Committees, World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP), UNESCO category 2 water centres and UNESCO Chairs on Water. Noting the difficult circumstances in which this session took place, she thanked everyone for the success of the meeting.

73. The Chairperson closed the meeting, emphasizing the role of water as a connector and the IHP's power to popularize scientific knowledge. He thanked all participants for their contributions and participation.

74. The meeting closed on 1 December at 15:45 GMT+1.