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The post-2015 development agenda

Romania stakeholder perspectives on a water goal and its implementation

Global Water Partnership

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Global Water Partnership (GWP), Global Secretariat, PO Box 24177, 104 51 Stockholm, SWEDEN
Visitor's address: Linnégatan 87D, Phone: +46 (0)8 1213 8600, Fax: + 46 (0)8 1213 8604, e-mail: gwp@gwp.org

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Contents

1 Chapter 1: Comments on recommended Sustainable Development Goal and Targets for water

1.1 Discussion of the recommended Goal and Targets in relation to local development aims

At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 (Rio+20), governments recognized that "water is at the core of sustainable development as it is closely linked to a number of key global challenges". In support of the new post-2015 Development Agenda, the UN-Water and its partners have proposed a committed global goal for water, 'Securing sustainable water for all' through the integration of all three dimensions of sustainable development - social, economic and environmental. The proposed goal for water represents a logical vision built on the existing commitments - the Millennium Development Goals and the priorities agreed at Rio+20 – and equally important, on the current and future national challenges and priorities in response to the international obligations, such as the EU Directives.

Through the synergy between the UN proposed global goal for water and the EU Water Framework Directive[1] (WFD) goal of reaching "good ecological and chemical status" for all Community waters by 2015, Romania is extensively engaged in meeting a number of objectives, such as preventing and reducing pollution, promoting sustainable water usage, environmental protection, improving aquatic ecosystems and mitigating the effects of floods and droughts. In addition, the overall framework offered by the suggested goal can easily accommodate the targets and requirements, Romania have to follow during the implementation process of the water related policies and strategies, which can be already measured and discussed through a reliable and quantifiable set of indicators, whilst ensuring achievements are sustainable on long term.

At the National Consultation/NCD organized in Romania, with an impressive and competent response, interested groups and individuals at different levels – high officials from government, civil society, academia, professionals and private sector - welcomed the opportunities to contribute with specific ideas and proposals about sustainable development and the implementation of the post-2015 agenda at the country level.

The discussions demonstrated the considerable importance of water to national development, recognized that the SDGs aim to develop a broader sustainability framework with a global vision, focused on the identified targets for sustainable development, and confirmed the achievements through the application of the integrated water development and management in Romania.

[1] The Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) of the European Parliament and of the Council of Europe 23 October 2000 is establishing the framework for Community action in the field of water policy for the protection of inland surface waters, groundwater, transitional waters; and coastal waters.

To facilitate the understanding and the reaction of the participants during the consultation, discussions were centered on five identified targets which are closely interlinked and are approached jointly in terms of water policy and planning at all levels.

In response to the identified targets, through the UN and EU policy processes, reflected by various initiatives such as Millennium Development Goals, Water and Health Protocol, Transboundary Water Conventions, respectively the EU Water Framework Directive /Urban Waste Water Directive / Drinking Water Directive /Nitrates Directive, objectives such as timely and adequate provision of clean water and sanitation services, improving water management, protection of water ecosystems, and preventing, controlling and reducing water-related diseases, constitute the rationale for highlighting water in the post-2015 development framework in Romania, at local and national levels.

The Danube is of huge significance to Romania: covering 237,391 km² and with nearly 22 million inhabitants, the country is almost entirely within the Danube Basin. The Romanian section covers almost a third of the surface area of the Danube River Basin, and over a third of the river's length flows through the country. Of a high relevance is the fact that Danube is the end carrier of all wastewater discharges from all Danubian countries into the Black Sea.

Although considerable improvements in the water supply and wastewater treatment have been reported, there are still water and sanitation challenges, especially in the rural areas with population < 2,000 p.e. In addition, Romania is facing more challenges of water resources, including flood and drought, accidental water pollution as well as soil erosion. Therefore, a dedicated global goal offers a unique opportunity to ensure water for people, economies and environmental needs, while conserving the Earth's finite and vulnerable water resource base for current and future generations.

1.2 Consideration of the approach for target setting (national or global level) and any country specific issues related to the targets, and elements to the targets, to enable countries to set its level of ambitions according to local circumstances

To address the suggested global water goal, the identified targets and the existing challenges, there are different interventions and initiatives on water covering access to basic water and sanitation services and water resources management, including water quality and wastewater management, reducing pollution, dealing with floods and drought, and improving water governance.

A two-level approach to goal setting that reflects global goals and country-specific targets and indicators is considered optimum in measuring progress and sustainability, but also in quantifying the remaining needs and anticipated effects, at different levels. The applicability of the global goals at the country level is recognized through the acceptance of the official targets and requirements imposed by international legislation and agreements implemented by Romania.

The quality of drinking water is a permanent concern in Romania because of levels of nitrates and nitrites that are found in drinking water in some places, mainly in rural areas, in the country. Timely and adequate provisions of safe water and adequate sanitation for everyone, improving water management, including the protection of water ecosystems, and by preventing, controlling and reducing water-related diseases are the main priorities in local and national development agendas as was presented by some speakers during the Consultations (see presentations attached). To meet these goals, the water authorities are required to establish national and local targets for the drinking water quality and the thresholds limits for wastewater discharges, for the performance of water supply and wastewater treatment, as well as to take measures to reduce occurrence and the incidence of water-related diseases.

To reach the identified targets Romania is taking into account its commitments under EU Directives (17 Directives on water quality), Agenda 21, the three Rio Conventions (on desertification, climate change and biodiversity), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) relating to water, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Rio+20 conference and also the UNECE Water And Health Protocol.

The main legislation implemented by Romania concerning the water includes the EU Directives on water quality by use: drinking waters, bathing waters, water for the lives of fishes and shellfishes. In addition, the implementation of the EU Directives on water protection: against pollution due to nitrates from agricultural activities and hazardous substances resulted in improvements of the water quality and meeting the WFD requirements for a good water status.

The Water Framework Directive has a number of objectives, such as preventing and reducing pollution, promoting sustainable water usage, environmental protection, improving aquatic ecosystems and mitigating the effects of floods and droughts, aiming to achieve “good water status, good ecological potential or good chemical status” for all Community waters by 2015. Programmes to monitor water status have been established, along with programmes of measures for each river basin district in order to achieve the specified environmental objectives. Then, for each river basin district, a river basin management plan has been produced with the active involvement of all interested parties. The first RBM plans under application, covers the period 2009-2015, and shall be revised in 2015 for the next period 2015-2021, and then every six years thereafter.

The WFD has been transposed in the Romanian legislation through the provisions of the Water Law 107/1996, modified and completed by the Law 310/2004, Law 112/2006, Law 146/2010, and most recently in 2013.

The objectives of Nitrates Directive forms an integral part of the Water Framework Directive and is one of the key instruments in the protection of waters against agricultural pressures. It has been transposed in the Romanian legislation through the provisions of the Governmental Decision GD 964/2000 concerning the approval of the Action Plan for protection of water quality against nutrients pollution from agricultural sources. Based on the assessment and recommendations of the European Commission, through a recent Decision 221 983 from 26.06.2013, the Interministerial Commission for the implementation of the Action Plan for the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources, approved the Programme of Actions for the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources, which has to be applied to the whole country, without having the obligation to establish Nitrates Vulnerable Zones.

1.3 Sub-sections discussing the Goal and each of the water targets

1.3.1 Target 1: Water supply, sanitation and hygiene

The are significant positive impacts due to the improvements in water, sanitation and hygiene which influence a broad range of human development goals – including health, education, environmental sustainability and employment. Access to clean water and adequate sanitation is a human right and together with practicing good hygiene a prerequisite for healthy human living; it has direct impact on the wellbeing and productivity of the population as well as sustaining freshwater ecosystems.

The implementation of the MDGs, the UN Protocol on Water and Health, and the EU Directive for drinking water and Directive for urban wastewater treatment ensure that water, sanitation and hygiene targets and indicators focus explicitly on reducing inequalities, and on improving the sustainability of services to secure long term benefits.

The MDG Targets in Romania aim at “safe drinking water” provided by public centralized networks that are required, by law, to be tested for potability parameters on a daily basis, or by private wells/fountains used for drinking water, as well tested for the potability conditions .

In ensuring the supply of safe drinking water and adequate sanitation, the Protocol placed an emphasis on improving policy and governance frameworks to support infrastructural interventions. It applied a flexible approach to the setting of targets, taking into account national priorities and capacities that could serve as a model for future SDGs.

Regarding sanitation considerable efforts are still needed for building infrastructure for public sewerage and wastewater treatment plants for rural areas mainly. The use of septic tanks, beside sewerage, is considered to fit in the narrow definition of “sanitation” in rural areas

In relation to water supply, in 2012, about 56.8% of Romanian population had drinking water networks and about 44.2% of Romanian population had houses connected to sewerage networks and 40.6% of Romanian population had houses connected both to sewage networks and urban waste water treatment plants. (note: According to data of National Statistics Institute-2013). At the same reference year, 21% of rural localities had public networks for water supply and about 6% had sewerage networks (according to the information from Romanian Water Association).

1.3.2 Target 2: The sustainable use and development of water resources in Romania

Romania's water supplies are quite modest, disposing only of 1,840 m3 water/inh./year (it situates Romania on the 13th place in Europe), which is half of the average (4,000 m3 water/inh/year in Europe. They are provided by the rivers, which meet 89% of the present demand (48% from the Danube and 1% from the interior rivers), and by the groundwater sources which account for about 4 %.

Water resources play a key role in the Romanian economy - between 35-40 % of the country's total electricity production is generated from hydro-power plants mostly on the Danube River; and about 30 percent of the cropland is irrigated. Romania's water system is broadly developed. Its water resources are sufficient to cover its water demand. Total renewable water resources: 211.9 km3 (2011).

Achieving the target will require measures to ensure the sustainable water use and maintaining ecosystems to provide water-related services.

Romania elaborated in 2009 its first River Basin Management Plans at the sub-basin (11) and also contributed to the development of the transnational Danube River Basin Management Plan and related Joint Program of Measures. The programs of measures include basic measures that provide implementation of the EU requirements in the field of water, and where the basic measures are not sufficient, supplementary measures are applied to achieve the status / good ecological potential and good chemical status. Investment costs for basic and supplementary measures estimated at river basin level, amounts to approx. 20.387 billion euros, of which about 97% are costs to achieve the basic measures. Romania has to comply fully with the UWWT Directive by 31st December 2018.

Since May 2005, Romania has applied Article 5(8) of the Directive and therefore does not have to designate sensitive areas. The parameters subject to more stringent treatment are N and P.

While agglomerations with a size of >10,000 PE have to comply with Article 3, Article 4 and Article 5(2) by 31st December 2015 at the latest, agglomerations ≤10,000 PE are subject to a transitional period until 31st December 2018.

In the field of water resources management, Romania's target is to achieve until 2027 good status of all surface water and groundwater and good ecological potential for heavily modified water bodies. The proportion of total water resources used and managed in a sustainable way is the relevant indicator to measure the progress.

1.3.3 Target 3: Robust and effective water governance

Effective water governance works through effective institutions and administrative systems. Robust water governance will encourage stakeholders to actively participate in designing, planning, managing and implementing water management activities, clarify roles and responsibilities on property rights, administration and management, create greater integration between them, and coordination of water management efforts.

In addition, promoting and building capacity for institutional arrangements for river basin management is done through e.g. River Fora, international river basin organizations, international agreements and mechanisms for transboundary river basin management.

The legal framework is provided by the main legislation: Water Law 107/1996, modified and completed by the Law 310/2004, Law 112/2006, Law 146/2010, and most recently in 2013, by the Governmental Decision 270 /2012 on the creation and operation of the River Basin Committee, and the Governmental Decision 1095/2013 regarding the modification and completion of the Rules of organisation and operation of Inter-ministerial mechanism of water, approved by Governmental Decision 316/2007. The authorities involved in the implementation of MDGs, for management of river basin, and implicitly in the implementation of the EU policies and water directives include - Ministry of Environment and Climate Changes - Department of Waters, Forests and Fisheries, National Administration "Romanian Waters" and its 11 Basin Committees (mainly having a consultative role in the information, communication and public participation involvement). The Secretary for Flooding, a newly created position, follows the implementation of the Action Plan for flood risk management.

The indicators will measure progress, for example, in capacity and skills development and having that, are able to measure the quality of water governance, including transparency, accountability, and participation, such as in River Basin Committee.

1.3.4 Target 4: Improved water quality and wastewater management

Point sources like wastewater treatment facilities and diffuse sources like on-site wastewater (septic) facilities, agricultural activities, erosion, fertilized lawns, and construction activities may affect the water quality with the contributed organics and nutrients compounds into the river systems. There are 359 significant point sources identified at country level, which includes agglomerations, industries and agricultural units. The diffuse sources of pollution are specially located within the

nutrient vulnerable zones, and include as well the agglomerations from rural and urban areas, fertilizers and pesticides used in agriculture.

The decision taken by Romania to designated all of its territory (including its coastal waters) as a sensitive area under the UWWD, in order to protect the Black Sea environment against eutrophication influenced also all upstream Danube countries.

Accordingly, the entire DRB is considered as a catchment area included in the sensitive area under Article 5(8) of the UWWD. This means that discharges from urban wastewater treatment plants situated in the Danube catchment area and which contribute to the pollution of the sensitive area need to apply more stringent treatments for agglomerations >10,000 PE.

In order to address one of the most important issues affecting water quality - organic pollution – Romania is taking actions to improve wastewater treatment facilities for cities and industry, and to achieve the vision for organic pollution - zero emission of untreated wastewaters. In the Interim Implementation Report indicators of progress are shown: a number of 555 UWWTPs have already been completed by 2012, and 991 are under construction/rehabilitation or planning.

1.3.5 Target 5: Reduce risk of water related disasters

Risks identified range from the localized effects of flooding to extreme climate events, and may result in severe environmental, social or economic disruption, with consequences on ecosystems, economic growth, services and livelihoods. According with the requirements of Directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks, for proper flood risk management plans is a real need to improve the existing data for hazard and vulnerability. For risk management the priority is that economic, social and environmental risks from water related events are identified and managed. With the climate change impacts often appearances, the flash flood threats had increased. Further studies for climate change impacts assessment over flood behavior, needs to be done in order to find proper measures for risk reduction. Main objective of National Flood Risk Management Strategy is to protect people at list for medium scenario (flood with probability of 1%) tacking into account also climate change impacts. Existing flood defense infrastructures (reservoirs, polders, dikes, etc) assure only partially this aims (less than 30%). In this respect, Romania need to implement both type of measures: structural and nonstructural measures. The catalogue of measures addressing flooding covers measures grouped in five categories of actions: prevention, protection, awareness, preparedness, and recovery. An important issue is the improvement of flash flood and flood forecast, related with early warning systems.The proportion of at-risk communities with effective people-centred early warning systems for water-related disasters is an indicator for reduction of fatalities number.

Romania is not facing water scarcity problems unlike many other countries although water shortages can occasionally and locally occur during long dry weather and the need for irrigation is increasing due to climate change.

2 Key implications and means of implementation identified for achieving the Goal and Targets over the period 2015-30.

2.1 Financing opportunities

Romania agreed for targets for progressive realization of accessing and ensuring safe drinking water, sewerage and wastewater treatment, in order to ensure full coverage for water supply, sewerage and wastewater treatment by 2020, and thus reduces the gap compared with other EU countries. Romania had gained access to funds from the cohesion policy, through Sectoral Operational Plan for Environment 2007-2013. In the water supply sector, this led to the regionalization of water utilities, counting for approx. 87% of the public water services, allowing the submission for financing of 43 major projects, in a total amount of about 5 billion Euro. The Romanian water sector is preparing itself for applying with these needs, to the EU 2014-2020 financing cycle.

In order to meet the targets, the Romanian water sector needs large investments in infrastructure, and therefore it is recommended to maximize the use of external funds. Small scale rural networks can be financed from Romanian Governmental funds.

The national targets for public water supply, sewerage and wastewater treatment after 2015 will be, probably, concentrated not only to investments in water/ waste water infrastructure, but also to the compliance to the EU standards. Solutions need to be identified for ensuring affordability of services and connection to existing public networks for urban poor and rural population. Continuous efforts are required in order to strengthen the administrative capacity with regards to the absorption of Cohesion Funds in the next EU financial programming stage 2014-2020.

2.2 Improved dialogue

A more frequent dialogue is needed among the central and local water authorities and institutions, to correlate the strategies and investments contained in the River Basin Management Plans with the investments included in the Master Plans, to agree for best location of water intakes, with minimal impact on the environment, to jointly monitor programmes among water suppliers, and consolidate the relationship between water operators and authorization authorities.

2.3 Capacity building

- Improve capacity building to ensure an effective monitoring of future water and sanitation targets and floods forecast
- Improve capacity for intervention of Emergency Inspectorate and another related institution at national, river basin and local level;
- Reducing timeline between planning and implementation;
- Improve land-use, better planning for development at local level tacking into account flood hazards;
- Specific training programme for operators of WWTPs
- Information and awareness programme for public on complexity of the issues in water/waste waters management field..

2.4 Low water footprint vs. low accessibility to safe drinking water

Frequently, the development of national water policies and plans consider options to reduce the water demand and also the increase supply, and the necessity to satisfy the water users, which is done without including the global dimension of water management. In this way they do not explicitly

consider options to save water through import of water-intensive products. In addition, by looking only at water use, the issue of sustainability of national consumption is neglected.

Therefore a dialogue should be organised between the governments with consumers and businesses to work towards sustainable consumer products. National water footprint accounting should be a standard component in national water statistics and provide a basis to formulate a national water plan and river basin plans that are coherent with national policies. Businesses can also reduce their operational water footprint by saving water in their own operations through technological processes, reducing water pollution, and minimising the wastes.

3 Concluding comments specific to the country

The participants at the national consultation have agreed that water, in all its forms and uses, is fundamental to all sustainable development needs and must be managed effectively. The suggested global water goal and identified targets and indicators will allow the benefits to become more obvious as progress is made and results are shown.

The strong synergies between water and other fundamental issues such as energy and food require clearer recognition and an integrated approach.

The discussions highlighted the problems and specific recommendations for the post-2015 development framework to ensure basic water and sanitation services as a fundamental human right, specifying a target date of 2030 for achieving universal access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene in households, schools and health facilities.

However, significant challenges remain and, strengthening institutions, accountability mechanisms and improved water governance are critically important to achieving the goal and targets.

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Global Water Partnership (GWP), Global Secretariat, PO Box 24177, 104 51 Stockholm, SWEDEN
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