



Ministry of Agriculture, Water
Resources, and Fisheries



Arab Anti-Corruption
and Integrity Network



Regional Conference

Water Sector Integrity in the Arab Region: Risk, Solutions, and Roles of Stakeholders

10-11/06/2024

Tunis, Tunisia

Programme

Supported by



Korea International
Cooperation Agency

Overview

Water affects all aspects of life and is indispensable to upholding human rights and human security across all levels, particularly concerning the nexus of water, food, and energy. It is fundamental for achieving sustainable development, as articulated in Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation. Consequently, the water sector represents a critical priority for action across the Arab region given the various persistent and growing challenges it is facing. These challenges primarily include water scarcity against growing demand, the impact of climate change, escalating conflicts, poor capacities in implementing plans for Integrated Water Resources Management, and gaps in existing transparency and accountability frameworks.

For that reason, governments, regional and international organizations, as well as non-governmental entities are making efforts to address these challenges and to find appropriate solutions. Nonetheless, these efforts do not seem to have adequately addressed the impact of corruption on this vital sector and the role that integrity could play in enhancing its ability to tackle challenges and contribute to achieving sustainable development.

Indeed, several factors increase corruption risks in the water sector, including scarcity and shortage, which intensify competition for this essential resource among individuals, groups, investors, and private sector entities. This is compounded by the intricate nature of the sector and the substantial financial resources required for its management, maintenance, and development, as well as governance loopholes within pertinent legal and institutional frameworks, red tape, and lack of financial transparency, digitalization and access to quality information.

In this context, and in the framework of its regional partnership with the Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network (ACINET) and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in collaboration with the Tunisian Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources, and Fisheries, are organizing a regional conference on "**Water Sector Integrity in the Arab Region: Risks, Solutions, and Roles of Stakeholders**" in Tunis on 10-11 June 2024.

The regional conference is expected to be attended by official delegations from 10 Arab countries including ministers and senior representatives of water ministries and authorities as well as anti-corruption agencies, financial and administrative oversight bodies, in addition to prominent experts and representatives of regional and international organizations, research centers, and specialized civil society organizations.

The conference provides participants with an opportunity to explore the concepts and practices of integrity in the water sector and its strategic significance in empowering this vital sector to fulfil its role in achieving sustainable development in the Arab region. Moreover, it offers a platform for exchanging expertise and experiences; deepening the understanding of effective approaches to assess and mitigate corruption risks in the water sector; and exploring potential areas of cooperation and financing, to support water integrity, involving the public and the private sectors, civil society, international financial institutions, and development partners.

The conference is expected to produce a series of regional recommendations aimed at enhancing integrity within the water sector, formulated in consultation with participants. Follow-up on these recommendations will be carried out in the framework of bilateral and multilateral cooperation initiatives with the UNDP and other international financial institutions and development partners.

The conference will be conducted in Arabic and English with simultaneous interpretation available. The detailed agenda is provided below, and outcome documents will be made available on the website www.undp-aciad.org within a month of the conclusion of the conference. For inquiries and suggestions, please contact us via email at aciad@undp.org.

Agenda

Day One: Monday 10/06/2024

08:00 – 09:00 Registration

09:00 – 09:45 Opening Session

Objective: Enable the organizers and supporting entities to welcome the participants and provide an integrated overview of the importance of this regional conference and their vision on its expected outcomes, while confirming their commitment to supporting the emerging pathways.

Official Opening Statement

- His Excellency Mr. Abdelmonem Belati, Minister of Agriculture, Water Resources, and Fisheries, Republic of Tunisia

Official Statements

- His Excellency Engineer Aun Dheyab Abdullah, Minister of Water Resources, Republic of Iraq
- Her Excellency Ms. Josephine Frantzen, Ambassador of the Netherlands to the Republic of Tunisia
- Her Excellency Ms. Celine Moyroud, Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme in Tunisia

09:45 – 10:00 Break

10:00 – 11:30 First Session: Challenges facing the water sector in the Arab region and the role of integrity in addressing it from a sustainable development perspective

Objective: Enable participants hailing from the water sector on the one hand, and the field of integrity and anti-corruption on the other, to formulate a common understanding of two fundamental areas that constitute the basis for the rest of the conference sessions.

The first is the status of this vital sector for the Arab region compared to its sustainable development needs in connection to Agenda 2030, namely SDG6 related to clean water and sanitation. The second is the concept of corruption and how it manifests in the water sector, in addition to the social and economic costs resulting from it, and thus the role of integrity in enhancing this sector's capacity to address the challenges it faces and supporting its role in achieving sustainable development in the countries of the region, especially in relation to water, food, and energy security.

Chairperson

- Ms. Mahassen Moursel, Economic and Legal Researcher and Journalist

Panelists

- Dr. Furat Al-Faraj, Lecturer at the University of Bolton, United Kingdom
- Dr. Donal O'Leary, International Council Member, Transparency International
- Mr. Ahmed Alseoud, Water and Environmental Project Management Expert, Regional Hub for the Arab States, United Nations Development Programme

Open Discussion

11:30 – 12:00 Break

12:00 – 14:00 Second Session: Governance in the water sector and ways to strengthen it drawing on the United Nations Convention Against Corruption

Objective: Provide water ministers and senior officials from water authorities, integrity and anti-corruption commissions and oversight bodies with the opportunity to shed light on key areas for water governance reforms and entry points for enhancing transparency, accountability, participation and corruption prevention in connection with the requirements of the UN Convention against Corruption. This is based on their visions and experiences in their respective countries in this field, aiming to produce strategic pathways that help guide the joint regional work on enhancing integrity in the water sector.

Speakers

- His Excellency Mr. Abdelmonem Belati, Minister of Agriculture, Water Resources, and Fisheries, Republic of Tunisia
- His Excellency Engineer Aun Dheyab Abdullah, Minister of Water Resources, Republic of Iraq
- Mr. Jamal Qash, Vice President, Anti-Corruption Commission, State of Palestine
- Mr. Fawaz Kabbara, Vice President, National Anti-Corruption Commission, Republic of Lebanon
- Mr. Said Lamrabeti, President of the Third Chamber in Charge of Infrastructure, Energy, and Water Sectors, Cour des comptes, Kingdom of Morocco
- Engineer Marwa Khattab, Director General, Hydrological Databases, Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation, Arab Republic of Egypt

Additional Interventions

14:00 – 15:00 Lunch

15:00 – 16:30 Third Session: Comparative experiences of corruption risk management in the water sector

Objective: Building on the second session towards establishing participatory, coordinated, and effective mechanisms to enhance water sector integrity, this

session will enable joint reflection on successful experiences and lessons learned in identifying, assessing, and addressing corruption risks in the water sector as a whole or within specific fields of the sector including, but not limited to, infrastructure projects like dams, hydroelectric power stations, water desalination, drinking water or irrigation networks as well as managing relevant public institutions, well drilling and exploitation permits, tax and customs exemptions related to the water sector, and revenue collection in all its forms.

Chairperson

- His Excellency Mr. Imed Hazgui, President of the High Commission for Administrative and Financial Control, Republic of Tunisia

Sectoral Corruption Risk Management Methodology

- Dr. Haytham Yassine, Senior Anti-Corruption and Integrity Specialist, Regional Hub for the Arab States, United Nations Development Programme

Tunisian Experience in Managing Corruption Risks in the Water Sector

- Mr. Moez Sliti, Director General, Central Governance Unit, Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources, and Fisheries, Republic of Tunisia

Open Discussion

Day Two: Tuesday, 11/06/2024

09:00 – 10:30 Fourth Session: Regional and international dimensions of water sector integrity

Objective: Broaden the scope of dialogue to highlight the regional and international dimensions of enhancing water sector integrity. This includes aspects related to protecting shared water resources from pollution and overexploitation, as well as the role of corruption in the water sector in maximizing the risks of disasters and conflicts, which impact extends beyond a single country to neighbouring states. Additionally, it involves the role of water sector integrity in attracting foreign investments and development funds, as the international community increasingly focuses on cross-border anti-corruption.

Chairperson

- Mr. Majid Al Mutairi, Coordinator of the Non-Governmental Group, Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network

Panelists

- Dr. Alan Nicol, Senior Researcher, International Water Management Institute
- Mr. Moez Allaoui, Senior Manager, Water and Sanitation Department, West Asia and North Africa Office, Stockholm International Water Institute
- Ms. Natasha Sarkis, Project Manager, Anti-Corruption for Trust in Lebanon, United Nations Development Programme in Lebanon

Open Discussion

10:30 – 11:00 Break

11:00 – 12:30 Fifth session: The role of concerned stakeholders in enhancing water sector integrity and means of cooperation at local, national, and cross-border levels

Objective: Link the outcomes of dialogues held in previous sessions to the different roles of stakeholders concerned in enhancing water sector integrity at local, national, and cross-border levels with the aim of accurately identifying their responsibilities and areas of common cooperation, including public sector institutions, private sector, and other civil society organizations such as associations, non-governmental organizations, media institutions, and influencers on social media as well as international financial institutions and development partners.

Chair

- Mr. Arkan El Seblani, Regional Chief Anti-Corruption and Integrity Advisor, Regional Hub for Arab States, United Nations Development Programme

Panelists

- Mr. David Bernstein, Lead Expert, Public Sector, World Bank

- Ms. Claire Grandadam, Director of Communication Programs, Water Integrity Network
- Mr. Asaad Thebian, Co-founder and Executive Director, Gherbal Initiative

Open Discussion

12:30 – 13:00 Break

13:00 – 14:00 Closing Session

Objective: Announce the final recommendations of the regional conference after incorporating necessary amendments, while enabling participants to share additional comments and suggestions for follow-up and effective implementation, then the conclusion of the conference.

Regional recommendations for water sector integrity in the Arab Countries

Comments and Suggestions

Closing Statement

14:00 Lunch
