ACCELERATING EFFORTS TO ADDRESS WATER POLLUTION AND TO PROTECT AND RESTORE WATER-RELATED ECOSYSTEMS

- Proposing Member State(s): The African Group
- Co-sponsoring Member States:
- Date submitted: 28 September, 2017

PREAMBLE

Recalling General Assembly resolution 66/288 of 27 July 2012 entitled The Future We Want, which stressed the need to adopt measures to significantly reduce water pollution and improve wastewater treatment and governments committing to the progressive realization of access to safe and affordable drinking water and basic sanitation\(^1\) as well as General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;”

Further recalling United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 2/5 of 3 August 2016, entitled “Delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; Resolutions 1/6 on marine plastic debris and micro-plastics; Resolutions 2/11 on marine plastic litter and micro-plastics; Resolution 2/17, entitled “Enhancing the work of the United Nations Environment Programme in facilitating cooperation, collaboration and synergies among biodiversity-related conventions”

Recalling also Governing Council (GC) Decision 27/3 in 2013, which called for creation of International Water Quality Guidelines for Ecosystems, to help interested countries set national standards for their own water quality;

Recalling United Nations Environment Assembly Resolution 1/9 of XX 2014 and Resolution 2/23 of XX on the Global Environmental Monitoring System for Water (GEMS / Water);

Recognizing that while water-related ecosystems, including wetlands, freshwater, coastal and marine bodies, are essential for sustainable development as enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, they sustain and bear the brunt of the impacts of human activities such as urbanization, poor sanitation, limited capacity, agriculture and industry including extractive industry;

Bearing in mind that pollution, through pathogens, organic matter and hazardous chemicals and salinity could be affecting up to one-third of rivers in developing countries, and that these impacts are exacerbated by the effects of climate change, disasters and armed conflict;

\(^1\)Paragraph 124
Noting that an estimated 80-90% of wastewater worldwide currently gets released into water bodies untreated, with negative impacts for fresh, coastal and marine ecosystems, biodiversity, human health and well-being, and livelihoods;

Conscious of the fact that women and children suffer disproportionately because of water pollution and degradation of water-related eco-systems;

Concerned about the limited legal, policy, financial, technical and institutional capacities required to monitor, enforce and address water pollution in an integrated manner in many developing countries;

OPERATIONAL

1. Emphasizes the need for Member States to update policy frameworks and enabling legislation, where necessary, to support the implementation of innovative solutions as new uses for recycled wastewater are identified; new financing arrangements become viable; and new technologies become available;

2. Urges countries to draw upon the work carried out by the United Nations Environment Programme in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to guide countries on how to protect and restore water-related ecosystems to create effective governance structures, set their own national standards for water quality; and to immediately set up water quality monitoring of their significant water-bodies and associated ecosystems,

3. Encourages Member States to establish water monitoring quality networks, including in collaboration with GEMS / Water, to help identify and address sources and root causes of water pollution in significant water bodies; and to help prevent water pollution through the reduction, reuse and treatment of wastewater.

4. Also encourages collaboration among stakeholders, including government labs, the private sector, academia, and civil society to improve Member States and stakeholder capacity to collect, recycle and channel the reuse of effluent into high water consumption domestic and industrial activities.

5. Further encourages collaboration among stakeholders, pharmaceuticals and medical facilities to provide take-back facilities for expired and no longer useful medication to reduce water pollution.

6. Urges collaboration among stakeholders, private sector, industry, academia and civil society on circular economy and cleaner production initiatives that helps in water use and reducing waste water and water pollution

7. Requests the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to:
a) Continue to support the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) global partnerships (wastewater, nutrients and marine debris);

b) To support the development of programmes that invest in the management of ecosystems, so as to prevent pollution and maintain the health of water sources, such as mountains, landscapes, wetlands, groundwater, rivers and lakes, in order to ensure the availability of quality water in a sustainable manner for all users;

c) Set up a water quality monitoring fund to assist developing countries at their request, in setting up water quality monitoring stations, and in building their capacity to respond quickly to water quality threats including those from municipal and industrial accidents, natural disasters and conflict;

d) Strengthen capacity-building, technology transfer and fundraising efforts to assist countries upon request, in reaching the target of halving the amount of untreated wastewater reaching water bodies, taking into account gender perspectives, including by developing a pipeline of bankable wastewater treatment plants in collaboration with local authorities and the private sector as appropriate;

e) Continue to develop tools to support countries upon request, in their efforts to; address water pollution and ecosystem health; fully implement Integrated Water Resources Management approaches and; address water-related impacts of disasters and armed conflict;

f) Undertake, in cooperation with other relevant international organizations, a global assessment of the world's water quality, future scenario and solution analysis; as well as an assessment of Endocrine Disruptor Concerns (EDCs) and in particular pharmaceutical contaminants in water bodies, and propose appropriate solutions in terms of policy and/or technology;

g) Work with governments and key stakeholders, including the private sector in creating an enabling environment for sustainable wastewater management, which encompasses supportive policies, laws and regulations, tailored technologies and innovative financial mechanisms;

h) Collaborate closely with Member States with a view to establishing more regional platforms for wastewater, including through an enhanced Global Wastewater Initiative (GW²I), capacity development programmes and public outreach campaign of the importance of sustainable wastewater management;

i) Work with relevant international organisations, including UN Water to address issues related to water pollution.

8. Further requests the Executive Director to report to the United Nations Environment Assembly on the implementation of this resolution at its next session.