

Technical Session on Groundwater Governance

Lead: UNESCO International Hydrological Programme (IHP)

Objectives:

Raise awareness of Lake and Rivers Basin Organizations in Africa on the opportunities and the threats related to groundwater resources and introduce a framework for action and guiding principles as a process for achieving better groundwater governance to sustain the benefits and services of these resources, looking especially at the key factors driving integration of groundwater within River and Lake Basins Organizations

Context:

National and transboundary aquifers in Africa within the contexts of ANBO's strategy, Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Session description:

The session is geared toward understanding what would deliver sound governance of groundwater resources which account for over 98% of the Planet Earth's accessible freshwater, provide all the daily water needs for one third of humanity and are crucial for environmental and social 'goods' upon which cities and rural communities have come to depend. In Africa, around 70 % of the population depends on groundwater for their primary water needs and groundwater plays a crucial role in socio-economic development, the preservation of ecosystems and the alleviation of drought and climate change impacts. However, according to experts from Africa and elsewhere, most - if not all - of the Continent's exploited aquifers are not being managed to conserve and protect these vital freshwater resources.

The session starts with a keynote presentation which gives an overview of a groundwater governance initiative designed to address groundwater issues at global, transboundary, regional and national levels. The initiative stems from the GEF-financed global project "Groundwater Governance - A Global Framework for Action" executed by UNESCO IHP, FAO, the World Bank, the International Association of Hydrogeologists and GEF and comprises a "Shared Vision 2030" and a "Framework for Action to achieve the Vision" on Groundwater Governance. The Shared Vision points to much needed improvements in groundwater governance to meet the growing demands for water and protect the integrity of aquifers. The Framework for Action is designed to raise political awareness of the issue and promote key policy messages to advance governance approaches that can sustain the set of groundwater and aquifer services upon which humankind now depends. The Framework for Action paves the way for legal, regulatory and institutional set-ups for groundwater that establish public guardianship and collective responsibility, permanent engagement of stakeholders and beneficial integration with other sectors. A comprehensive process of steps to be adapted to the local context to achieve the governance objectives sought is also provided. In addition, the Framework aims to focus investments through the governance lens in order to generate a set of tangible benefits.

The keynote presentation will be complemented by: 1) a synopsis of the role of L/RBOs in groundwater data management and sharing which constitutes one of the main prerequisites for the effective groundwater governance of transboundary aquifers; 2) sharing of experience on a case study on the integration of groundwater management within the existing structure of a River Basin Organization in direct application of the proposed groundwater governance principles: the example of the LIMCOM Groundwater Committee. Current initiatives for the promotion of groundwater integration in the River Basin Commissions in Africa and conjunctive water management implementation will be also reflected, highlighting the support of UNESCO IHP's, in particular as co-executing agency of the GEF-UNDP ANBO Project, and partners.

The second half of the session will be devoted to moderated discussion by participants and the agreement of main recommendations for inclusion in ANBO's strategy and action by the concerned stakeholder.

For additional information, consult: <http://www.groundwatergovernance.org>

Time (min)	Description of Items/Presentations	Speakers/Panelists
10 min	Session Overview and Presentation of the Panellists	<i>Ms Tracy Molefi</i> , OKACOM, Session Chair
30 min	Keynote: Groundwater Governance Initiative	<i>Mr. Mohamed Bazza</i> , Senior Consultant, UNESCO IHP
15 min	Groundwater monitoring and data sharing mechanisms	<i>Mr. Arnaud Sterckx</i> , Hydrogeologist, UNESCO-IGRAC
15 min	Case study: Establishment of groundwater governance arrangements for the Limpopo River Basin. Example of the LIMCOM Groundwater Committee	<i>Mr. Sergio Siteo</i> , LIMCOM
50 min	Discussion, Questions and Recommendations	Facilitator and Participants
10 min	Conclusions and Recommendations	Rapporteur
5 min	Closing Remarks	Session Chair

Session expected outputs

- Increased understanding of the benefits of groundwater and of the challenges facing their sustainability with regard to governance
- Sharing of the Groundwater Governance Initiative and its process for improving groundwater governance at national and transboundary aquifers
- Ownership of the Initiative and its inclusion in ANBO's strategy for the sound integration of groundwater governance in Lake and River Basin planning