

## IAHR's Participation in the 32<sup>th</sup> UN Water Meeting

by Angelos Findikakis

On 28-29 January 2020, I participated in the 32<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the UN Water program, held at the headquarters of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in Rome, Italy.

The agenda of the meeting included presentations and discussions on ongoing and planned activities and initiatives of UN Water. This report covers only items of special interest to IAHR. Specific IAHR follow-up actions are highlighted in **green font**.

1. The 2020 World Water Development Report (WWDR) on “Water and Climate Change” is ready. IAHR has contributed to its preparation and this contribution is acknowledged in the report.

The report will be officially released on World Water Day, March 22. Different special events are planned to publicize the report and raise awareness about the subject. What the UN calls a “pivot event” will be organized in Geneva on March 23. The UN Water partners were encouraged to organize their own events on this occasion.

- I suggested that IAHR can explore the possibility of organizing a special event in its Beijing office. This could be an important contribution, considering that there was no mention of any events on the release of WWDR2020 planned by UN Water in China.
- IAHR can also include a special announcement on this subject in its Newsletter.

2. Work on the preparation of the 2021 WWDR whose theme is “Valuing Water” is under way. A first draft of chapters should be available by March 16, 2020.

- Following discussions with the lead coordinators of the preparation of the report, it was agreed that IAHR will contribute to the following chapters:

Chapter 2 (an interconnected Approach to Valuing Water),  
Chapter 3 (Water Resources and the Environment)  
Chapter 6 (Energy, Industry and Business)  
Chapter 9 (Creating an Enabling Environment for Change), Part C (Knowledge,  
Research and Capacity Building)

3. The theme of the 2022 WWDR will be “Groundwater”. Work to prepare this report will start next year.

- IAHR can contribute to this report primarily through its Committee on Groundwater Hydraulics and Management.

4. The International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre (IGRAC) presented a proposal to organize a Groundwater Summit as the UN-Water pivot event of the 2022 World Water Day campaign. For this purpose, work will start soon to prepare a catalogue of groundwater

management and governance measures, including their applicability and exemplary experiences, which will be prepared for the summit. This proposal was approved.

- IAHR can contribute to this report primarily through its Committee on Groundwater Hydraulics and Management.

5. [Women for Water Partnership](#) (WfWP), a UN Water partner organization working to raise the profile of women in the water and development sector, both in their professional capacity and as a major group in society, made a proposal to create a task force to develop recommendations on how to promote the position of women in UN Water and the water sector in general.

- During the break I talked with WfWP's representative Lesha Witmer and told her about IAHR's work in this direction and its recent achievement of reaching gender balance in its Council.

IAHR can support and collaborate with WfWP in this effort, which would be an opportunity to show its leadership in this area and highlight its success in promoting women in leadership positions.

6. On January 29, there was an open session where participants proposed different subjects that they wished to bring to the attention of UN Water for discussion. Among the proposed topics five subjects were selected and discussed in groups. Tomas Sancho of WCCE and I proposed the subject of the role of Engineering in achieving SDG6. This subject was selected as one of the five topics to discuss.

- In the discussion that followed it was recognized that there is very little mention of engineering the statements and reports supporting SDG6 and that there I need to raise awareness about what engineering does offer and what more can offer.
- It was agreed to develop a white paper on this subject (the role of Engineering in achieving SDG6), which will be distributed to the UN Water members and partners for comments and then will be presented at the next UN Water meeting.
- Six participants in this group discussion with a diverse range of backgrounds agreed to contribute to the preparation of the white paper. They are: Pierre Kistler (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation), Antonio Torres (International Migration Organization), Geraldine Gene (WaterLex), Graham Alabaster (UN Habitat), Tomas Sancho (World Council of Civil Engineers) and me.

IAHR can play leading role in the preparation of this white paper.

7. Other topics of potential interest to IAHR and its members that were covered in the meeting are:

- A presentation was made by the representative of the [CEO Water Mandate](#) organization on its campaign centered around a new Water Resilience Pledge. This initiative aims at effectively creating a time bound and measurable global ambition for water that will include actions in water-stressed parts of the world where the participating companies operate. This campaign will be launched on the UN World Water Day (Monday, March 23 of this year) to coincide with UN-Water's 2020 theme focused on water and climate.

This initiative could be of interest to IAHR individual and Institute members involved in engineering or industrial practice.

- A special Task Force has prepared an analytical brief on unconventional water resources. This document will be finalized and released in March on World Water Day. *This initiative could be of interest to the IAHR TC on Water Resources Management.*
- A presentation was made on the [Global Groundwater Sustainability Call to Action](#) and the issued statement to this effect that has been signed by hundreds of scientists. The statement is meant to raise awareness of the global importance of groundwater, encourage future international action-oriented initiatives and build momentum towards the 2022 UN World Water Day. *This initiative should be of interest to the IAHR TC on Groundwater Hydraulics and Management.*
- A presentation was made on the development of the terms of reference of the UN Water Expert Group on Regional Level Coordination, established last year. The Group will develop a work plan to operationalize its activities over the coming two years. *IAHR participates in this Group through its TC on Water Resources Management.*