

Highlights

19th meeting of the OECD Water Governance Initiative (WGI)

5-6 March 2024
Marrakesh, Morocco



Summary of outcomes

Overview

On 5-6 March 2024, the OECD Water Governance Initiative (WGI) held its 19th meeting hosted by the Moroccan Ministry of Equipment and Water and the Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Urban Policy in Marrakesh, Morocco. The meeting brought together 80+ onsite and 70+ online practitioners, policymakers and representatives from major stakeholder groups (see the [agenda](#), [list of participants](#) and [slides](#)). The objectives of the meeting were to:

- Provide updates on the WGI's contribution to global agendas notably the 10th World Water Forum (18-25 May, Bali, Indonesia);
- Share knowledge and experience on water governance for disaster management and climate change;
- Peer review the work on the blue economy in cities and regions, and circular economy in Latin America and the Caribbean;
- Discuss progress on the Handbook for the local implementation of OECD Principles on Water Governance.



Key takeaways

1. **Water is gaining momentum in global agendas, but much remains to be done to raise its political profile.** Global water events, such as the [UN 2023 Water Conference](#) (22-24 March, New York, United States), the forthcoming [10th World Water Forum](#) (18-25 May 2024, Bali Indonesia), and the [One Water Summit 2024](#) (23 September, New York City, United States) show the need for global water governance. Despite increasing exposure of countries to water challenges, only 3% of global climate finance is allocated to water.
2. **The increase in climate-related disasters recalls the need for good water governance.** Natural disasters such as floods and droughts are on the rise worldwide, highlighting the need for proactive rather than reactive water resources management. Other disasters such as earthquakes — like the one that hit the Marrakesh region in September 2023 — can also have an impact on water, especially by disrupting access to water and sanitation services. Some countries have long been leading the charge to tackle water challenges. WGI members underlined the need for inter-ministerial collaboration, engagement between national and local levels and the involvement of private actors in the face of an increasing complex water governance landscape.
3. **Local water governance is crucial for addressing pressing challenges.** Local water governance plays a pivotal role in addressing challenges such as short-termism, coordination gaps, and data deficiencies, highlighting the importance of building capacities, developing innovative practices, unlocking financial support, improving performance, and aligning policies. In implementing the OECD Water Governance Principles, WGI members underscored the need for clarity, practicality, and replicability across diverse contexts, with a focus on inspiring examples. Greater emphasis on local action and adaptation is aligned with accelerating trends in circular economy and social innovation to meet the dynamic needs of communities and ecosystems.
4. **Water is a vector of sustainable development and economic resilience.** Water is essential for ecosystem health, wellbeing and food security, as well as for a number of blue economy sectors such as fisheries, shipping, port activities and tourism. Subnational governments have a prominent role to play in enhancing the city-basin dialogue through their competences in land use planning, waste management and sanitation. WGI members concurred on the relevance of further coordination across ocean and freshwater policies and actors both at national and local levels.
5. **Applying circular economy principles to water can enhance water security and climate resilience.** The “circular water economy” aims to reduce water use in production and consumption processes across sectors, reuse and recycle water, and recover energy and materials from wastewater treatment. As part of a circular approach, enhancing the level of wastewater treatment, as seen in Morocco’s [Circular Economy of Water in Urban Areas Project](#) or Chile’s [bio-factories](#), can bring multiple benefits to nature, water users and service providers by restoring ecological flows, improving water quality and transforming by-products into resources such as energy and fertiliser. However, the transition to a circular water economy requires addressing governance-related barriers, notably regulation, policy coherence, awareness and capacities, and financing.

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Day 1: 5 March 2024

Opening remarks

1. **The Chair, Barbara Pompili** welcomed delegates to the 19th meeting of the OECD Water Governance Initiative (WGI). She expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Public Works and Water and the Ministry of National Planning Housing, and Urban Policy for their warm hospitality, alongside UCLG-Africa for co-hosting. She reflected on the profound impact of the September 2023 earthquake in the region of Marrakesh, which claimed 2 900 lives, injured 5 500 people, and affected nearly 2 million people, disrupting essential services including water and sanitation. The decision to hold the 19th meeting of the WGI in Marrakesh was taken as a token of solidarity with Morocco. The challenges brought by the earthquake highlight the importance of robust governance for effective water service in everyday life and even more so in the aftermath of natural disasters. The WGI's work takes on particular importance in the wake of such events.

2. **Lamia Kamal-Chaoui, Director of the Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities (CFE), OECD** expressed her gratitude for Morocco's warm reception and underlined Marrakech's symbolic significance in hosting the Water Governance Initiative (WGI) meeting, particularly after the 2023 earthquake. The Director stressed the global importance of water, highlighting that 25 countries worldwide already face extreme water stress, approximately 2.8 billion people lack access to safe sanitation services and 4 billion people will be living in water-stressed regions by 2050. She underscored the need for innovative solutions and inclusive policies, citing examples such as Morocco's increase in wastewater treatment from 7% in 2006 to over 50% in 2020. The Director advocated for enhancing circular and blue economies, highlighting that water-related disasters such as floods and droughts cause over USD 120 billion in annual damages to urban infrastructure. The OECD's commitment to supporting countries like Morocco in addressing water-related challenges was reiterated, along with a call for social justice to ensure equitable access to water resources. The Director emphasised the importance of efficient and inclusive water governance for sustainable economic development and citizen well-being globally.

3. **Youssef Hosni, Secretary-General of the Department of Housing and Urban Policy, Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Urban Policy, Morocco** highlighted the importance of coherence across sectors and levels of government to address water challenges. In a context where approximately 35% of the Moroccan population will experience absolute water scarcity by 2025, Morocco is adopting an integrated and multi-scale approach to urban planning and water management. This includes national guidelines for territorial planning, regional schemes focusing on water resource preservation, strategic urban development plans promoting ecosystem protection, and operational rules for increased soil permeability and rainwater reuse. The Guidelines of Public Policy for Territorial Planning (OPPAT) are reshaping sectoral development objectives by considering water scarcity and resource replenishment constraints. The implementation of the Regional Spatial Planning Schemes (SRAT) serves as a strategic framework, emphasising the preservation of water resources. The Urban Development Master Plans (SDAU) prioritise the protection of natural resources, with an emphasis on water conservation. At urban level, regulations are being enforced to enhance soil permeability and promote rainwater reuse. Additionally, the Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Urban Policy, in collaboration with relevant ministerial departments and international organisations, has developed a roadmap to incorporate water

management principles into building design and construction processes through technical standards, ensuring better water demand management and use of unconventional water resources.

4. **Abdelaziz Zerouali, Director of Research and Water Planning, Ministry of Equipment and Water, Morocco** highlighted Morocco's dedication to supporting places devastated by recent earthquakes. The government outlined plans for rehabilitation, particularly emphasising agricultural recovery efforts. Beyond the emergency of the earthquake, Mr Zerouai provided an overview of ongoing projects led by the Ministry on infrastructure development, such as utilising unconventional water resources and implementing flood protection measures. The government's water policy emphasises diversification and acceleration of water supply programmes in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The water governance model involves numerous stakeholders and consultative bodies, including the Higher Council of Water Climate and the National Council of Environmental, to tackle water management challenges exacerbated by climate change. Beyond coordination, financing sources need to be diversified to effectively tackle water challenges, from state budgets to international cooperation, with an emphasis on public-private partnerships.

5. **Jean-Pierre Elong Mbasi, Secretary-General of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) Africa** stressed that engagement of all levels of government is essential to address the consequences of water crises, including tensions within communities and threats to stability and security. The increase in conflicts around access to and use of water resources, exacerbated by climate change, calls for the establishment of monitoring systems and conflict resolution mechanisms, which in turn requires the application of the "active subsidiarity" principles, effective multi-level governance and the adoption of appropriate technologies. He mentioned the role of the [OECD/UCLG-Africa Roundtable of African Mayors for Water Security](#), which aims to gather local leaders and experts in the sidelines of major climate and water-related events.

WGI contributions to global agendas

6. The Secretariat and Steering Committee shared updates on major water-related events.

7. **Pierre-Alain Roche, French Association of Water and Waste Professionals (ASTEE)** highlighted the momentum generated by the [UN 2023 Water Conference](#) (22-24 March 2023), the first conference on water to be organised by the UN in 47 years which gathered 10 000 people, generated 700 commitments to protect "humanity's most precious global common good" corresponding to USD 300 billion pledges to the [Water Action Agenda](#), and concluded with a UN resolution to designate a special envoy on water. However, progress on SDG 6 is still lagging. Many of the actions in the Water Action Agenda are not additional (i.e. they would have happened without the conference); a UN special envoy on water has not yet been nominated; and official development assistance (ODA) for water declined between 2015 and 2021, with disbursement of ODA for water dropping by 15% to USD 8.1 billion in 2021. Three major events in the next six months – the [10th World Water Forum](#) (18-25 May, Bali, Indonesia) co-organised by Indonesia and the World Water Council in May, the [3rd Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference](#) co-organised by Tajikistan and the UN in June, and the [One Water Summit](#) co-organised by Kazakhstan and France in September – will provide a space to share proposals on water governance and build the alliances towards the UN 2026 Water Conference. To this end, he suggested that the WGI scales up its contribution and analytical thinking to global water governance, potentially looking into aspects such as virtual water; the global water cycle, connecting land-based impacts with ocean health; regional conflicts and instability; and international water justice through regulation and financing mechanisms.

8. **Alejandro Jiménez, Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI)** provided an update on [World Water Week](#) (25-29 August 2024, Stockholm, Sweden) with the theme "Bridging Borders: Water for a Peaceful and Sustainable Future". Sessions will focus on water cooperation for peace and security in a broad sense; linkages with food security and ecosystems; and sharing responsibilities and benefits of

sustainable water management. Several hundred proposals for events have already been submitted. The programme overview is available [online](#).

9. **Oriana Romano, OECD Secretariat** confirmed the OECD participation to the [UN Ocean Decade Conference](#) (10-12 April 2024, Barcelona, Spain), which comes three years after the start of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030). This conference brings together experts, policymakers, scientists, and stakeholders to discuss and collaborate on ocean-related research, conservation efforts, and sustainable development initiatives. As such, it provides an opportunity for the OECD to contribute to strengthen the link between ocean and freshwater governance.

10. **Eric Tardieu, International Network of Basin Organisations (INBO)** highlighted that the role of water was still emerging but rising on the agenda of COPs. Notably, COP 22 in Marrakesh (2019) dedicated half a day to the interaction between water and climate, and the [Marrakesh Partnership for Global Climate Action](#) continues to be a key framework. [COP 28](#) (30 November-12 December 2023, Dubai, United Arab Emirates) announced a global framework for adaptation and the operationalisation of the Loss and Damage Fund for the most vulnerable countries to face the impacts of climate change. For the first time, the [COP 28 Declaration](#) explicitly recognised the importance of enhancing water resilience and mitigating the adverse impacts of water scarcity, including for drinking water. The conference also recognised the importance of international partnerships and knowledge exchange to address the transboundary impacts of climate change, as well as financing climate adaptation and considering interactions between water and water-dependent sectors (e.g. industry, energy, agriculture).

11. **The WGI Chair**, as the special envoy for water of President Macron, France, presented an update on the [One Water Summit](#) (23 September 2024, New York City, United States), announced at COP 28. The summit will be organised by France and Kazakhstan, in parallel to the [UN Summit of the Future](#) (22-23 September). The Summit aims to push water higher on the political agenda, especially at the level of Heads of State, highlighting connections with other policy areas and emphasising water as a solution to major global challenges (e.g. water for peace, economic development and innovation). Governance and financing solutions will play a prominent role. Several WGI members are already members of the summit's steering committee.

12. WGI members shared updates on recent and forthcoming events, research and studies.

- **Adrian Sym, Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS)** highlighted that the AWS has conducted a revision of the [International Water Stewardship Standard](#), which should make more explicit links with other global initiatives and standards like the WGI and the Principles. The [Global Water Stewardship Forum](#) (5-6 June, Edinburgh), to which all WGI members are invited, will be an opportunity to further strengthen those links.
- **Dominique Gatel, Veolia** reacted to points made in the opening speeches, notably emphasising that need for governments to renew their social contracts beyond water, and the challenges of subsidiarity and decentralisation given the difficulties in determining at which scale water-related decisions should be made. Veolia recently published its [2024-2027 strategic programme](#), which builds on three pillars, including “water technologies and new solutions”.
- **Laura Tanco Ballesteros, Jucar River Basin Authority, Spain** highlighted that Mediterranean countries face similar water-related challenges. To support Mediterranean countries and basin authorities, the [Mediterranean Network of Basins](#) (MENBO) delivered a training course on joint surface and groundwater management with the MedProgramme of UNESCO in May 2023, and will deliver a training on desalination in Malta in May 2024. Valencia hosted the [21st Euro-RIOB conference](#) in Valencia, Spain in October 2023, back-to-back with the MENBO General Assembly which transferred the presidency from Malta to Spain. On 5-6 February in Tunis, Tunisia, the [5th Mediterranean Water Forum](#) took place as part of the regional process of the 10th World Water Forum (18-24 May, Bali, Indonesia), covering several thematic areas such as the water-energy-food nexus, droughts and floods, conflict resolution, financing and digitalisation.

- **Barbara Schreiner, Water Integrity Network (WIN)** raised attention to the first [People's Water Forum](#) (21-23 May, Bali) taking place during the 10th World Water Forum (18-25 May, Bali, Indonesia) as a coordinating space for water justice movements around the world. The WIN's flagship [Water Integrity Global Outlook](#) report will be launched mid-2024, with a focus on integrity in financing for water and sanitation.
- **Danielle Gaillard, SIWI** stressed that the 62 organisations part of the [Water for Climate Pavilion](#) at the last three COPs were continuing to work together to foster continuity on water discussions from one COP to another. Danielle highlighted that the Biodiversity and Desertification COPs would also take place in 2024 and urged WGI members to make links with water at those conferences. As they stand, the formal outcomes of the [Summit of the Future](#) (22-23 September, New York City, US) could be more ambitious: the chapter on governance seldom mentions water.
- **Colin Herron, Global Water Partnership (GWP)** suggested that the next programme of work of the WGI look into governance-related innovation. Recent events, namely World Water Week 2023 and the announcement of the winners of the [Water Changemaker Awards](#), shed light on innovation from a policy/governance as well as a business/entrepreneurial perspective. Notably, following the 2023 World Water Week, a [UN-Water Task Force on Innovation](#) was created to explore policies to foster water innovation.
- **Mohamed Nbou, UCLG-Africa** remarked that COP 27 (Egypt, 2022) and COP 28 (United Arab Emirates, 2023) had catalysed the water debate given the organising countries' high levels of water stress. At COP28, USD 84 billion were put on the table for the [Loss and Damage Fund](#), and financing water was part of the discussions. He stressed that we cannot talk about governance without talking about financing, and that financing should also be pivotal to the 10th World Water Forum (18-25 May, Bali, Indonesia).
- **Linda Lilienfeld, Let's Talk About Water** highlighted the collaboration between the National Water and Sanitation Agency (ANA, Brazil) and LTAW on a film compilation to the [preparatory meeting for the Latin American Water Forum](#) in November 2023.

High-level session. Dealing with water in times of crisis and climate change: Focus on Morocco

13. The **Chair** opened the session by emphasising that the recent earthquakes in Morocco, Syria and Turkey as well as the increasing number of climate disasters demonstrate the need for resilient water governance in times of crisis.

14. **Abdelaziz Zerouali, Director of Research and Water Planning, Ministry of Equipment and Water, Morocco** highlighted the impact of climate change on water reserves, noting a decrease in both drinking water and irrigation resources in recent years in Morocco. The Director emphasised the importance of governance in managing water resources at national, regional and provincial levels, highlighting the national government's collaborative efforts with regional partners for effective oversight and risk mitigation. The severity of drought conditions prompted the creation of a [National Water Commission](#) chaired by the Minister for Infrastructure and Water, to address extreme situations and ensure equitable water allocation. The process for drawing up drought management plans includes the assessment of the current situation, the identification of security options, and the implementation of the plan. As part of the current drought response plan, the Director presented solutions to address water scarcity such as the creation of the AI Jadida desalination plant. He also stressed major changes in water policy, including [Law 36-15 of 2018](#), which seeks to establish a legal framework for seawater desalination, strengthen the institutional framework, provide tools for protecting and preserve water resources, and improve the conditions for preventing extreme phenomena linked to climate change. Morocco considers three levers of water policy: conventional water sources (e.g. dams, water transfers, rainwater collection),

unconventional water sources (e.g. desalination plants, wastewater treatment plants) and water management (e.g. hydraulic efficiency programme). Finally, the Director shared plans for completing a comprehensive national water resource management plan by 2024-2025, with collaboration from international experts and financial institutions to address governance challenges and ensure sustainable water management practices.

15. **Noureddine Ait L'haj, Vice-President of the Moroccan Association of Mayors (AMPCC)** highlighted Morocco's exposure to water stress due to climate change, stressing the international significance of these challenges and their potential impact on peace and migration. He outlined Morocco's measures to address water scarcity, including ratifying international conventions, developing legislative frameworks, and implementing programmes and partnerships to mitigate climate change impacts and improve livelihoods. When discussing the role of subnational authorities in water management and the integration of water resources into national plans, he underscored the importance of developing long-term programmes to improve access to drinking water supply, emphasising infrastructure investment, awareness-raising, and collaboration with subnational players and citizens as well as shared responsibility among political stakeholders to address water challenges through resource mobilisation and solidarity.

16. **Badria Benjelloun, Director of the Urban Planning Department, Ministry of National Planning, Housing, and Urban Policy** highlighted the pressure on water resources within city centres due to urban expansion, and the importance of anticipating and adapting to climate change, which poses a significant threat to Morocco. She emphasised the need for securing investments in water infrastructure to mitigate these risks, and the importance of the [Investment Charter](#) in supporting innovative projects aimed at addressing disparities in water access. National strategic projects focusing on reducing environmental impacts and water consumption are overseen by inter-ministerial committees chaired by the Head of State.

The cumulative effects of natural hazards due to climate change cost Morocco more than [USD 575 million per year](#), prompting the need for a national risk prevention strategy. The Ministry is working on the [Urbanisation Aptitude Map](#) ("*Cartes d'aptitude à l'urbanisation*"), a tool for resilient land use planning co-financed by the [Natural Disaster Relief Fund](#) ("*Fonds de lutte contre les effets des catastrophes naturelles*"), facilitating governance and decision-making for natural risk prevention and protection. She also discussed urbanisation-induced soil impermeability, stressing the importance of urban planning and integrated water resource management to ensure water availability, ecosystem protection, and climate resilience. Moroccan planning regulations have an incentive system in place to encourage the creation of permeable spaces in built-up zones, where new developments with a high [soil permeability coefficient](#) ("*Coefficient de perméabilité des sols*") can be granted an additional 15% of permitted floor space .

The Director presented the Moroccan-German [Circular Economy of Water in Urban Areas Project](#) ("*Economie circulaire de l'eau en milieu urbain*"), which aims to implement circular economy principles to water (Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repair and Recycle) to achieve seven outcomes: sustainable supply, eco-design, industrial and territorial ecology, economy of functionality, responsible consumption, and wastewater recycling and valorisation. The project's four main axes (planning and reference framework, participative vision and circular water management, data management, and capacity building) include diagnostic assessments, stakeholder mapping, cross-territorial water cycle analyses, data consolidation, and capacity building initiatives to enhance awareness and standardisation among stakeholders.

17. **Soraya Khalil, Director of Technical Affairs and Relations with Professionals, Ministry of National Planning, Housing, and Urban Policy** outlined the current water availability in Morocco, which falls under the category of water scarcity (less than 1000 m³/hab/yer) with a water availability of 606 m³/capita/year. She detailed the collaborative efforts of various ministries in benchmarking Moroccan initiatives against global practices, focusing on controlling and rationalising drinking water consumption, promoting water efficiency measures, and using unconventional water resources. The roadmap for reducing water consumption in the residential sector encompasses five pillars: regulation and

standardisation, technical support, capacity building, pilot projects, and incentives and funding. Examples include the development of regulations for sanitation management and the domestic use of rainwater, technical references for water-saving construction, the establishment of sanitation approval systems, and pilot projects for housing with lower water consumption.

18. **Oumar Ba, Mayor of Ndiob, President of the Association of Mayors of Senegal, and President of the Council of Territorial Communities of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA)** underscored Africa's fundamental challenge with water access and governance, highlighting how these issues can lead to local conflicts and even tensions between states. The contradiction of losing billions of cubic metres of water annually while facing water scarcity was underlined, urging for solutions to address water access and consumption in agriculture and industry. He stressed the importance of resilience, emphasising the need to learn from nature and adapt to challenges rather than trying to control nature. He referenced the [OECD Principles on Water Governance](#) (2015), advocating for their implementation at the subnational level to address water challenges effectively, and highlighted Senegal's approach of questioning and collaborating with experts and international entities.

19. Following the presentations made by the Moroccan authorities and the UEMOA, the floor was opened for other interventions.

- **Nabil Benazzouz, Moroccan Federation of Consulting and Engineering (FMCI)** referenced the [5th Mediterranean Water Forum](#) (5-7 February 2024, Tunis, Tunisia) organised by the IME in coordination with the Tunisian National Water Exploitation and Distribution Company (SONEDE). Recognising the need for inclusive collaboration, he pointed the need of coordinating interventions among stakeholders for effectiveness, such as involving landscape engineers in green space design. He underscored the importance of technological innovations, such as atmospheric water generators powered by solar energy in remote areas, and insisted on the need for active listening to both social needs and nature.
- **Oriana Romano, OECD Secretariat** reflected on the international landscape regarding circular economy initiatives in urban settings, noting that while it is not a new concept, long-term circular economy strategies are on the rise, particularly in the water sector. She highlighted the challenges faced by cities and regions in implementing circular economy practices, with regulatory, financial, and cultural barriers being more significant than technical obstacles. She mentioned tools developed by the OECD to address these challenges such as the [OECD Checklist for Action and Scoreboard on the Governance of the Circular Economy in Cities and Regions](#) (2020).
- **Joannie Leclerc, SUEZ** highlighted Morocco's expertise in water governance and its holistic approach to water issues. She shared two experiences aligned with the presentations: efforts at SUEZ to train sub-contractors, linking water conservation with youth employment; and the importance of public-private collaboration in managing alternative stormwater solutions. In discussing the local implementation of the OECD Principles on Water Governance, she insisted that there is room to explore creativity through innovative or unconventional approaches. For example, in Senegal, SUEZ is substituting chlorine with locally-produced salt from a women's cooperative at Lake Guiers, offering tangible solutions to reduce chemical use and engage stakeholders in managing water resources.
- **Eric Tardieu, INBO** underlined the increasing complexity of public policy organisation, the need for inter-ministerial collaboration, and engagement between national and local levels, as well as with private actors like property developers and sub-contractors. He asked about the role of private insurers and banks in water governance, especially their responses, expectations, and concerns regarding water challenges.
- **Barbara Schreiner, WIN** asked delegates about the consideration of gender dynamics in addressing the water crisis, particularly in terms of resilience and impacts. She questioned whether

urban, rural, or national strategies accounted for potential differences in how the water crisis affects men and women, especially during episodes of drought.

- **Andrew Allan, University of Dundee** asked the speakers about challenges encountered in navigating existing legal frameworks and whether they posed obstacles to progress.

20. **Abdelaziz Zerouali, Ministry of Equipment and Water, Morocco** underscored the need for standardised criteria to define water stress thresholds to facilitate a common response to water scarcity, and the importance of cohesive governance structures and consistent data reporting in managing water resources effectively. He provided insights into ongoing efforts to establish national water information systems and revise regulatory frameworks to accommodate evolving water needs, particularly in the context of water reuse and irrigation amid drought conditions. Specific initiatives include integrating smart groundwater metering technologies and regulatory reforms to incentivise responsible water use. Regarding insurance coverage for water-related risks, the Predict project in Morocco provides rainfall data for a given catchment area to assess potential risks and inform insurers accordingly, but this remains largely unaddressed globally. The Natural Disaster Relief Fund is expected to facilitate negotiations between basins and insurers to address the financial implications of data monitoring for effective disaster management.

21. **Aziza Akhmouch, OECD Secretariat** concluded by summarising the session. First, there is a need for a comprehensive approach to water management beyond immediate crises, aligning with the long-standing message of the OECD on the systemic nature of water risks. Second, responses to water scarcity should not only stem from the supply side but also from the demand side (e.g. demand management, water use efficiency). These solutions can range from economic instruments such as pricing signals to foster water conservation, drawing attention to the need for nuanced approaches to ensure both affordability and sustainability. Third, effective water management requires a strategic focus on risk management and long-term sustainability. While acknowledging the institutional fragmentation challenge at various levels of government, governance is precisely a means to manage complexity and align political cycles with long-term planning horizons. She concluded by highlighting the need for continuous public awareness and political commitment to address water challenges comprehensively, beyond crises.

Towards the 10th World Water Forum

22. The session shared updates with WGI members on the progress of the thematic, regional and political processes of the [10th World Water Forum](#) and the main milestones until the Forum, to be held on 18-25 May in Bali, Indonesia.

23. **YoonJin Kim, Director of the 10th World Water Forum** thanked WGI members for their contributions and involvement in the preparatory process, notably on the sub-theme on Governance, Cooperation and Hydro-diplomacy, and provided an overview of progress towards the Forum. Two stakeholder consultation meetings have been held for the interlinked thematic, political, and regional processes. The [Bali Youth Plan](#) involves 30 global youth organisations and emphasises the inclusion of young voices. Approximately 280 sessions are under development, with 11 to 13 parallel sessions each day.

- The thematic process will feature 105 topic sessions, 30 synthesis topic sessions, and six synthesis sub-theme sessions covering the topics of 1) water security and prosperity, 2) water for humans and nature, 3) disaster risk reduction and management, 4) governance, cooperation, and hydro-diplomacy, 5) sustainable water finance, and 6) knowledge and innovation.
- The regional process will feature 33 regional sessions and four synthesis regional sessions across four groups: the Mediterranean (led by the Mediterranean Water Institute, IME), Africa (led by the African Ministers Council on Water, AMCOW), Asia Pacific (co-led by the Asia-Pacific Water

Forum, Asia Water Council, and Asian Development Bank), and the Americas (led by the Inter-American Development Bank, IDB).

- Regarding the political process, invitations were extended to 36 Heads of State, followed by 70 ministers, 350+ parliamentarians, and local, regional, and basin authorities.
- Finally, high-level panels will be organised to cover the three pillars of the forum: political, thematic, and regional processes.

24. **Eric Tardieu, INBO** presented updates on the Forum Declaration and the Heads of State and parliamentarians processes being led by the Indonesian presidency and a group of Indonesian parliamentarians, respectively. The draft declaration is spearheaded by the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs with input from countries participating in the Forum and has been discussed in two meetings. The declaration covers water governance, proposes a World Lakes Day and the establishment of a water excellence centre in Indonesia. Discussions on basin management at the Forum will tackle governance, planning, financing, technical systems, integration of water and nature, and transboundary cooperation.

25. WGI members shared updates on the Sub-theme 4 on Governance cooperation and hydro-diplomacy:

- **Oriana Romano, OECD Secretariat** explained that the governance theme, led by the OECD, is composed of five topics: international collaboration at all levels, decentralised cooperation, enhanced cross-sectoral dialogue and cooperations, active stakeholder engagement, and transparent and accountable institutions and legal frameworks. After the second stakeholder meeting in Bali in October 2023, 15 thematic events (three for each topic) were proposed, three cross-cutting events, and two high-level events focusing on water governance and hydro-diplomacy. The topic 4. C on policy coherence will deliver three sessions focusing on freshwater-ocean connections, water and circular economy, and local water governance. The latter will feature the launch of the OECD Handbook on the local implementation of the OECD Principles on Water Governance.
- **Mohamed Nbou, UCLG Africa** shared updates on topic (4.B) with sessions focusing on decentralised water management, cooperation in water governance, and innovative approaches to water governance, led by ANA Brazil, UNESCO and Senegal respectively. Each session will include a panel discussion, with the decentralised water management session aiming for structured dialogues between national and local levels, involving diverse stakeholders such as the private sector and youth. The third session will consist of a tour de table where stakeholders with varied perspectives can share innovative ideas and practical recommendations.
- **Pierre-Alain Roche, ASTEE** updated members on the stakeholder engagement topic (4.D). The first session, led by Waterhead Australia, focuses on transforming crises into opportunities, recognising civil society's key role in addressing water management challenges. The second session, organised by the International Water Secretariat, will highlight the significance of marginalised individuals in water management. The third session, led by the Australian Water for Women Fund, will delve into the influence of local cultures on water management, emphasising ancestral wisdom. The cross-cutting session will centre on ensuring equitable water access for both humans and nature.
- **Barbara Schreiner, WIN** updated members on the transparency and integrity topic (4.E). The first session aims to engage non-state actors, in freshwater resources management by analysing trends and challenges in national and international water laws. It will feature a diverse panel including youth representatives, members from the Mekong River Commission and the Water and Artists Convention. The second session will explore topics like climate resilience and the human right to water and sanitation. The third session will address the protection of the rights of marginalised groups in water management, covering areas such as disaster risk reduction and sexual corruption.

A cross-cutting theme across these sessions is the emphasis on hearing the unheard, highlighting the voices of grassroots organisations and local NGOs.

26. During the tour de table of WGI members added:

- **Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi, UCLG Africa** highlighted the risk of conflicts due to “too much” and “too little” water, emphasising the importance of organisations like WGI to engage in managing these global water-related challenges.
- **Filipe Sampaio, ANA Brazil** announced there would be a Latin American pavilion at the 10th World Water Forum.
- **Yumiko Asayama, Japan Water Forum**, as a coordinator overseeing the Asia-Pacific regional sessions, shared plans for sub-regional and thematic discussions, including topics related to science, governance, and finance, with a particular focus on Pacific governance issues.

Handbook on the local implementation of the OECD Principles on Water Governance

27. **Oriana Romano, OECD Secretariat** presented the draft *Handbook on the local implementation of the OECD Principles on Water Governance*. A call for contributions was issued in September 2023 using an online survey, which WGI members shared with their networks and constituencies. The submitted practices were reviewed by the steering committee of the WGI and the OECD secretariat to ensure that the minimum selection criteria were met (e.g. refer to well-documented publications, refer to at least one of the OECD Principles, etc.). A meta-analysis of collected practices was conducted to identify commonalities, cross-cutting messages, challenges and lessons learned on water governance. As a result of this work, the Handbook contains 52 concrete examples of how the Principles have been put in practice through public, private and non-profit actions in different cities, regions, and basins. The main challenges include short-termism, insufficient coordination across levels of government, lack of holistic perspective, lack of capacity, and insufficient data. Key lessons learned related to the importance of building capacities, developing innovative practices, unlocking financial support, improving performance, and aligning policies.

28. During the tour de table discussion, WGI members reacted to the Handbook:

- **Ian Barker, Expert** highlighted that full transparency and disclosure on the performance of water and sanitation service providers could ultimately undermine water users’ trust in service providers. A key attribute of good water governance is monitoring stakeholders’ trust in water services provision and having a feedback mechanism to integrate scrutiny arising from increased transparency.
 - **Aziza Akhmouch, OECD Secretariat** agreed there is broad consensus on the need for transparency but the detailed actions can sometimes have counter-productive effects. Many other Principles might have unintended consequences as well depending on their level of implementation. For example, more data disclosure could unveil previously concealed water governance problems for which responsible authorities might be blamed. Stakeholder engagement can lead to consultation fatigue, capture or delays in decision-making etc. Building consensus among OECD countries around a same set of high-level, generic Principles acknowledging the diversity of situations was challenging, but specificity and granularity can be addressed only through a case-by-case approach.
- **Andrew Allan, University of Dundee** inquired whether the key challenges for policy-making and implementation detailed in Chapter 3 were conclusions drawn from the practices in Chapter 4 and questioned the sequence of these two Chapters. He also suggested to simplify the language, especially in Chapter 1, to make the Handbook accessible to a wider audience.

- **Mostafa Biad, French Development Agency (AFD)** raised concerns that the target audience was not defined clearly enough, since a very diverse set of stakeholders are involved in water management at the local level. He underlined the importance of giving instructions on how to use the case studies described in the Handbook and suggested highlighting key takeaways in bullet points after each case study.
- **The Chair** explained that removing technical information from collected practices while retaining their practical nature could be very challenging. She suggested to indicate whether the practices were replicable or not, and to provide contact details for each practice, to make the Handbook more practical.
- **Nabil Benazzouz, FMCI & IME** stressed the need to use coherent and simple terminology to make the document understandable to the target audience, especially operators and local stakeholders.
- **Laura Tanco Ballesteros, Jucar River Basin Authority** highlighted the usefulness of the [OECD Water Governance Indicator Framework](#) (2018), especially in situations where issues faced by operators cannot be solved with additional financial resources or different regulation.
- **Joannie Leclerc, SUEZ** inquired if new trends and governance had been identified since the [Implementing the OECD Principles on Water Governance \(2018\)](#) report.

29. **Oriana Romano, OECD Secretariat** concluded that the revised version will clarify the intended use and users of the Handbook, keeping the focus on straightforward and inspirational examples. She recognised the importance of achieving replicability across contexts but stressed the challenging nature of the task due to distinct geographic settings. Compared to the [Implementing the OECD Principles on Water Governance \(2018\)](#) report, the Handbook emphasises, amongst others, circular water economy and digital innovation practices. While the effectiveness, efficiency, and trust dimensions of the Principles remain relevant and adaptable to local contexts, the tools and methods used for their local implementation may have evolved in the last decade.

30. The video [Water Conservation in Chefchaouen](#) produced by Let's Talk About Water as part of the [Mayors Make Movies initiative](#) was displayed. It includes an interview of **Mohamed Sefiani, Mayor of Chefchaouen** and member of the [OECD Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth initiative](#), explaining the efforts made by the city and local community in improving access to drinking water and sanitation during a period of drought.

Day 2: 6 March 2024

Sustainable blue economies in cities, regions, and basins

31. The **Chair** recalled the forthcoming launch of the OECD synthesis report [The Blue Economy in Cities and Regions: A Territorial Approach](#) that highlights the link between ocean and freshwater management and the role of basins and subnational governments. The report is based on 80+ survey responses from cities, regions, basins and small island developing states (SIDS) across 41 OECD and non-OECD countries. The Chair thanked the collaborative efforts of several international organisations, including WGI members (ICLEI, INBO, Resilient Cities Network, and UCLG–Africa), in developing and disseminating the survey.

32. **Juliette Lassman, OECD Secretariat** highlighted that the report emphasises two innovative dimensions of blue economy policy: i) a territorial approach, tailoring policies to local challenges for sustainable blue economies through effective multi-level governance, and ii) the connection between water security and the blue economy, extending its definition beyond coasts and oceans to freshwater bodies like rivers and lakes. The report underscores the potential of the blue economy to enhance local economic development while protecting blue ecosystems. The blue economy is both vulnerable to water-related risks exacerbated by climate change, and a contributor to carbon emissions, water pollution and environmental degradation. The report calls on cities and regions to develop RISC-proof blue economies that are Resilient, Inclusive, Sustainable, and Circular by addressing governance gaps related to policy making, policy coherence, and policy implementation. The report concludes with a RISC Assessment Framework as a self-assessment tool for local and regional governments to evaluate the resilience, inclusiveness, sustainability and circularity of their blue economy and the level of implementation of the enabling governance conditions to get there. The Framework includes a 'Whole of Water' Checklist offering 10 actionable steps for governments to embed water security into blue economy strategies. The Framework has already been pilot-tested in four OECD and non-OECD cities and regions: the cities of Accra (Ghana), Porto (Portugal) and eThekwin (South Africa), and the region of Los Lagos (Chile).

33. **Eric Tardieu, INBO** highlighted that governance holds particular significance for coastal cities, especially considering the economic potential of the blue economy, and requires investment in both upstream and downstream solidarity to address the challenges posed by climate change. Establishing a dialogue between cities and broader regional and basin scales for the blue economy is crucial, while addressing the complexity of urban water management, including water, sanitation, and urban planning. He suggested to further explore this issue at the 10th World Water Forum.

34. During the tour de table discussion, WGI members reacted to the report findings:

- **Joannie Leclerc, SUEZ** underscored the need for heightened awareness of the issue of saline intrusion, which is growing and expected to amplify over time.
- **Juan Antonio Guijarro, Aquae Foundation** stressed the importance of a holistic approach to water challenges. Traditionally, end-of-pipe solutions have been used, but factors such as climate change and population growth are making piecemeal solutions ever more inadequate. A comprehensive approach considering water's interconnectedness with ecosystems and economic

activities like tourism and agriculture is essential. He emphasised the complexity of coordinating stakeholders and the need to involve new ones, such as the private sector. Businesses are increasingly interested in becoming environmentally neutral and taking measures to mitigate their environmental, carbon, water and biodiversity footprint. By facilitating the monetisation of environmental and social services, mechanisms such as voluntary carbon credit markets could address water and biodiversity concerns. Other initiatives such as handbooks and pilots are also crucial for accelerating a holistic approach to water challenges.

- **Ruth Mathews, SIWI** highlighted the [Source-to-Sea Action Platform's](#) role in uniting freshwater, coastal, and marine communities. The source-to-sea approach is a structured process aimed at creating a shared understanding and action plans with roles and responsibilities. To enhance coordination, she suggested continued collaboration through the platform and welcomed new members. Incentives and mechanisms to facilitate governance coherence are needed to integrating the blue economy with water security. She underscored the importance of connections between upstream activities and downstream ecosystem services benefits, and expressed optimism about accelerating source-to-sea management, emphasising its potential to maximise benefits across the entire source-to-sea system.
- **Leon Kapetas, Resilience Cities Network** discussed ecosystem services justice in urban areas, suggesting its application as a framework to scrutinise both the distributive and procedural aspects of benefits from the blue economy. This approach involves assessing who benefits and how decisions are made, including understanding potential trade-offs in decision-making. Using Athens as an example, he emphasised the need to evaluate the impacts of cities and economic activities on biodiversity and ecosystems, particularly in Greek aquaculture facing challenges in balancing food security and marine ecosystem resilience. Recent research also showed temperature fluctuations impacting aquatic species health, affecting the region's blue economy, food availability, and urban prices.
- **Susana Neto, Lisbon University** raised three points. First, the need for territorial integration from source-to-sea, considering both bodies of water and interconnected territories. Second, the need for effective institutional capacity to implement preventive and remediation measures. Drawing from the example of Portugal, she underscored challenges aligning territorial plans towards common objectives and translating goals into actionable plans. Third, the need for sustainable blue development, considering social, institutional, and environmental dimensions alongside economic factors. She called for deeper reflection on the long-term impacts of coastal and maritime planning efforts, which are particularly relevant for countries like Portugal with extensive maritime territories.
- **Mostafa Biad, AFD** highlighted growing water scarcity and climate challenges in the Mediterranean and MENA regions, including Morocco, insisting on the growing potential for desalination. While Morocco's desalination programme is poised for rapid expansion and is positioned the main solution for addressing water scarcity in coastal regions, he underlined the significant negative impacts from brine discharge on marine life and asked about case studies and regulations to address them.
- **Barbara Schreiner, WIN** highlighted that the report lacked consideration of corruption as a major challenge and risk factor to the blue economy, despite its pervasive presence across various sectors such as fisheries. Policy gaps, fragmented governance, and poor data sharing can facilitate corruption. Using Durban's example of corruption in water management, she underscored the urgency of addressing corruption at all levels of governance within the blue economy.
- **Ruben Fernandes, Aguas e Energia de Porto (Portugal)**, confirmed that Porto pilot-tested the OECD RISC Assessment Framework, providing comments and observations on the validity, practicality and usefulness of the Framework at the subnational level. He underscored the significance of nature-based solutions in enhancing local resilience. Porto is taking a proactive stance in addressing urban floods through green infrastructure rather than conventional grey

infrastructure. As a water utility managing the entire urban water cycle and energy, he proposed an integrated approach to water management, stressing the interconnectedness of all waterbodies. This approach could serve as a crucial tool in overcoming governance challenges within the blue economy, particularly in engaging diverse stakeholders towards common solutions.

- **Linda Lilienfeld, Let's Talk About Water** conveyed a sense of urgency regarding the disconnect between policy discussions and real-world challenges. While confirming the importance of connecting freshwater and seawater issues, she questioned concrete actions to accelerate financial solutions and clarify the vision around water. Pointing out language barriers and ambiguity in water-related discussions, she called for collective action to showcase progress and address pressing water management challenges.
- **Mohamed Nbou, UCLG-Africa** noted a prevalent lack of understanding of the blue economy among surveyed cities and regions. Highlighting a lack of capacities, he stressed the need for wider dissemination of knowledge about the blue economy, and mentioned challenges in traditional fishing practices in Africa due to limited access to information, transport and essential infrastructure.

35. **Juliette Lassman, OECD Secretariat** thanked WGI delegates and reminded members that the report would be launched in a dedicated session of the [UN Ocean Decade Conference](#) (10-12 April, 2024, Barcelona) and presented during a session on the blue economy at the 10th World Water Forum on 22 May at 10:20.

36. **Oriana Romano, OECD Secretariat** clarified that the ocean and blue economy have undergone extensive analysis from different angles, as exemplified by the OECD's multidisciplinary approach involving multiple directorates. The contribution of the [OECD Cities and Regions for a Blue Economy Programme](#) lies in advancing a territorial approach and emphasising the link between ocean and freshwater. The next step involves conducting "deep dive" case studies to offer in-depth support governments aspiring to develop RISC-proof blue economies, with the first study focusing on the metropolitan area of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). The dialogue for additional case studies, particularly in Africa, remains open. The Programme also established an OECD Task Force on Cities and Regions for a Blue Economy composed of 40+ cities, regions and basins, which aims to respond to the growing interest and demand for practical tools on implementation. The Programme strives to bridge the governance gaps identified in the report by providing concrete tools and support to cities and regions worldwide.

37. **Lamia Kamal-Chaoui, OECD CFE Director** highlighted the OECD's horizontal approach to water issues, noting efforts to elevate this issue over the past decade through platforms like the WGI. The OECD provides policy guidance on the ground, as exemplified by the [G20-OECD Policy Toolkit to Mobilise Funding and Financing for Inclusive and Quality Infrastructure Investment in Regions and Cities](#), which features financing mechanisms applicable to various issues, including those discussed at the WGI. The Director stressed the importance of involving the private sector in finding solutions and highlighted OECD's engagement with stakeholders through committees on tourism and entrepreneurship, the [OECD Geospatial Lab](#), as well as the [Local Development Forum](#). She called for place-based strategies to foster synergies across different sectoral policies, including the blue economy, and reiterated the OECD's support for piloting the RISC Assessment Framework across cities.

Water and circular economy

38. **María Ferrer Estévez, OECD Secretariat** presented the preliminary results of the OECD-IDB study on Water and Circular Economy in selected countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), exploring the challenges and the opportunities of applying circular economy principles to water in the region. She reminded that "circular water economy" refers to reducing water use in production and consumption processes across sectors, reusing and recycling water, and recovering energy and materials

from wastewater treatment. The results stem from a survey based on the [OECD Principles on Water Governance](#) across 8 countries: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay. The final report will also include Chile and Paraguay. Within the framework of the study, the “circular water economy” encompasses the reduction of water use, reuse and recycling of wastewater, and the recovery of energy and materials from wastewater treatment. Three preliminary findings emerge from this study. First, the main drivers for the circular water economy in LAC are of environmental nature, implying that the “economic “ aspects and impacts of the circular economy are not yet fully considered. Water scarcity and resource constraints are pointed out by most countries as the top driver. Second, although the circular water economy has technically been applied for a long time in the region, it is still a relatively new concept in terms of policy. Circular economy policies in the region do not always include water resources, and water policies often miss opportunities emerging from the recovery of energy and materials from wastewater treatment. Third, governance-related obstacles may hinder the transition to a circular water economy. According to the survey results, inadequate regulatory frameworks, insufficient financial resources, lack of awareness, and institutional fragmentation are the main challenges and areas to improve in LAC.

39. **Sergio Campos, Water and Sanitation, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)** highlighted the significance of applying the circular economy to water in the context of the LAC region. With approximately one-third of the world's freshwater resources, over 200 million people still grapple with water supply disruptions in LAC. The challenges are compounded by climate change, exemplified by events like the ongoing Amazon drought in Brazil and a notable drought in Mexico City. The recommendations of the OECD-IDB forthcoming report can unleash the potential of innovation for a circular water economy in LAC. Furthermore, public-private partnerships (PPPs) are essential to embrace circular concepts. Examples such as [Sanepar](#) in Brazil demonstrate how water utility companies can progress in adopting circular practices, such as efficient biogas production and energy-neutral operations. One of the leading examples worldwide are water utility companies in Chile treating 99% of their wastewater by integrating circular economy principles into their daily operations.

40. During the tour de table discussion, delegates commented on the preliminary findings of the OECD-IDB study:

- **Belén Ramos, Spanish Water and Wastewater Association (AEAS)** highlighted that circular economy initiatives are helping Spain deal with water scarcity and degraded soils. Some regions reuse 98% of used water for agriculture, industry, street cleaning, forest irrigation, and gardens. Spain also reuses 85% of sludge generated in wastewater treatment plants in agriculture as natural fertilisers. The main challenges relate to quality assurance and the social acceptance of reusing treated wastewater and by-products, which requires strengthened regulations. Another challenge lies in ensuring the financial viability and creating markets for recovered products including water, energy and fertilisers.
- **Mostafa Biad, AFD** highlighted two main areas for improvement: reducing non-revenue water and overall consumption. Non-revenue water primarily stems from agricultural use rather than municipal sources, especially in places such as North and West Africa. Addressing this requires a comprehensive understanding of and accounting for both physical and commercial losses to improve the economic viability of water operators. Efforts to reduce consumption have to extend beyond households to include the industrial and tourism sectors. Additionally, major challenges lie in implementing regulations in sectors characterised by high informality, such as the construction sector.
- **Joannie Leclerc, SUEZ** presented two examples of applying circular economy principles to water. For instance, Egypt blends treated wastewater with freshwater for irrigation, while in Denmark, phosphorus is recovered from wastewater. Acknowledging that recycling material and infrastructure is critical to advance the circular transition in the water sector, she highlighted that SUEZ has been working on the recycling of membranes used in desalination plants.

- **Dominique Gatel, Veolia** concurred that a major challenge was the paradigm shift needed in regulation to enable circular business models to emerge. France is currently implementing two laws related to the circularity of water use and infrastructure. He drew attention to regulatory sandboxes as a framework to test innovative practices and showcase commercial viability, which is crucial for industrial investors concerned with return on capital and lengthy payback periods.
 - **Ruben Fernandes, Águas e Energia do Porto** expressed Porto's commitment to circular economy across three pillars: water efficiency, water use, and energy generation. Using AI allowed Águas e Energia do Porto to reduce non-revenue water from 50% in 2006 to approximately 10% in 2024. Porto is pilot-testing the decentralised production of reused water, enabling the cleaning of streets and public spaces in the city. Another pilot project will transform sludge into synthetic gas and other by-products that can be used as nutrients for soil regeneration.
 - **Eric Tardieu, INBO** made three recommendations on the report. First, to add a diagram showing the perimeters included in the "circular economy of water". Second, to formalise the obstacles as an introduction to the recommendations at the end of the report. Third, to introduce the wording 'business case' or 'business model' beyond just 'financing' to convey the need to find new economic and business models.
 - **Leon Kapetas, Resilient Cities Network** presented an example from Rotterdam where local authorities have developed a large scale [system of multifunctional roofs](#) to tackle both floods and water scarcity. During floods, water is stored below the green roof and irrigates the vegetation. Despite the positive cost-benefit analysis, there does not seem to be a clear business model for such practices.
 - **Juan Antonio Guijarro, Aquae Foundation** highlighted the need to monetise circular solutions to make investments easier to mobilise. For example, wastewater treatment plants can become sources of energy and resource rather than just costs. Since public budgets are static financial visions, they lack a dynamic vision of economic flows; bringing on board other stakeholders could help close this gap and implement longer-term solutions. He underscored that there is still room for improvement in customer management in water supply systems, since a large share of non-revenue water is due to non-meter consumption, fraud, and illegal consumption. Concrete examples show water utilities can be profitable and invest in infrastructure without raising prices for water users. Artificial intelligence tools can predict frauds and detect leaks, demanding expert assessment and support tailored to each case.
 - **Fayrouz Eldabbagh, International Water Management Institute (IWMI)** shared an experience from Egypt based on aquaponics, which uses crop byproducts as feed for fish in aquaculture and uses the treated wastewater from fish for irrigation.
41. Moroccan representatives then presented water and circular economy practices in the country.
- **Mohamed Chtioui, Tensift Water Basin Agency (ABHT)** presented circular economy initiatives carried out in the Tensift basin to reduce water consumption and enhance the reuse of wastewater. Water demand management in the basin is key to ensure water availability for tourism and agriculture, the most prominent sectors of the Marrakesh economy. The [Tensift joint international laboratory](#) has conducted research and developed projects in the fields of artificial intelligence, groundwater modelling, and water accounting, enabling the mapping of water resources and the adoption of adaptive measures. The Agency developed schools to enable local farmers to minimise water losses in irrigation, simultaneously improving yield. In a recent project in Marrakesh, 246 hectares of green spaces were developed and irrigated by tertiary wastewater; however, standards for tertiary water use in irrigation are lacking. The Regional Council financed a comprehensive water consumption reduction study with to target large municipal water consumers such as hospitals and schools. The ABHT identified around 40 public buildings and engaged with each to

reduce water consumption. He recalled the [Hackathon "Water Show"](#) organised to give a voice to youth projects in the field of water and support them with funding.

- **Khalid Boussetta, Agency for the Development and Rehabilitation of the Medina of Fes (ADER-Fès)** presented the hydraulic networks of the city of Fes. The city is home to various handicrafts industries, which all use considerable amounts of water in their everyday operations. When water is scarce, technicians face challenges in distributing it optimally across the city. He highlighted the importance of innovation by capitalising on technology and encouraging initiatives on managing water scarcity; involving local communities; ensuring justice in access to water; and including water conservation criteria in tenders as soon as possible.
- **Souad Belkeziz, Urban Planning Architect** presented the ancestral hydraulic system of the [khettaras](#) (draining galleries) in Marrakesh established from the very first settlements and developed by all ruling dynasties until the 1980s. These galleries brought water to the city and enabled a well-functioning irrigation system. Marrakesh and its surroundings have a 900 km network of canals and 33 draining galleries that bring water to the city and to its 30 water storage facilities.

42. **María Ferrer Estévez, OECD Secretariat** and **Sergio Campos, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)** thanked WGI members for their examples and ideas and highlighted that the discussion confirmed the challenges and opportunities identified in the OECD-IDB study on circular economy and water in LAC. The OECD Secretariat invited WGI members to share written comments on the draft report and shared the next steps, which include the finalisation of the draft and the launch of the report (Q4 2024).

The next steps of the WGI for 2024-2027

43. Due to time constraints, the last session of day 2 on "The next steps of the WGI for 2024-2027" was not held. The OECD Secretariat will organise a webinar where members will discuss the next steps of the WGI after the finalisation of the ongoing programme of work at the 10th World Water Forum.

Closing

44. The **Chair** thanked members for attending the 19th meeting of the WGI, as well as the government of Morocco, the Steering Committee, the Secretariat and the OECD for organising the meeting. Based on comments and suggestions received, the OECD Secretariat will revise the Handbook on the local implementation of the OECD Principles on Water Governance, the OECD report "The Blue Economy in Cities and Regions", and the OECD–IDB policy dialogue on "Water and circular economy in Latin America".

45. The date and venue of the next WGI meeting will be communicated after the 10th World Water Forum (18-25 May, Bali, Indonesia).