

Revised - Proposed Approach and Work Plan for Workstream 1 - Promote human-rights-based approaches to water, sanitation, wastewater, and water quality across all contexts

Interactive Dialogue (a): Water for People
2026 United Nations Water Conference

PART A — FRAMING

1. Background and Human Rights Framework

Background and mandate

Workstream 1 supports Interactive Dialogue (a): *Water for People – the human rights to water and sanitation, including for those in vulnerable situations, for healthy societies and economies*. The workstream promotes human-rights-based approaches to water, sanitation, wastewater management, and water quality across all contexts, placing people at the centre of policies, governance systems, and service delivery. Particular emphasis is given to ensuring safe, affordable, equitable, and sustainable access for all, especially underserved and marginalised populations.

In accordance with the Terms of Reference established by the Co-Chairs, Workstream 1 is tasked with identifying priority actions and flagship initiatives that can accelerate the realisation of the human rights to water and sanitation and contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6. Given the breadth of expertise represented within the Working Group and the limited timeframe available before submission of the first draft outputs, this concept note proposes a practical, transparent, inclusive, and participatory process to guide the development, review, and selection of Workstream 1 contributions.

Human rights framing

Access to safe drinking water and sanitation is a fundamental human right, essential for health, dignity, equality, and sustainable development. These rights are recognised under international human rights law and elaborated in General Comment No. 15 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as subsequent resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and Human Rights Council.

A human-rights-based approach to water and sanitation requires that services are available, accessible, affordable, acceptable, and of adequate quality (AAAQ). It also requires that policies, institutions, and service delivery systems are guided by the principles of non-discrimination, participation, transparency, and accountability. Central to this approach is the commitment to prioritise those furthest behind, including women and ¹girls, children, persons with disabilities, older persons, Indigenous Peoples, migrants and displaced populations, people experiencing homelessness, and those living in informal settlements and rural areas.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) submission for Interactive Dialogue (a) provides the principal framing document for the work of Workstream 1, as it comprehensively covers many of the thematic issues raised by Member States, UN entities, and other stakeholders in their contributions to the [Interactive Dialogue](#). The paper highlights

¹ Source: [OHCHR Concept Paper for the 2026 UN Water Conference, Interactive Dialogue \(a\)](#).

persistent inequalities in access to water and sanitation, identifies emerging challenges, and sets out priority areas for action to accelerate progress towards the realisation of these rights.

Among its key recommendations are: strengthening policy, institutional, and regulatory frameworks; empowering local and regional governments; promoting meaningful participation, accountability, and civic engagement; aligning financing and economic policies with human rights obligations; addressing discrimination and inequalities; and ensuring that the human rights to water and sanitation remain central to the post-2030 development agenda.

Workstream 1 adopts this human-rights framework as the overarching lens for its work. Accordingly, all proposed Priority Actions and Flagship Initiatives should demonstrate how they advance the human rights to water and sanitation, contribute to reducing inequalities, and deliver tangible benefits for those who are currently underserved or left behind.

Guiding questions for the interactive dialogue

To ensure that Workstream 1 outputs remain focused, practical, and action-oriented, all submissions should respond to one or more of the guiding questions established for this Interactive Dialogue (a). These questions seek to **identify successful experiences, lessons learned, and scalable approaches** that can accelerate the realisation of the human rights to water and sanitation, namely:

1. What successful programme or initiatives around improved **policies, institutional arrangements and regulatory frameworks** have demonstrated progress in extending safe drinking water and sanitation services to underserved and vulnerable populations?
2. What good practices have **strengthened the capacity**, mandate, and role of local and regional governments in delivering equitable, inclusive, and sustainable water and sanitation services?
3. What examples demonstrate how **participation, accountability, transparency, and civic engagement** have improved water and sanitation governance and outcomes for communities, particularly those facing discrimination or exclusion?
4. What **innovative financing, budgeting, investment, or resource-allocation** approaches have successfully expanded access to water and sanitation while advancing equity, inclusion, and human rights?
5. What **lessons learned, emerging practices, or transformative approaches** should inform efforts to place the human rights to water and sanitation at the centre of the post-2030 sustainable development agenda?

All Priority Actions and Flagship Initiatives should clearly indicate which guiding question(s) they address and **show evidence on how they contribute to reducing inequalities and reaching those who are currently underserved, marginalised, or left behind.**

2. Objectives and Guiding Principles of the process

The proposed process is designed to ensure that Workstream 1 develops high-quality, representative, and actionable outputs within the timeframe established by the Co-Chairs. Specifically, the process aims to:

- A. **Provide all participating organisations with an equal opportunity to contribute** Priority Actions and Flagship Initiative proposals.
- B. **Establish a transparent, fair, and objective mechanism** for reviewing and prioritising submissions.
- C. **Foster collective ownership and consensus** around the final Workstream 1 outputs.
- D. **Maximise efficiency and minimise administrative burden** by reducing the number of meetings and streamlining decision-making.

- E. **Deliver credible, evidence-based, and action-oriented outputs** that support Interactive Dialogue (a) and contribute to the objectives of the 2026 UN Water Conference.

The process is guided by three core principles:

Inclusiveness: All participating organisations are encouraged to contribute proposals, share experiences, and participate in the prioritisation process. The approach seeks to draw on the full diversity of expertise, perspectives, and geographical representation within the Working Group.

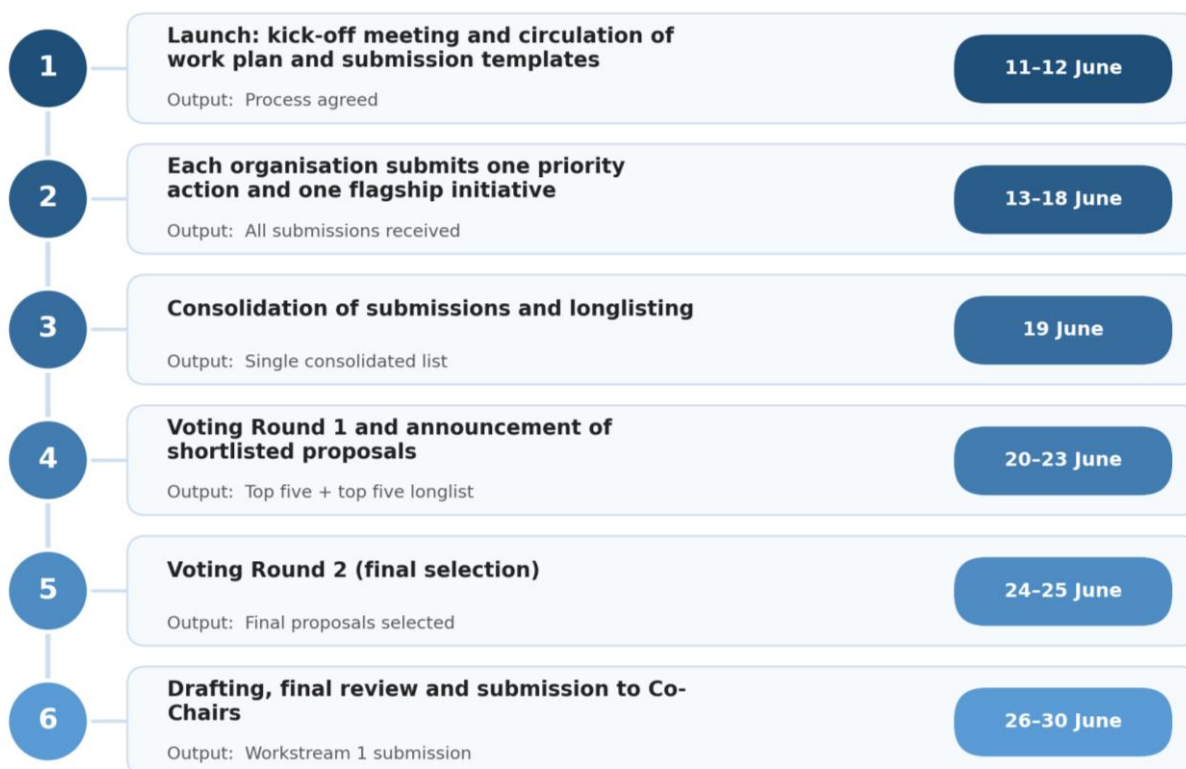
Transparency: Roles, timelines, selection criteria, and decision-making procedures will be clearly communicated. The prioritisation of proposals will be undertaken through a transparent voting process to ensure fairness, credibility, and accountability.

Simplicity: Recognising the limited timeframe available, the process is designed to be practical and efficient. It will rely primarily on concise written submissions, electronic consultation, and online voting, thereby minimising meeting requirements while enabling broad participation.

PART B — THE PROCESS

3. The Process at a Glance

The Workstream 1 process runs as six sequential steps, each with its own dates and output:



4. The Process in Detail

Step 1 — Launch (11–12 June 2026)

The process will commence with a Workstream 1 kick-off meeting, during which the proposed approach, timeline, submission requirements, and selection process will be presented and discussed. Following the meeting, the work plan, submission templates, and supporting guidance materials will be circulated to all participating organisations.

Step 2 — Submission of Proposals (13–18 June 2026)

Each participating organisation may submit **one Priority Action and one Flagship Initiative**. **Alternatively, two or more participating organisations** may jointly submit a single Priority Action and a single Flagship Initiative as a consortium.

Priority Action

Priority Actions are specific policy, institutional, financing, governance, service delivery, capacity-development, or accountability measures that can accelerate progress towards the human rights to water and sanitation and contribute to the achievement of SDG 6 before 2030.

Priority Actions may address any aspect of the human rights to water and sanitation, including:

1. Safe drinking water services;
2. Safe Sanitation services;
3. Wastewater management;
4. Water quality;
5. Human-rights-based governance and accountability;
6. Equity and inclusion; and
7. Other cross-cutting interventions.

Flagship Initiative

Flagship Initiatives are transformative programmes, partnerships, platforms, campaigns, financing mechanisms, or investment initiatives capable of mobilising political commitment, resources, innovation, and collective action beyond the 2026 UN Water Conference and into the post-2030 agenda.

Submission Requirements

A standard submission template will be provided to participating organisations to ensure consistency and comparability across proposals. Submissions will be expected to:

1. Identify the guiding question(s) addressed;
2. Demonstrate how the proposal advances a human-rights-based approach;
3. Explain how it contributes to reaching populations in vulnerable situations and those furthest behind;
4. Outline the expected impact and potential for wider application or scale-up;
5. Describe the proposed implementation and financing approach, where relevant; and
6. Provide evidence from past or ongoing projects, programmes, policies, partnerships, or initiatives that demonstrate the proposed approach is feasible and effective.

To strengthen the evidence base of Workstream 1 outputs, all submissions should include at least one concrete example demonstrating successful implementation of the proposed approach. Examples should be supported by references, publications, evaluations, case studies, programme documentation, or other verifiable sources. Where available, submissions are encouraged to include quantitative results, lessons learned, and evidence of impact.

Priority will be given to proposals that are supported by credible evidence and demonstrate clear potential for replication, scale-up, and measurable contribution to the human rights to water and sanitation.

All submissions will be collected through an online platform (Microsoft Forms) and compiled by the Workstream Coordinator for review and consolidation.

Step 3 — Consolidation and Longlisting (19 June 2026)

Following the submission period, all Priority Action and Flagship Initiative proposals will be consolidated into a single catalogue and circulated to participating organisations in preparation for the first voting round.

At this stage, the Workstream Coordinator will undertake only a limited administrative review to improve clarity and consistency across submissions. This may include:

- Removal or merger of duplicate or substantially similar submissions;
- Harmonisation of terminology where appropriate;
- Clarification or standardisation of proposal titles; and
- Minor editorial adjustments to improve readability.

The Coordinator will also undertake a basic screening to ensure that each proposal:

Addresses at least one of the guiding questions presented in Section 1;

- Demonstrates a clear contribution to a human-rights-based approach to water and sanitation;
- Includes an inclusion dimension, explaining how the proposal benefits individuals and groups in vulnerable situations or those furthest behind;
- Falls within the scope of Interactive Dialogue (a); and
- Provides evidence from past or ongoing projects, programmes, policies, partnerships, or initiatives that demonstrate the proposed approach is feasible and effective, supported by at least one verifiable source or reference.

Where a proposal does not fully meet these minimum requirements, the submitting organisation will be invited to make minor revisions before the commencement of voting.

No technical assessment, qualitative review, or ranking of proposals will be undertaken at this stage. The purpose of the consolidation process is solely to ensure consistency, eligibility, comparability, and a minimum level of evidence across submissions prior to the voting process.

To strengthen the quality and credibility of the final Workstream 1 outputs, participating organisations are encouraged to support their proposals with concrete examples, lessons learned, implementation experience, and, where available, quantitative evidence demonstrating impact and potential for replication or scale-up.

Step 4 — Voting Round 1: Pre-selection (20–22 June 2026)

All participating entities (whether individual organisations or consortia) will be invited to participate in an anonymous electronic voting process to identify the proposals that will advance to the final evaluation round. The purpose of this first voting round is to shortlist the proposals that have the broadest support across the Workstream and warrant further consideration.

Voting Rules

Priority Actions

- Each participating entity will **receive three votes**.
- Votes should be allocated to three different proposals.
- **Participating entities may not vote for their own submission.**

Flagship Initiatives

- Each participating entity will receive **two votes**.
- Votes should be allocated to two different proposals.
- **Participating entities may not vote for their own submission.**

When casting their votes, participants are encouraged to consider the relevance, evidence base, potential impact, scalability, and contribution of each proposal to advancing the human rights to water and sanitation. Particular consideration should be given to proposals that are **supported by credible evidence and build upon successful or emerging programmes, initiatives, partnerships** that have already demonstrated results in practice.

In line with the Terms of Reference, participants are encouraged to prioritise proposals that translate existing knowledge, experience, and **proven approaches into actionable recommendations, rather than creating entirely new concepts**. Preference should therefore be given to proposals that demonstrate a clear evidence base, draw on lessons learned, and show potential for replication, adaptation, or scale-up across different contexts.

Longlisting: Following the close of voting, the Coordinators will compile and rank all proposals based on the total number of votes received.

The **top five Priority Actions and top five Flagship Initiatives will be selected and advanced to the final evaluation and prioritisation round**. The results of the selection process, including the selected proposals, will be circulated to all participating organisations by 23 June 2026.

Step 5 — Voting Round 2: Final selection (24–25 June 2026)

A second and final evaluation round will be conducted using only the selected proposals identified through the Voting Round-1.

To ensure that the final selections reflect both broad support and strategic value, participating organisations will assess each shortlisted proposal against a set of agreed criteria (see table below) and using a five-point scoring scale. The assessment framework should reflect the requirements of the Working Group Terms of Reference, including feasibility, scalability, human rights impact, and the potential to mobilise partnerships and resources.

Alternative Process for a Limited Number of Submissions

The two-stage voting process has been designed to efficiently manage a potentially large number of submissions. However, should the number of eligible proposals be limited, the Workstream may adopt a simplified approach.

If **eight (8) or fewer** eligible Priority Action proposals **and/or eight (8) or fewer** eligible Flagship Initiative proposals are received, **the Coordinators may decide to bypass Voting Round 1 (Pre-selection)**.

In such cases, all eligible proposals will automatically advance to Voting Round 2 (Final Selection), where participating entities will assess and score proposals directly against the agreed assessment criteria.

This simplified approach will reduce administrative burden, avoid unnecessary voting rounds, and enable the Workstream to focus its efforts on evaluating the quality, evidence base, feasibility, scalability, and potential impact of the proposals received.

The Coordinators will notify all participating entities whether the standard or simplified process will be applied following completion of the consolidation and eligibility screening process.

Assessment Framework for Priority Actions

Purpose: Identify evidence-based, feasible and actionable measures that can be initiated or scaled up in the short-to-medium term and contribute directly to implementation.

	Criterion	Description	Weight
1	Evidence Base and Proven Effectiveness	The proposed action is supported by credible evidence from existing projects, programmes, policies or initiatives. Concrete examples, documented results, lessons learned, and verifiable sources are provided to demonstrate that the approach has been successfully implemented and has achieved measurable outcomes.	30%
2	Feasibility and Implementability	The proposed action is realistic, actionable, and capable of being initiated or scaled up in the short-to-medium term. Implementation arrangements, responsible actors, financing pathways, and delivery mechanisms are clearly identified.	30%
3	Scalability and Political Support	The action demonstrates potential for replication and scaling across different contexts and geographies and has demonstrated support from Member States or strong potential to secure such support.	25%
4	Human Rights Impact and Inclusion	The action contributes to the progressive realisation of the human rights to water and sanitation, addresses inequalities, prioritises vulnerable and marginalised groups, and supports the principle of leaving no one behind.	15%

Assessment Framework for Flagship Initiatives

Purpose: Identify transformational, multi-stakeholder initiatives that can drive systemic change beyond the 2026 UN Water Conference and mobilise long-term action and investment.

	Criterion	Description	Weight
1	Transformational Impact and Measurable Results	The initiative has the potential to drive systemic change at scale, accelerate progress on the human rights to water and sanitation, and deliver measurable outcomes. The initiative includes a clear focus on action, accountability, and long-term impact beyond dialogue or commitments.	30%
2	Multi-Stakeholder Partnership and Political Support	The initiative brings together diverse stakeholders around a clearly defined shared objective and demonstrates active or potential support from Member States, UN entities, local and regional governments, civil society, academia, development partners, and the private sector.	25%
3	Evidence Base, Strategic Alignment and Cross-Dialogue Relevance	The initiative is supported by credible evidence and practical experience, aligns with the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework, strengthens existing initiatives and commitments, and creates synergies across Interactive Dialogues and broader water and sustainable development agendas.	25%
4	Resource Mobilisation, Scalability and Sustainability	The initiative demonstrates strong potential to mobilise financing, investment, innovation, capacity development, and other resources. It is scalable, sustainable, and capable of supporting implementation over the medium-to-long term.	20%

Scoring of the proposals

Participating entities will assess each shortlisted proposal by assigning a rating of one to five stars against each applicable assessment criterion. The Coordinators will compile all scores, apply the agreed weighting for each criterion, and calculate the aggregate score for each proposal.

Proposals will then be ranked according to their final weighted score. The highest-ranked Priority Actions and Flagship Initiatives will be selected as the final outputs of Workstream 1 and incorporated into the submission to the Co-Chairs.

Rating	Description
★★★★★	Excellent – strongly meets the criterion and demonstrates exceptional potential
★★★★☆	Strong – meets the criterion well with only minor limitations
★★★☆☆	Moderate – adequately meets the criterion but could be strengthened
★★☆☆☆	Limited – partially meets the criterion and requires significant improvement
★☆☆☆☆	Weak – does not sufficiently meet the criterion

Step 6 — Drafting, Final Review and Submission (26–30 June 2026)

Following the completion of the final evaluation and prioritisation process, the Coordinator and Drafting Lead will prepare the Workstream 1 submission based on the selected Priority Actions and Flagship Initiatives.

The draft submission will be circulated electronically to all Working Group members for a final review to ensure accuracy, clarity, and alignment with the outcomes of the selection process. Members will be invited to provide suggestion to refinements, and any factual corrections within the agreed review period.

The Coordinator and Drafting Lead will consolidate and address comments as appropriate, while maintaining fidelity to the proposals endorsed through the Workstream’s selection process. The finalised submission will then be submitted to the Co-Chairs by 30 June 2026 for consideration within the broader Interactive Dialogue (a) process.

PART C — OUTPUTS

5. Final Outputs and Deliverables

Following the submission, review, voting, and evaluation process, Workstream 1 will identify and prioritise the proposals that demonstrate the greatest potential to advance the objectives of Interactive Dialogue (a). The final outputs of Workstream 1 will comprise:

- Two Priority Actions that provide concrete, evidence-based, and actionable recommendations to accelerate progress towards the human rights to water and sanitation.
- One Flagship Initiative that can catalyse medium- to long-term action, partnerships, and resource mobilisation beyond the 2026 UN Water Conference.

The Workstream 1 process will result in:

1. Two Priority Actions for submission under Interactive Dialogue (a);
2. One Flagship Initiative for advancement beyond the 2026 UN Water Conference;
3. A consolidated Workstream 1 submission to the Co-Chairs; and
4. A transparent record of stakeholder engagement, voting, and prioritisation.