



## **IGAD Expert Dialogue on Water Security**

11-12 September 2023, Nairobi

### **SUMMARY REPORT**

#### **1. Background**

Water security has been a prominent theme on the global and regional agendas throughout 2023, with the UN Water Conference bringing the Water Action Agenda, the World Water Week focusing on innovation and a strong focus on the issue during the Africa Climate Week. Effective water management is critical for food security in the IGAD region, which faces challenges related to water scarcity, food crises, conflict and displacement. The region is highly dependent on groundwater and an estimated 80 per cent of its water is used for agriculture. Access to water in the most vulnerable and marginalized areas of the region continues to be limited, with climate-induced migration further exacerbating water insecurity. Holistic solutions at the policy and operational levels, increased private sector engagement, as well as targeting food insecure and vulnerable communities where land degradation is highest, are critical to address water insecurity. To achieve this, all stakeholders in the region need to strengthen cooperation and collaboration for more resilient and sustainable water and food systems.

Against this backdrop, IGAD convened its Member States, as well as practitioners and experts from UN agencies, NGOs, academia, the donor community, the civil society and the private sector, to co-create an agenda for increased water security in the region, with a specific focus on water availability, links with food security and food crises, and peace and security. Held in the margins of the Africa Climate Week, the Expert Dialogue built on the outcomes and followed up on commitments of previous regional meetings and initiatives. These include the IGAD joint communique on Strengthening, Adapting, and Accelerating National and Regional Efforts to Address Food Crises in East Africa in a Humanitarian Development Peace nexus (October 2022), the IGAD-convened meeting of the Groundwater Access Facility (GaFa) Technical Working Group (June 2023) and the IGAD-WFP Consultative Symposium on water resource management for fragile food systems (May 2023).

The event was supported by the Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC), with specific/technical support provided by the following UN agencies, funds and programmes: FAO, IOM, Office of the UN Famine Prevention and Response Coordinator (OFPRC), Office of the UN Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa (OSEHA), UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP. This Summary Report provides an overview of key deliberations, including a set of proposals and recommendations on coordination, information sharing and management, and proposed priorities for action to be taken forward for the Ministerial Dialogue.

## 2. Summary of the dialogue

The dialogue was officially opened by the representative of the Government of Kenya, with key opening speeches delivered by IGAD, as well as FAO and WFP on behalf of the GNAFC.

### 2.1. Joint sessions

Although most of the time participants were engaged in thematic group discussions, the Expert Dialogue contained three joint sessions: (1) Scene-setting; (2) Strategic Dialogue on Financing for Water Security; and (3) Preparing for the Future.

#### Scene-setting

The session contained four presentations anchoring the ensuing discussions. Dr. Ibrahim Mohamed Ahmed from IGAD provided an overview of the water security situation in the IGAD region. With a strong focus on groundwater, the presentation covered issues around water availability, the impacts of climate change, legal and social issues affecting water security, as well as the need for increased knowledge and capacity building.

Dr. Anik Badhuri from Future Earth presented a vision for water security in the IGAD region, stressing the need for better coordination between land, soil, and water management to sustain agricultural growth without harming the environment. He also highlighted the need to know when and where investment should be targeted that will produce a socially optimal outcome while addressing the trade-offs between agriculture and other ecosystem services. Mr. Victor Vazquez from the World Bank delivered a presentation on achieving universal access to safely managed water supply and sanitation services in the region. Mr. Vazquez called for a paradigm shift in five areas: policy and institutional reform; leveraging private and partner financing; more efficient service provisions; investing in green and grey storage for resilience; and prioritising country and regional collaboration platforms.

Mr. Titus Wamae from Wetlands International then presented a success story on turning water crises into opportunities for peacebuilding, focusing on rangelands restoration in the Turkana region in Kenya, which also benefited communities across the border in Ethiopia. In the ensuing discussion, Member States stressed the need for multisectoral coordination platforms under government leadership (including among the UN and the donor communities), the benefits of peer-to-peer learning and best practice exchange, information and data sharing, and the need to strengthen gender analysis in water projects.

#### Strategic Dialogue on Financing for Water Security

For countries in Sub-Saharan Africa to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 6 related to water security, public, private, blended, climate and innovative financing, as well as increased efficiency and efficacy in water financial expenditure, are needed. In a panel discussion moderated by Dr. Samuel Godfrey from UNDP, five speakers (Mr. Abera Endeshaw Abebe, Government of Ethiopia; Ms. Amandine Umukesh, AFDB; Dr. Ibrahim Mohamed Ahmed, IGAD; Ms. Radhika Dave, UNDP; Mr. Victor Vázquez, World Bank) explored questions related to financing water security, including what has worked and what could be scaled.

Mr. Abera Edeshaw Adebé's intervention focused on coordination, and in particular the ONE WASH National Programme in Ethiopia. All major donors and partners are funding WASH initiatives through a single basket, with the Government matching the investment amounts. Ms. Amandine Umukesh highlighted AFDB efforts in that regard, the importance of the project preparation phase, as well as the need to invest in public-private partnerships. Dr. Ibrahim Mohamed Ahmed discussed the importance of

data sharing to unlock financing opportunities, the promotion of synergies and coordination across all stakeholder groups. Ms. Radhika Dave presented UNDP initiatives on investments for water across the entire value chain, including feasibility studies. She also stressed the links between water security and climate adaptation and the need for increased coordination and cooperation. Mr. Victor Vazquez briefed on the ways in which the World Bank is accelerating the water agenda. He stressed the need for national investment programmes that are government-led and designed, to break silos within the space of water security, and to attract private sector investments.

### **Preparing for the future**

Dr. Geoffrey Sabiti from the IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC) presented the observed and projected climate change impacts on water security in the region. He briefed on the projections work ICPAC undertakes using data from IGAD member states and the latest findings. The ensuing discussion focused on ways to make the best use of this information, including making it accessible to the last-mile users, and linking it to existing national early warning platforms.

## **2.2. Thematic pillars**

### **Water security for food security**

The thematic group was led by IGAD, FAO and UNESCO focused on presenting existing initiatives and good practices, with stakeholders deliberating on the key constraints and obstacles that hinder achieving Water Security for Food Security in the IGAD region.

In the first session covering what is working in the region, the presentation by UNESCO emphasised the importance of open data, highlighting benefits such as transparency, cost savings, innovation, and collaboration. Data governance and standards were deemed crucial for the future, with an emphasis on data quality and its impact on water security. Regional and multi-country collaborations were underscored IGAD, emphasising the critical role of transboundary water resources management, cooperative agreements on water allocation and policy harmonization. The Support for Effective Cooperation and Coordination of Cross-Border Initiatives project, presented by UNEP, highlighted the need for cooperation and long-term investments to address transboundary water issues. The SECCI project involving Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia was discussed, emphasising the need for collaborative efforts and shared resources to address the complex challenges related to water management in the region. In the discussion led by FAO, several key points on data and coordination were highlighted. Participants acknowledged the sensitivity of water data but noted that modern technologies, including satellite data, have made most surface water resource information effectively public. Challenges persist in acquiring accurate data for groundwater and rainfall, which require ground-level validation. The discussion stressed the value of data sharing for improving data quality and project outcomes. Initiatives such as IGAD's 3W matrix online platform and FAO's mapping of water projects in East Africa were mentioned as valuable tools for coordination.

Initiatives such as the IGAD/ Regional Irrigation Development and Agriculture Water Management Strategy in the region presented by IGAD highlighted the issue that policies interlinking Water Security and Food Security need to be reviewed within the current context with aspects of early warning and preparedness, anticipatory actions and gender to be included in such policies e.g. Irrigation policies at member state level. Specific programmes were also presented such as the near Real time FAO Water productivity open access portal (WaPOR) to map indicators including cultivated areas, biomass production to inform agricultural productivity at country level. Discussion around linking aspects of water security to existing

National level food systems transformation pathways to ensure joint initiatives around Water for energy, crop and animal production, agriculture food security to transform food security.

Another session covered various aspects of making water projects "bankable," emphasising the need to showcase value chains, local returns, and contributions to national revenue targets, while also considering water infrastructure, post-harvest processes, and sustainability. Member states emphasised challenges related to water security, the importance of transboundary collaboration, community involvement, conservation efforts, river assessments, irrigation, and drought-resistant crops. It was agreed that achieving bankability for water projects requires a comprehensive approach that considers financial viability, sustainability, and stakeholder engagement. This involves securing revenue sources at local, community, and national levels, while also prioritising environmental safeguards during project design. Cost-effective planning and environmentally sound practices are crucial, including the development of value chain systems and improved infrastructure like roads. The establishment of legal entities at all levels and the promotion of multipurpose linked projects are essential components. Bankable projects should also be resilient to climate change by incorporating various climate scenarios. It is essential to address the needs of diverse user groups, including vulnerable communities, and utilise available tools to enhance project success.

### **Increasing water availability**

The group sessions, led by IGAD, UNDP and UNICEF, commenced with providing an overview of existing promising initiatives with potential to be scaled in the region. In terms of what initiatives are existing, presentations by IGAD and UNDP showcased groundwater potential in IGAD region is high in comparison to the utilisation which is still at low rates. Key challenges on water availability to be addressed include limited knowledge around groundwater suitability its volume and quality. Not all data is collected and verified by the member state government. Water is a human right but the cost of supplying it cannot be ignored. There is a big potential for water to be a commodity in Africa. There exists no transboundary data agreement in the IGAD region.

Potential solutions in order to increase water availability include the need for a holistic government led process for national water investment planning and decision-making e.g., the ONE WASH project in Ethiopia. Presentation by IOM on Sustainable Water Management (Lessons from Somalia) emphasised the benefits and use of PPP models for water management supply and sustainability (contractual agreements model). The initiative improved quality of service in supply of water, increased operational efficiency, better fundraising capabilities, regular maintenance, opportunity for knowledge transfer to communities/local government. IGAD presented on the transboundary management, the case of Merti aquifer that provides an example of creating an enabling environment, legal and regulatory framework to support water investment and management. The need to scale up development of bilateral agreements or treaties that outline the legal obligations, rights and responsibilities of each country in the joint management of the aquifer. Such agreement would address issues such as groundwater allocation, governance structures, dispute resolution mechanisms, and information sharing protocols among others.

UNICEF showcased the economics of water, mobilising finance for water initiatives and the water sector. The programme is currently implemented jointly by UNICEF and UNHCR with local governments in nine sites across three IGAD countries and provides an example on how to translate scalable solutions to increase climate resilient water availability. The programme also aims at increasing social cohesion across different communities. Emphasising the need for Governments to provide a stable and transparent administrative, regulatory and policy environment to promote investments in water and showcase return on investments on such investments. Creating risk profiles to identify how to de-risk investments and attract the private sector is important.

The GaFa responds to the need for the UN system to come as one and address water insecurity. New technologies need to be deployed to refine existing knowledge and increase accessibility and prioritise groundwater suitability assessment ahead of any drilling works.

Having harmonised standards and guidelines for groundwater exploration, including transboundary Aquifer management plan, and integrated regional water policy is key. The need for stakeholders' collaboration in the mapping of transboundary aquifers to boost opportunities for capacity building and knowledge sharing such as life cycle cost analysis, provide evidence to inform utility and investing at scale on the transboundary aquifers. There is a need to strengthen water policies at regional and member state level to enhance water management governance, pricing and water tariff controls.

### **Water, peace and security**

Discussed as a cross-cutting theme within the other thematic pillars, stakeholders came to consensus that peace and security is important to implement water security initiatives sustainability. Stakeholders acknowledged the need for addressing and promoting peace building, cross-border conflict resolution and promoting social cohesion.

The significance of the HoA-GW4R Program lies not just in technical solutions, but in fostering regional collaboration, knowledge sharing, and capacity building. It is about empowering our communities and institutions to take charge of their water resources. Through indicators like the establishment of policies, agreements, and regulations for sustainable groundwater management, the Horn of Africa Groundwater Information System (HoA-GWIS), and the Regional Platform for Groundwater Collaboration (PGWC), we are forging a path towards effective water governance.

However, our pursuit of water security transcends technicalities. It touches upon peace, security, and the very fabric of human existence. In regions plagued by conflict and insecurity, access to water becomes even more precarious, often fuelling tensions and exacerbating crises. The IGAD region houses a humanitarian caseload of 5.5 million refugees, over 12 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), and countless others affected by climate-induced migration and statelessness. The availability of water resources can be the difference between stability and further upheaval.

## **3. Outcomes and recommendations**

The Expert Dialogue has produced a series of overarching recommendations and proposed specific initiatives. Many are focused on three prioritised areas: coordination, capacity-development and access to resources.

### **3.1. Overarching recommendations**

**Advancing water security in the region will require increased coordination and collaboration.**

- Strengthen cooperation on water security in the region through improved coordination across Member States, IGAD, the United Nations, international partners and the private sector.
- Increase synergies between stakeholders working on water security, food security, as well as climate change and the environment.
- Establish a collaboration platform between IGAD and UN agencies working on water and climate resilience, with the view of facilitating information-sharing, joint project planning and resource mobilization.

- Encourage public-private partnerships in water resource management, including the private sector's involvement in infrastructure development, water treatment, and sanitation services.
- Convene this Expert Dialogue periodically at the regional level, and explore undertaking a similar initiative at the national level.

**Water resources cannot be managed well unless they are known and understood.**

- Invest in the collection of information on water resources, including groundwater, to identify and address knowledge gaps.
- Develop advanced analytical tools to accelerate analysis for potential policy and decision-making support for groundwater mapping and sustainable water resources management.
- Expand and scale transboundary aquifer feasibility studies to enhance the understanding of groundwater availability; support collaboration among IGAD Member States to assess and manage these shared resources effectively.

**Water security requires holistic, sustainable and nexus approaches.**

- Encourage water resource management at basin and catchment levels, which considers the entire water cycle and aims to balance competing interests while ensuring the long-term sustainability of water resources. It requires collaboration, data-driven decision-making, and a commitment to environmental stewardship.
- Prioritise investments in effective water storage.
- Strengthen an ecosystems approach and incorporate environmental considerations in all areas of work on water security.
- Integrate climate resilience strategies into water security initiatives, including adaptive measures to mitigate the impact of climate change on water resources and ensure the long-term sustainability of water-related projects.
- Develop regional strategies for disaster preparedness and response related to water, such as floods and droughts. Strengthen early warning systems and emergency response mechanisms.

**Women and young people play an indispensable role in water security initiatives.**

- Actively involve women and youth in decision-making processes related to water resource management.
- Promote gender-responsive policies and actions to address water-related challenges effectively. Strengthen gender and vulnerability analysis and mainstreaming in all areas of work on water security.

### **3.2. Proposed initiatives**

- Using the Horn of Africa Groundwater Access Facility (GaFa) as an entry point, establish **a regional groundwater data management system** comprising national and transboundary information.
- Develop **a regional programme to strengthen Member States' capabilities and cooperation on water security** through facilitated trust-building, capacity building including peer-to-peer learning, and promotion of interoperability. The programme would focus on the following aspects:
  - Data and information management;

- National coordination and leadership;
- Sharing of best practices and initiatives, including the private sector;
- Resource mobilisation and absorption capacity.
- Design a **'package' of bankable projects for water security** in the region, outlining several critical initiatives for joint resource mobilisation.
- Develop **joint World Bank, African Development Bank and International Fund for Agricultural Development guidelines** for governments on water security projects.
- Establish a **regional Working Group on Water Security for Food Security** comprising government, IGAD, UN and donor representatives to enhance coordination and information-sharing.
- Develop a legal framework for transboundary resource cooperation, which would:
  - Contain legal mechanisms that define the rights and responsibilities of each IGAD Member State regarding shared water resources;
  - Address critical issues such as water allocation, dispute resolution mechanisms, and information sharing protocols.

IGAD should convene a **Ministerial Dialogue** in the margins of the Eastern and Southern Africa Leadership Summit on Accelerating Universal Access to WASH (15-16 November 2023 in Addis Ababa) to discuss and agree on the way forward regarding the above.

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