



## GLOBAL WATER OPERATORS' PARTNERSHIPS ALLIANCE CHARTER (Ver.2 as of October 2013)

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### Rationale

Most utilities in developing countries suffer from a number of interrelated institutional weaknesses, including inadequate cost recovery compounded by a low customer base and limited physical coverage, dilapidated physical infrastructure, high levels of unaccounted for water, the low skill levels of the staff and poor customer relations, among others. There is also the inability to serve the needs of the urban poor, the main targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Fostering collaboration between Water Supply and Sanitation Utilities is a vital element in ensuring exchange of experiences between performing and non-performing utilities. The need for creating a mechanism for the collaboration of water utilities is highlighted in the "Hashimoto Action Plan" which was announced by the United Nations Secretary General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB) during the 4th World Water Forum in Mexico.

One of the recommendations of the Hashimoto Action Plan was the establishment of a global mechanism to promote Water Operators Partnerships (WOPs). The rationale behind the WOPs mechanism is that most of the capacity for improving water and sanitation services lies with the operators themselves. It also builds on the fact that about 90% of all utilities are publicly owned and managed, and that even modest improvements in these utilities will go a long way in contributing to meeting the internationally agreed development goals and targets for water and sanitation. Thus the WOPs are to be based on mechanisms to enable operators to systematically communicate amongst themselves and to share their experiences and learn from each others' practices for the benefit of all.

The Global Water Operators' Partnership Alliance (GWOPA) brings together a diversity of actors – utilities, utility associations, financial institutions, and research and expert organisations – that stand to enrich WOPs with their knowledge and resources. Water Operators' Partnerships are being promoted by a global alliance of partners who believe in WOPs and are committed to supporting them. GWOPA aims to build on the relative strengths of each of its partners to make WOPs work.

### Vision and Mission

GWOPA's **vision** is that water and sanitation operators help each other to achieve universal access to sustainable water and sanitation services through not-for-profit peer support partnerships. These partnerships result in public operators – the target of support – with strong technical, financial and management capacity, able to provide a sustainable, high-quality service to all.

GWOPA's **mission** is to promote the effective use of not-for-profit partnerships between water operators to realize its vision. GWOPA will be the global leader in WOPs promotion, facilitation, and coordination, and the principle source for WOPs knowledge and guidance so that effective WOPs contribute to meeting



global water and sanitation objectives including those relating to the Millennium Development Goals, Sustainable Development Goals and the Human Right to Water.

## Guiding Principles

In keeping with the original text and spirit of UNSGAB's Hashimoto Action Plan, the Global WOPs Alliance shall be guided by the following Guiding Principles:

- A. *Inclusiveness*: GWOPA shall be as inclusive as possible and reach out to all stakeholders in the water supply and sanitation sector including public and private water operators, non-governmental organizations and representatives of civil society, academia, and private sector players at the global, regional, and national levels.
- B. *Non-profit based partnerships*: Partnerships established between water operators under the WOPs umbrella shall be built on a not-for-profit basis. Therefore, funding of partnerships – mainly done in the format of “twinning” of utilities – should cover direct costs only without profit of any sort for any participating party.
- C. *Mutuality of benefit*: Mutuality of benefit shall be promoted whenever possible in implementing “twinning” and other activities of exchange of experience and expertise among utilities. Such mutuality shall be used as an incentive, whenever possible, for utility cooperation on non-profit basis.
- D. *Transparency*: GWOPA shall promote transparency in the water and sanitation sector on the global, regional, and national levels. The Alliance shall conduct its own activities in a transparent manner, providing clear and regular updates on activities, and equal opportunities for stakeholders to influence Alliance direction.
- E. *Learning from the Past and Others*: GWOPA shall draw lessons and learn from past experiences to promote best practices for utility partnerships and capacity building.
- F. *Supporting WOPs Processes Worldwide*: GWOPA shall not seek to recreate, but to reinforce, efforts worldwide to strengthen mutual exchange between water operators. In this sense, the Global WOPs Alliance supports all regional and global initiatives that champion WOPs activities and principles.
- G. *Fostering Sustainable Change*: GWOPA shall support efforts to build lasting positive change within water utilities using mechanisms that are increasingly independent of external financial support.
- H. *Building a Culture of Solidarity*: GWOPA shall embrace and promote a spirit of solidarity and mutual support between water operators and all other water sector actors working towards the goals of the Alliance.



## Structure and Governance

**Membership:** With the aim of being as inclusive as possible, membership in GWOPA is open to all stakeholders in the water and sanitation sector from around the world.

All water and sanitation utilities, national, and international development organizations, regional development banks, non-governmental and civil society organizations, national, regional, and international donor organizations, as well as any other stakeholders who are interested in the Alliance and willing to participate in its activities shall be eligible to join GWOPA and be members of its General Assembly.

Members are expected to sign the Alliance Guiding Principles, promote the Alliance in their respective fora, and work towards its objectives. Members shall not be charged any membership fee and shall not – in turn – charge the Alliance, or any other members and/or partners, for their activities within the Alliance.

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### The Alliance Structure

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#### Secretariat

The GWOPA Secretariat is hosted by UN-Habitat at its office in Barcelona. The GWOPA Secretariat implements the Alliance work plan and coordinates all its activities in various working areas including supporting regional WOP platforms, WOPs direct brokering and funding, financial guidance and support, development and management of WOPs knowhow, training and capacity building, alliance and partnership strengthening, as well as advocacy and communication activities.

The Secretariat prepares and presents to the annual meeting of the Alliance Steering Committee and bi-annual meeting of the Alliance General Assembly, the annual budget, progress report, and work plan.

Currently, the Secretariat is comprised of the following personnel:

- Programme Manager
- 4 Programme Officers
- Administrative Assistant

The Secretariat is also supported on a part-time basis by a Project Management Officer and Administrative Assistant at UN-Habitat's Headquarter in Nairobi



## **General Assembly**

The General Assembly (GA) is an inclusive platform for all stakeholders that are interested in being part of the Alliance. The GA shall meet bi-annually in parallel with the **Bi-annual Global WOPs Congress** which will be the main platform for inter-regional interaction amongst water operators within the Alliance. The bi-annual GA meetings shall be used to discuss the Alliance work plan and progress report, prepared and presented by the Secretariat, to provide recommendations to the Alliance Steering Committee on major Alliance issues in general, and to select half of the Steering Committee voting members (see next section).

## **Steering Committee**

GWOPA activities are implemented under the overall strategic direction of a Steering Committee (SC) comprised of water operators, operator associations, and WOP platforms from regions around the world, in addition to private water operators, non-governmental and civil society organizations, labor union representatives, as well as Alliance partners and donors. Membership of the SC, which is chaired by a representative of UN-Habitat Executive Director, is guided by the following principles:

- I. The majority of SC members shall be representing public water utilities / utility associations;
- II. geographic and stakeholder representation shall be even and fair; and
- III. SC membership shall belong to organisations, not individuals. Organisations shall appoint their respective representative to serve on the Steering Committee.

Guided by the above principles, GWOPA Steering Committee members agreed on the following SC composition in November 2013:

- (a) Two representatives of public utilities / utility associations from each of the following regions: Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Arab region
- (b) One representative of public utilities / utility associations from each of the following regions: the Caribbean, the Pacific, and Southeast Europe
- (c) Three representatives of public utilities / utility associations from the North (Two from Europe, and one from North America)
- (d) Two representatives of civil society/NGOs
- (e) Two representatives of private water operators
- (f) Two representatives of labour unions
- (g) Two representatives of the Alliance Partners
- (h) One representative of each of GWOPA Donors
- (i) One representative of UNSGAB (Observer)\*
- (j) One representative of UN-Habitat Executive Director (ex-officio\* SC Chair)
- (k) One representative of GWOPA Secretariat (ex-officio\* SC Secretariat)

\*: Observers and Ex-officio members of the Steering Committee are non-voting members.



In addition to the above, representatives of regional WOP platforms secretariats from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Pacific shall be invited to Steering Committee meetings to capture the geographical growth of GWOPA and WOPs practice.

The Steering Committee shall provide the overall strategic direction for GWOPA. To that effect, the Steering Committee shall receive and review reports from the Alliance Secretariat on progress and work plans, and ensure their compliance with the agreed objectives and guiding principles.

The Steering Committee shall be considered as an advisory body to the Executive Director of UN-Habitat on all issues related to the Alliance. The Steering Committee shall offer recommendations on the above issues to the Executive Director of UN-Habitat accordingly. The Steering Committee shall reach its recommendations by consensus whenever possible, and where not, such recommendations shall be voted by simple majority of voting members.

As SC members represent their organisations on the SC, they in turn have a responsibility to support and promote GWOPA and its guiding principles within their own institutions and networks.

The SC shall meet annually on the back of other major international water events. In interim periods, SC members may be asked to provide feedback via email on specific actions to be taken by the Secretariat. Occasionally, on-line meeting forums or teleconferences may be conducted for consultation purposes only.

The term of the Steering Committee members of categories (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), and (g) shall be four (4) years. One half of these Steering Committee members shall be elected during every General Assembly bi-annual meeting. For the first time (in 2011) the members who should leave the Steering Committee shall be selected by draw. During the General Assembly bi-annual meeting, GA members who belong to each of categories (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), and (g) vote for the representative(s) of their respective category in the Steering Committee.

### **Alliance Partners**

Alliance partners are those organisations (academic and research institutions, international and expert organizations, etc.) that engage in partnership with GWOPA and contribute substantive support to help meet the Alliance mission and objectives. Partnerships with such organizations may help support twinning arrangements; produce capacity building tools and knowledge products; establish funding mechanisms to facilitate WOPs; etc.

All institutions willing to commit their expertise, staff time, and/or other resources with stakeholders in the water and sanitation sector at the national, regional, or global levels, to enhance the Alliance activities in line with its objectives and guiding principles shall be welcome to become Alliance partners.



## **APPENDIX 1: Code of Conduct**

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### **Introduction**

This code of conduct lays down the principles or the “rules” for partnerships between utilities and water operators that are undertaken as WOPs under the umbrella of the Global Water Operators Partnerships’ Alliance. Such partnerships are facilitated and supported collaboratively by the Global WOPs Alliance and regional WOPs platforms around the world.

This code of conduct does not offer guidance on whether a specific partnership is the suitable option for the parties. It mainly applies once the parties have decided to pursue a partnership and highlights the expected conduct and requirements of such a partnership. The “rules” presented hereinafter are meant to guide the formation and implementation of efficient, results-oriented, and socially acceptable partnerships between water operators.

### **Good Governance**

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All stakeholders will take all needed measures to conduct their activities within the partnership according to the principles of good governance, including:

- Transparency
- Accountability
- Responsiveness to stakeholders’ concerns and interests
- Consensus-orientation
- Clarity and common understanding of stakeholders’ roles, rights, responsibilities, and expectations
- Compliance with local laws

### **Integrity**

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Central to WOPs is the sharing of knowledge in a not-for-profit and unrestrained way and built upon the notion of solidarity between utilities. Its purpose is to enhance the capacity and capability of public utilities within the guiding principle of integrity. Therefore:

The partners agree that no information will be intentionally withheld by any party in anticipation of any commercial gains, and no confidential information of one party will be used by the other party for its commercial advantage.

### **Social and Cultural Values**

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All stakeholders will take needed measures to abide by and respect the social and cultural values of the location where they are engaging in WOPs, including:

- Respecting the cultural norms and behaviours relevant to the local context
- Recognising and respecting the influence of gender, age, culture and religion on the different perspectives and values accorded to water and sanitation

### **Resolution of Conflicts**

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All stakeholders will form partnerships based on mutual trust and respect, address all issues with full transparency, and collaborate to identify workable solutions.



**Results-Orientation**

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Prior to engagement, partners shall prepare written partnership agreements that outline a) the objectives of the partnership and expected outputs b) the roles and responsibilities of each partner, c) the value (in-kind and cash) of the partnership and d) the interests of each party in engaging in partnership. The agreement should form the basis for professional, results-oriented cooperation, while leaving sufficient room for flexible solutions, as the context and issues are subject to change and evolve.

**Cost sharing and Not-for-Profit**

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Activities carried out by any partner or stakeholder within a WOP shall be done on a not-for-profit basis. WOPs should never be used as a vehicle for commercial activities by any party. Activities within a WOP will incur costs for both partners. The parties have to identify these costs and decide together whether to bear these costs themselves, appeal for external support, or both. The respective contributions of the parties, be they in-cash or in-kind, shall be mutually agreed by the parties themselves.

**Shared Incentives**

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Particular objectives and common interests of all stakeholders will be openly discussed to identify all possible costs and benefits in the arrangement. The respective motivations of both parties shall be explicitly discussed.

WOPs' benefits are mutual, but not necessarily equal. Partners have to respect the bona fide interests of their counterparts and seek actions that advance the goals of the partnership without requiring compromise of a partner's key interests.

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We, the subscribing parties, agree to apply the present Code of Conduct in performing all activities within the water operator partnership (WOP) between our organizations under the umbrella of the Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance.

We, the subscribing parties, are committed to cooperating, through this water operator partnership (WOP), to improve the performance and sustainability of the water supply and sanitation services in our sphere of action.

**ORGANIZATION:**

**ORGANIZATION:**

NAME:

NAME:

SIGNATURE:

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

DATE:



## APPENDIX 2: Membership Form

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### The Global Water Operators' Partnership Alliance: Membership Form

#### I. Background

A key recommendation of the “Hashimoto Action Plan” announced by the United Nations Secretary General’s Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB) was the establishment of a global mechanism to promote Water Operators Partnerships. The Hashimoto Action Plan includes the following principles for water operator partnerships:

*“The operators who deliver water services need help. Publicly owned and managed water operators currently provide more than 90 percent of the world’s piped water, and even small managerial improvements could yield major benefits. The Board recommends a new mechanism – water operators’ partnerships. This would be a structured programme of cooperation among water operators, based on mutual support and a not-for-profit basis.*”

*Cooperation between water operators, or Water Operators Partnerships (WOPs), can be a useful mechanism for providing support for capacity building of public water operators. Given the preponderance of public sector undertakings, it is envisaged that most operating partnerships will be between public operators. However, we do not exclude private sector operators, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), or those who can contribute to the performance of public water undertakings on a not-for-profit basis.”*

#### II. Guiding Principles for the Global WOPs Alliance

In keeping with the UNSGAB’s Hashimoto Action Plan text and spirit, the Global WOPs Alliance shall be guided by the following Guiding Principles:

- A. *Inclusiveness*: The Global WOPs Alliance shall be as inclusive as possible and reach out to all stakeholders in the water supply and sanitation sector including public and private water operators, non-governmental organizations and representatives of civil society, academia, and private sector players at the global, regional, and national levels.
- B. *Non-profit based partnerships*: Partnerships established between water operators under the WOPs umbrella shall be built on a not-for-profit basis. Therefore, funding of partnerships – mainly done in the format of “twinning” of utilities – should cover direct costs only without profit of any sort for any participating party.
- C. *Mutuality of benefit*: Mutuality of benefit shall be promoted whenever possible in implementing “twinning” and other activities of exchange of experience and expertise among utilities. Such mutuality shall be used as an incentive, whenever possible, for utility cooperation on non-profit basis.



- D. *Transparency:* The Global WOPs Alliance shall promote transparency in the water and sanitation sector on the global, regional, and national levels. The Alliance shall conduct its own activities in a transparent manner, providing clear and regular updates on activities, and equal opportunities for stakeholders to influence Alliance direction.
- E. *Learning from the Past and Others:* The Global WOPs Alliance shall draw lessons and learn from past experiences to promote best practices for utility partnerships and capacity building.
- F. *Supporting WOPs Processes Worldwide:* The Global WOPs Alliance shall not seek to recreate, but to reinforce, efforts worldwide to strengthen mutual exchange between water operators. In this sense, the Global WOPs Alliance supports all regional and global initiatives that champion WOPs activities and principles.
- G. *Fostering Sustainable Change:* The Global WOPs Alliance shall support efforts to build lasting positive change within water utilities using mechanisms that are increasingly independent of external financial support.
- H. *Building a Culture of Solidarity:* The Global WOPs Alliance shall embrace and promote a spirit of solidarity and mutual support between water operators and all other water sector actors working towards the goals of the Alliance.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_, have read the above guiding principles of the Global Water Operators Partnerships Alliance, and I accept these principles. On behalf of my organization, I would like to apply for membership of the Global WOPs Alliance.

**MEMBER:**

NAME:

SIGNATURE:

DATE: