

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Sponsoring Partners of the Global Water Partnership Organisation (GWPO)

Date: 14 May 2025

Location: Virtual

Chair: Sweden

1. Opening Remarks

The Chair, Tobias (Sweden), opened the meeting by acknowledging the decision of the Swedish Government to redefine its relationship with GWPO. While reiterating Sweden's continued interest in supporting the Organisation, he emphasized that the objective of the meeting was forward-looking. He welcomed the recent developments under the leadership of Chair Pablo Bereciartua and Executive Secretary/CEO Alex Simalabwi and expressed interest in discussing the future direction of GWPO.

It was noted that, as this was an extraordinary, non-decision-making meeting, no quorum was required. Formal decisions will be addressed at the next meeting of Sponsoring Partners in June 2025. The Sponsoring Partners present included:

1. Sweden-Tobias Axerup
2. Netherlands-Brechtje Paardekooper
3. Hungary-Peter Kovacs
4. Pakistan-H.E. Mr. Bilal Hayee
5. WMO-Stefan Uhlenbrook

GWPO was represented by the Chair Mr. Pablo Bereciartua and GWP CEO and Executive Secretary Mr. Alex Simalabwi. GWPO invited observers, Mr. Per Bertilsson, Senior Advisor and Ms. Michele Schwarz, CFO.

2. Remarks by Chair of the GWPO Steering Committee

Pablo Bereciartua, Chair of the GWPO Steering Committee, expressed appreciation for the opportunity to engage directly with Sponsoring Partners. He emphasized the importance of their support in achieving GWPO's ambitions and stressed the significance of a unified, inclusive agenda developed with the backing of Steering Committee members and Regional Water Partnerships.

3. Approval of the Agenda

The proposed agenda was approved without amendments.

4. Strategic Briefing on GWPO Transformation Agenda

Presented by: Alex Simalabwi, Executive Secretary/CEO

4.1 Context and Background

- In 2023, a governance review of GWPO was conducted, leading to several strategic recommendations to improve organizational performance and relevance.
- Internal assessments and donor reviews highlighted the need for reform and increased responsiveness.

4.2 GWPO Global Transformation Agenda

- The Steering Committee launched the Global Transformation Agenda in February 2025, which includes:
- A pivot toward climate-resilient water investments, aligning with global shifts in development finance and the global climate emergency
- Stronger engagement with G20 leadership, MDBs, private sector and international climate finance mechanisms.
- Establishment of a Global Outlook Council on Water Investments comprised of current and former Heads of States and influential global leaders.
- Confirmed leaders so far include:
 - H.E Jakaya Kikwete-Former President of Tanzania,
 - H.E Pemmy Majodina-Minister of Water and Sanitation for South Africa as the current lead water minister in the G20 Presidency of South Africa)
 - Henk Ovink (Netherlands) Former Dutch Water Envoy,
 - Celeste Saulo WMO Secretary-General
 - H.E Csaba Kőrösi (Hungary nominated) former President of UN General Assembly who will be contacted to join.

4.3 GWPO Decentralization-Establishment of Regional Technical Hubs

- Four regional technical hubs are being established in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, and Latin America.
- These hubs will decentralize GWPO technical support functions, embedded within existing Regional Water Partnerships.
- Hubs will report to GWPO on programming and be administratively led by the GWP Regional Water Partnership Coordinator for accountability and alignment.

4.4 Expansion of Sponsoring Partners

- The Steering Committee proposes to open the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for new governments to join as Sponsoring Partners.
- A public global call will be launched on 2 June 2025, alongside targeted diplomatic contacts.
- The Sponsoring Partners welcomed Governments to be invited for signing the MoU at any of the following diplomatic locations: Stockholm/Sweden, Pretoria/South Africa, Geneva/Switzerland.

4.5 Relocation of GWPO Headquarters

- GWPO will relocate its headquarters from Sweden to the Global South upon expiration of the current hosting agreement in May 2026.
- Transition arrangements are underway, including establishment of a transition office in South Africa.
- Candidate host countries include South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, and China – all G20 members.
- Final decision is pending further consultations and offers.

5. Feedback from Sponsoring Partners

World Meteorological Organization (WMO) – Stefan Uhlenbrook

- Welcomed the transformation agenda and confirmed WMO's ongoing sponsorship and collaboration.
- Sought clarification on the governance and autonomy of the regional hubs.
- Raised questions about opening the MOU process to organizations versus limiting to states.

Response – GWPO Secretariat

- Hubs are not independent units but decentralized technical support functions of GWPO embedded within regional water partnership structures.
- The current proposal for new Sponsoring Partners limits MOU expansion to states and governments only; however, Sponsoring Partners can propose inclusion of organizations.
- Existing partners (including WMO) do not need to re-sign MOUs; only new members will be invited to sign.
- All final approvals will remain with the Sponsoring Partners.

Netherlands – Brechtje Paardekooper

- Suggested consideration of Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Brazil for sponsorship.

Hungary – Peter Kovacs

- Welcomed the initiative and affirmed Hungary's continued interest.
- Noted a potential change in ministerial oversight in Hungary.
- Expressed hope that Hungarian high-level leaders (e.g., former President Áder or H.E Csaba former UNGA President) will join the Global Outlook Council.

6. Proposal to make a set of technical amendments to the GWPO and GWP Statutes

Amendments to the GWP Statutes are governed by Article 17 of the GWP and GWPO Statutes, which states:

- *Any amendment to these Statutes may be adopted by a two-thirds majority vote of the Network Meeting and a unanimous decision of the Meeting of the Sponsoring Partners preceding or subsequent to the said Network Meeting. A proposal for an amendment shall be circulated to the Partners and Sponsoring Partners four weeks in advance of the respective meeting.*
- *Any amendment adopted in accordance with the preceding paragraph shall enter into force in accordance with Article IV of the Memorandum of Understanding referred to under paragraph 2 of Article 19.*

According to Article IV of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of the Global Water Partnership Organisation of 2002, the amended Statutes come into force one year after the decision of the Meeting of the Sponsoring Partners the.

The following amendments are proposed to clarify existing provisions in the GWP and GWPO Statutes and to ensure their effective implementation in line with current practices of intergovernmental organisations and use of modern digital tools. The proposed changes pertain to the four Articles outlined below:

Article 1(3): Legal Status

The proposed amendment to Article 1(3) aims to facilitate the decentralisation of GWPO. To enable GWPO to establish its presence across multiple countries, the Statutes must provide the legal basis for concluding Headquarters Agreements with more than one State.

Article 8 (5): The Nomination Committee

Amendments to Article 8(5) are intended to improve the efficiency of the GWP Nominations Committee's mandate. The Committee is responsible for nominating the GWP Chair, Steering Committee members, and both External and Internal Auditors, with final appointments made by the Meeting of the Sponsoring Partners.

Article 12: Location

The proposed amendment to Article 12 addresses the flexibility in the physical location of the GWPO Secretariat. It would allow for the Secretariat to be hosted or co-hosted by more than one country, reflecting GWP's decentralisation efforts.

Article 13 Privileges and immunities

The amendment to Article 13 seeks to ensure that GWPO staff are granted the necessary privileges and immunities in all countries where the Secretariat is located. This provision is essential to support decentralised operations and ensure consistent legal protection for staff in line with international norms. Table 1 below presents the current provisions of the GWP and GWPO Statutes (2012) alongside the proposed amendments.

Current articles in the 2012 GWP& GWPO Statutes	Recommended Amendments ¹ for the 2025 GWP & GWPO Statutes
<p>Article 1: LEGAL STATUS</p> <p>Article 1(3) currently reads as follows The Organisation shall possess full legal personality under international law and enjoy such capacities as may be necessary to exercise its functions in the fulfilment of the objective set out in Article 2. Its status under the national law of the Host State of the Secretariat will be provided in a Headquarters Agreement between that State and the Organisation.</p>	<p>Article 1: LEGAL STATUS</p> <p>Article 1(3) shall be amended as follows: The Organisation shall possess full legal personality under international law and enjoy such capacities as may be necessary to exercise its functions in the fulfilment of the objective set out in Article 2. Its status under the national law of a Host State/s of the Secretariat will be provided in a Headquarters Agreement between that State and the Organisation.</p>
<p>Article 8: THE NOMINATION COMMITTEE</p> <p>Article 8 (5) currently reads as follows The nominations shall be presented to the Partners at least three months before the Annual Meeting of the Sponsoring Partners. In order to receive widest possible support from the Partners, the Nomination Committee shall be prepared to modify its nominations in the light of comments by Partners. Nominations and relevant comments from Partners shall be presented to the Sponsoring Partners one month before the Annual Meeting when the appointments shall be made.</p>	<p>Article 8: THE NOMINATION COMMITTEE</p> <p>Article 8 (5) shall be amended as follows: The nominations shall be presented to the Partners at least six weeks before the Annual Meeting of the Sponsoring Partners. In order to receive widest possible support from the Partners, the Nomination Committee shall be prepared to modify its nominations in the light of comments by Partners. Nominations and relevant comments from Partners shall be presented to the Sponsoring Partners one month before the Annual Meeting when the appointments shall be made.</p>
<p>Article 12: LOCATION</p> <p>Article 12 currently reads as follows The Secretariat of the Organisation shall be located in Stockholm.</p>	<p>Article 12: LOCATION</p> <p>Article 12 shall be amended as follows: The Secretariat of the Organisation shall be virtual, or located within a host organisation, or in the State/s where the Organisation has entered into a headquarters agreement with the government of that State.</p>
<p>Article 13 PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES</p> <p>Article 13 currently reads as follows The Organisation and its staff shall enjoy such privileges and immunities in the Host State as shall be stipulated in the Headquarters Agreement referred to in Article 1, paragraph 3.</p>	<p>Article 13 PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES</p> <p>Article 13 shall be amended as follows: The Organisation and its staff shall enjoy such privileges and immunities in the Host State/s as shall be stipulated in the Headquarters Agreement referred to in Article 1, paragraph 3, and Article 12 above</p>

Feedback from Sponsoring Partners

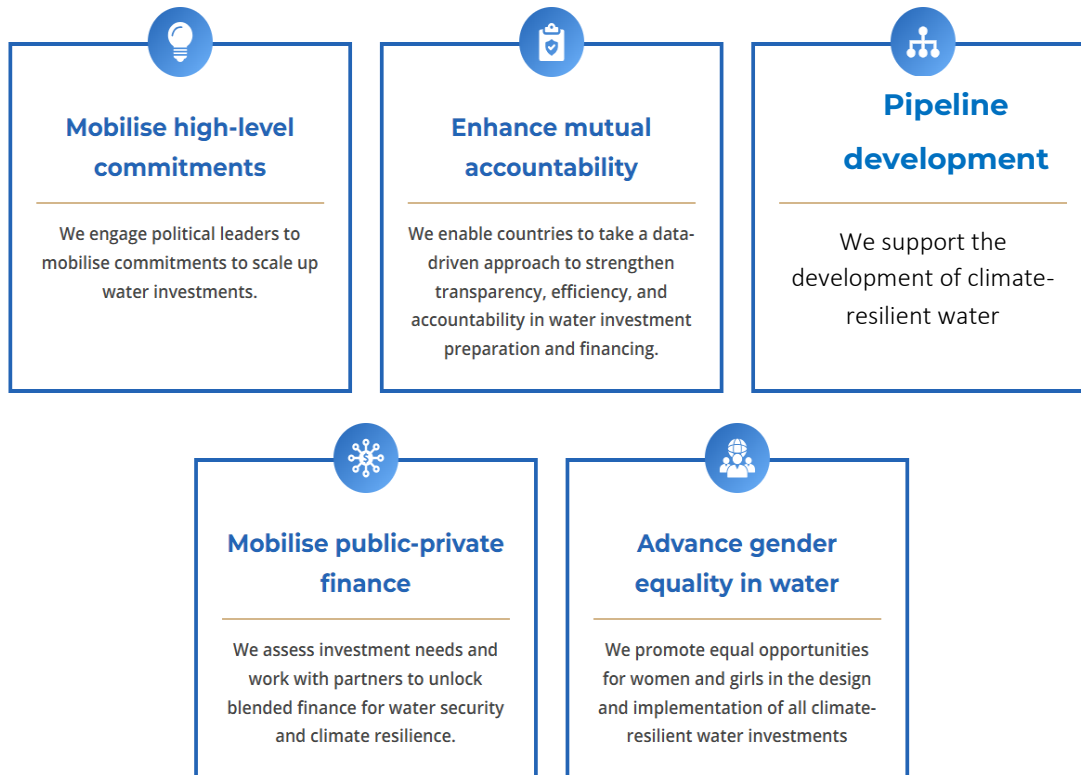
- Sweden-Tobias Axerup welcomed the proposals and mentioned that they would address some of the issues related to finding a new home for the GWP HQ.
- Hungary-Peter Kovacs enquired about the process for the amendments.
- GWPO clarified that the process is enshrined in the Statutes under Article 17 and the MOU under Article IV. According to Article IV of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of the Global Water Partnership Organisation of 2002, the amended Statutes come into force one year after the decision of the Meeting of the Sponsoring Partners.
- Any amendment to these Statutes may be adopted by a two-thirds majority vote of the Network Meeting and a unanimous decision of the Meeting of the Sponsoring Partners.
- GWPO confirmed that on 22 May 2025, a Network Meeting has been organized and the proposed amendments will be presented to the Partners for adoption.
- GWPO will immediately inform the Sponsoring Partners on the outcome and next steps.

- GWPO hopes that the process for the amendments to take effect can be initiated following 22 May to allow for the 12 months period required before they can become effective. This is to ensure that the Host Agreement with Sweden ends in May 2026, GWPO will be able to move forward with the new HQ for its global secretariat.

7. Global Water Partnership Strategy 2026-2030

- **Goal 1: Finance - Substantially increase the volume, quality and efficiency of financing to achieve climate resilient water security for all**
 - *GWP will convene public, private, and development actors to co-design continental and national investment programmes and develop pipelines that bridge the gap between water management needs and investor expectations and financing models.*
 - *We will facilitate cross-sector collaboration and promote blended finance solutions to unlock a broader range of funding sources while increasing the efficiency and impact of water-related investments.*
- **Goal 2: Governance - Improve national and international water governance and transboundary cooperation in the water and water-related sectors to support the achievement of water security for all**
 - *GWP will support countries and partners in strengthening to ensure equitable, water governance systems inclusive, and climate-resilient water management, creating the conditions necessary for effective and sustained investment.*
- **Goal 3: Knowledge and capacity**
 - *Build and increase the capacity of institutions, professionals, service providers and systems, and strengthen the generation, sharing and application of knowledge to accelerate water security for all.*
 - *GWP will focus on building institutional and human capacity to plan, finance, and manage climate-resilient water investments.*
 - *We will strengthen knowledge ecosystems that enable learning across countries and regions, informed by evidence, practice, and innovation.*

To achieve our Strategic Goals, we will leverage our Network focusing on 5 main intervention areas:



Funding sources for the implementation of the GWP Strategy 2026-2030

- *Climate change-related funding: gradually increasing as the demands and requirements of mitigation and adaptation to climate change are increasing.*
- *Private sector, philanthropy, and individual sponsorship programmes, as well as traditional development assistance.*
- *GWPO will strengthen engagement with the G20 and new countries to secure core funding contributions, emphasizing the importance of water security and climate resilience in advancing global development agendas.*

Summary Reflections

Per Bertilsson, GWP Senior Advisor and long-standing GWP supporter, praised the current trajectory of GWPO and reaffirmed the strategic importance of investing in water security to prevent escalating climate-related costs.

8. Any Other Business

No additional agenda items were raised.

9. Next Meeting of the Sponsoring Partners

- The next formal decision-making meeting is scheduled for 25 June 2025, online.
- Secretariat will circulate the draft agenda in advance.

Meeting adjourned.

Minutes approved on a no objection basis by May 30th, 2025.