



GWP SPONSORING PARTNERS

23rd Annual Meeting of the Sponsoring Partners
to the Global Water Partnership Organisation

Stockholm, Sweden

Wednesday, June 19, 2024

MINUTES

Approved electronically by 29th January 2025

www.gwp.org

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1. Welcome and Introduction, Apologies Received, Quorum Confirmed & Approval of Agenda

The Chair of the Sponsoring Partners, Mr. Tobias Axerup, opened the virtual Annual GWP Sponsoring Partners Meeting 2024 and welcomed all participants, together with the Chair of GWP, Mr. Pablo Bereciartua.

All participants were then invited for a quick "round the table" introduction.

1.1: Apologies received

Mr. Axerup noted that apologies for the 23rd Sponsoring Partners meeting had been received from Denmark and Jordan.

1.2: Quorum confirmed

Mr. Axerup further confirmed that a quorum of Sponsoring Partners was reached.

1.3: Approval of Agenda

Decision: The meeting Agenda was approved.

2. Matters arising/updates from Minutes from the 22nd Annual Meeting of the Sponsoring Partners in Stockholm on 28th June 2023

The Chair of the Sponsoring Partners noted that, according to the procedure of electronic approval of the Sponsoring Partners Minutes on a no objection basis after each meeting, the Minutes from the 22nd Annual Sponsoring Partners Meeting had been approved as of November 30th, 2023.

No further comments related to the Minutes were raised except for the Chair of the Sponsoring Partners acknowledging that a lot had been achieved by the organisation during the last year. Many of the matters brought up for discussion one year ago had been resolved, the spot audit had been completed, the GWPO restructuring as well, and a new Executive Secretary had been appointed and installed.

2.1: Update on decisions taken since last SP meeting

Two decisions had been made electronically by the Sponsoring Partners since the last SP meeting and were noted.

	Decision	Adoption date
1	The Minutes of the Sponsoring Partners meeting 28 th June 2023 were approved on a no objection basis.	30 th November 2023
2	<p>8 nominated GWP Steering Committee members (6 new and 2 re-appointments) were appointed, on a no objection basis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Mr. Adrian Sym, UK▪ Mr. Ángel Cárdenas Sosa, Venezuela▪ Mr. Atem Ramsundersingh, Singapore▪ Ms. Carolina Tornesi MacKinnon, USA▪ Ms. Jing XU, China▪ Jorge Werneck Lima, Brazil▪ Roula Majdalani, Lebanon▪ Yamileth Astorga, Costa Rica <p>The 8 Steering Committee members will take up their positions as of the December 2023 Steering Committee meeting.</p>	8 th December 2023

3. Information and Approval of GWP Reports for 2023

The GWP Chair expressed that he was very pleased to see Mr. Alan AtKisson having been recruited as the new Executive Secretary as of February 1st, and a lot of fantastic work had already been made in a very short time, involving GWPO, Regions, Steering Committee and the Financing Partners.

The floor was then given to the Executive Secretary and the Interim CFO to present the 2023 GWP activities and financial situation.

The PPT presentation was circulated to the participants after the meeting, by the Executive Secretary.

3.1: GWP Annual Activity and Financial Reports 2023

The GWP Executive Secretary, Mr. Alan AtKisson, started off by giving a brief overview (halfway in to 2024) of highlights related to the 2024 Work Plan for the overarching areas of: Climate, Water Solutions for the SDGs, Transboundary and Knowledge & Learning.

Workplan 2024 – Highlights Climate



USD\$ 6 million grant agreement for the African Union AIP GCF Readiness project

The multi-country GCF Readiness project will support the development of national climate resilience water investment plans across 15 African Countries.

Water and Climate Coalition

- Secretariat transitioning from WMO to GWP (Global Climate, administered by SAF)
- Strategic focus on enabling integrated water and climate investments globally
- GWP now co-chairs the WCC Steering Committee
- Constituting a new [Water & Climate Leaders Panel](#)
- Serving 260+ WCC Member Orgs, facilitating exchange within community



Source: water-climate-coalition.org

Workplan 2024 - Highlights Water Solutions for the SDGs



Southeast Asia: From SDG 6.5.1 to Climate Resilience Early Warning System (CREWS) project

- Budget: 178,000 Euro (Mar. 2024 – Mar. 2025) from the WMO
- Implemented in Cambodia and Lao PDR

CREWS objectives:

- Review and update or develop drought management action plans at national level
- Support the establishment of coordination mechanism for drought and outline the detailed roles and responsibilities for each stakeholder
- To develop a National IWRM Action Plans



West Africa: GWP has coordinated the process to identify and select innovative examples of IWRM implementation, with the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU).

The best examples identified were funded to be presented in the 10th World Water Forum, and will be the basis for a regional report with WAEMU on the status and opportunities for IWRM implementation

Workplan 2024 – Highlights Transboundary



Southern Africa: USD 11.1 Million Funding Agreement signed for a new GEF-funded transboundary water management project.

- The focus of the project will be on the preparation of investment plans in the Cuvukun basin shared by Namibia & Angola.
- With a duration of 5 years, it will contribute to the AIP transboundary portfolio.



West Africa: in Burkina Faso, GWP is supporting the process of acceding to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Water Convention.

Workplan 2024 – Highlights Knowledge & Learning

New feature of the IWRM Action Hub –Platforms catalogue

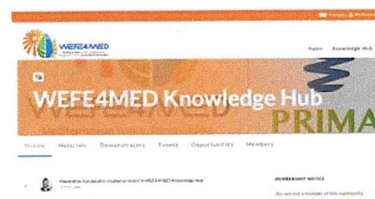
- Featuring prominently platforms, tools, methodologies, guidelines developed by other organisations
- Strategically used to build new alliances and strengthen partnerships



<https://iwrmaactionhub.org/explore/platforms>

Communities of Practice - Upcoming launches:

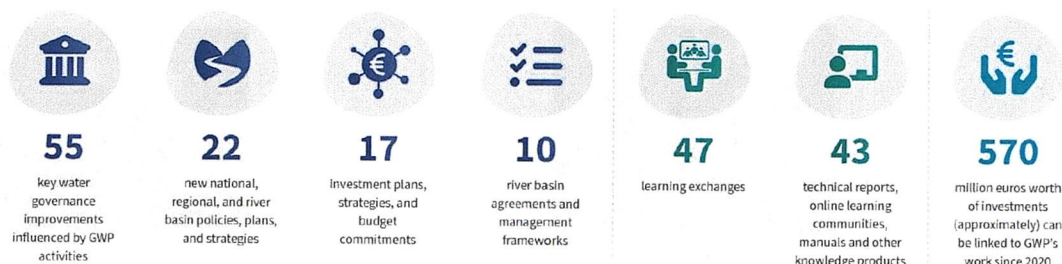
- UNCCD continental Communities of Practice
- Mediterranean Water, Energy, Food, Ecosystems for the Mediterranean



The Executive Secretary then moved on with presenting an overview of GWP's most significant activities and impact made during 2023, summarized in the "GWP in Action 2023" report.

The GWP in Action 2023 put the emphasis on GWP's global impact rather than activities.

A year of inspiring results



[Explore our comprehensive results map](#)

Some comments noted following the presentation:

- Really want to congratulate GWP on the results and the framing of the impacts. WMO is happy to be collaborating with GWP.
The Executive Secretary said that it had been a pleasure to visit WMO earlier in the year, signing a new MoU between the two organisations. GWP is very appreciative of the continued collaboration.
- Netherlands, as a Sponsoring Partner, is pleased to approve the GWP in Action 2023 report but as a Financing Partner needs more detailed reporting towards the end of the year, as per usual.
- Supporting documents needs to be provided to the Sponsoring Partners more in advance next time. Too short time to receive documents only a couple of days prior to the meeting.
The Executive Secretary responded that it is absolutely the aspiration to provide needed information much more in advance than what became the situation this time.

Decision: The GWP Annual Activity Report 2023 of the Steering Committee to the Sponsoring Partners were received and approved by the Sponsoring Partners.

With regards to the 2023 Annual Financial Reports, there had been a delay in the financial reporting process (reasons presented below). The Steering Committee will approve the 2023 Annual Report as soon as they receive it and the request to the Sponsoring Partners are to take an electronic no-objection decision thereafter, i.e when the financial reports (2023 Annual Financial Report, 2023 Audit Report and Management Letter) have been received.

Delayed financial reporting: causes and remedies



- 2023 was a challenging year for the organization in terms of Finance, both from a budgetary and an operational perspective.
- A combination of staff departures without replacement, the requirement for monthly audits in 2023, and increasing demands linked to growing reliance on restricted funding (among other things) have made the organization's financial function vulnerable.
- GWPO has also exercised extreme diligence in reviewing (and re-reviewing) the financial data for 2023 to ensure that there are no issues or problems.
- New auditors and their questions, new audit requirements that change our reporting formats, and delays in reporting from the Country level have contributed to the delays.
- The ES had previously identified the short-staffed financial team and under-developed financial system as the key vulnerability in the GWPO system overall, and the GWPO Steering Committee has tasked the ES with strengthening the Finance Unit. This is key to the organization's credibility in financial management and a prerequisite for successful fundraising going forward.

Current status of the financial report and plan for completion



- The GWPO Audit and Finance Subcommittee has reviewed the Draft Annual Financial Report 2023.
- The auditors note verbally that the numbers are solid, no major issues are expected, but the structure of the report, the narrative, and the categorizations of costs are still under review.
- The Steering Committee decided to wait for the final, audited version before giving its **APPROVAL** for submission to you. A short, special meeting (which may eventually be an email-process) is planned to secure that approval.
- Following SC approval, and signatures by the GWP Chair, Audit and Finance Subcommittee Chair and the ES, it is proposed to send the final report to you for "no-objection" approval ~~before 30 June 2024~~ when it is ready (text changed after Sponsoring Partner discussion).
- What follows is an introduction to the Draft Financial Report to support your review once the final, audited report arrives.

Changes introduced to the Annual Financial Report 2023



- **Exclusion of the Regions' Locally Raised Funds (LRF) income and expenditure from the GWPO Financial Statements.**
GWPO is not a signatory to the (LRF) agreements. GWPO is not contractually responsible for these funds and thus cannot include the funds in GWPO Financial Statements.

Auditors have suggested that the LRF can be included as an appendix to the GWPO Financial Statements.
- **New names for the overall categories in the financial statements.**
Globally Raised Funding (CORE) has been changed to **Unrestricted Funding**
Earmarked and Designated Funding has been changed to **Restricted Funding**
Sweden Ministry Foreign Affairs has been classified as **Other Funding**
- **Management Fees** which were previously considered as Other Income (and part of the "CORE" or Unrestricted category) are now being reported as income related to the project that made the contribution
- We have introduced a new **Schedule of Project Grants Income/Expenditure** both in our report currency (EUR) and donor currency, reflecting the new dependency on Restricted (program and project) funding.

3.2: GWP Audit Report 2021

As noted above, the 2023 GWP Audit Report and Management letter will be provided to the Sponsoring Partners electronically with a delay, for their no-objection receipt and consideration.

3.3: Discharge of liability of the Steering Committee Members and the Executive Secretary

As a consequence of the delayed financial reporting, the decision regarding discharging the GWP Steering Committee Members and the Executive Secretary of liability for 2023 will be taken electronically on a no-objection basis when the financial reports have been received, considered and approved.

The Chair of the Sponsoring Partners confirmed, with the present Sponsoring Partners' consent, that related to the consideration and approval of the financial reports, as well as the decision regarding discharging the GWP Steering Committee and the Executive Secretary of liability for 2023, an electronic decision will be made by the Sponsoring Partners when the requested documents have been received. To take into account is the upcoming summer holiday season and that the Sponsoring Partners need approx. a working week to handle the process.

The Executive Secretary thanked the Sponsoring Partners for their understanding and flexibility and said that it is essential that the process is thorough and correct rather than rushed. The next step will be for the Executive Secretary to formally ask the donors for an extension in submitting the financial reports for 2023, to align with the respective formal agreements.

4. GWP Chair Annual Report

The GWP Chair gave a brief update on the year that had passed since the last meeting. The Autumn of 2023 was tough for the GWPO Secretariat with several changes in the Executive Secretary position having occurred during the year, HR related difficult cases, funding uncertainties etc.

With the recruitment of Alan AtKisson as the new Executive Secretary, joining as of February 1st 2024, various areas had rapidly improved and positive signals were received both from within GWP, as well as from external parties.

Strong focus was put on keeping the organisation operational.

The Governance reform is an area which had also been receiving strong focus. Good work was done by the external consultant Judith Sargentini who suggested governance amendments/changes along 2 routes. One route requiring changes to the statutes (after approval by the Sponsoring Partners) and one route requiring decisions by the Steering Committee, but without changing the statutes. The Steering Committee had tasked the Executive Secretary to start investigation and implementing the suggested changes, not requiring statutory changes. Results of this implementation process have already started to become visible.

More significant organisational changes will be made jointly with the strategy 2026 - 2030 development, for full alignment.

5. Update on nomination process for 5 new Steering Committee members to take seat at the December 2024 Steering Committee meeting, for electronic approval by the Sponsoring Partners after the summer

The Executive Secretary said that the process for 5 regions (South Asia, Southern Africa, Central Africa, South America, and Central & Eastern Europe) to nominate their candidates for the global Steering Committee was ongoing, led by the Nominations Committee. The Sponsoring Partners will receive the final nominations electronically, for approval on a no-objection basis towards end September/beginning of October.

A comment was made that the present rotation schedule of Steering Committee members seems to present a bit of disruption, which affects longer term stability and knowledge about various topics. According to the statutes it is not a must to change 4-5 members every year. A recommendation (not a strong advice) for the Steering Committee to reflect on this going forward.

6. Sponsoring Partner guidance on GWP's strategic development going forward considering: Governance Reform Action Plan, Organisational Renewal Process, Replenishment Campaign, New Strategy 2026 - 2030 and Political Commitment as an Enabling Condition

The PPT presentation was circulated to the participants after the meeting, by the Executive Secretary.

The Executive Secretary started off this part of the meeting by saying that the majority of the issues occurring during the last year were mainly related to the GWPO Secretariat. The regions continued to produce fantastic results.

GWPO has now emerged and stabilized from a difficult year and is in the process of a relatively rapid recovery.

When we now move towards "a new generation of GWP", we need to know that the Sponsoring Partners will guide us as necessary on where to go and be united with us when we go there.

To bring additional Sponsoring Partners onboard would strengthen GWPO as an intergovernmental organisation.

There are still a number of critical challenges which need to be taken into account moving forward:

- Changes in development politics, priorities, and budgets
- Governance Reform as a condition for financing
- The shift away from unrestricted (core) to restricted financing
- Mismatch between resources and expectations (on procedural matters as well as performance)
- A very uneven global network (and our network is one of our unique value-additions to the world)

The Executive Secretary presented two viable scenarios, of which the Steering Committee had recommended to move forward with scenario A, with elements of scenario B included.

Two viable scenarios: A & B

Scenario A:

“Roadmap to Renewal”

- IGO enlargement
- Statutory revision
- New global strategy
- Network redesign
- Includes the “Replenishment” concept for fundraising



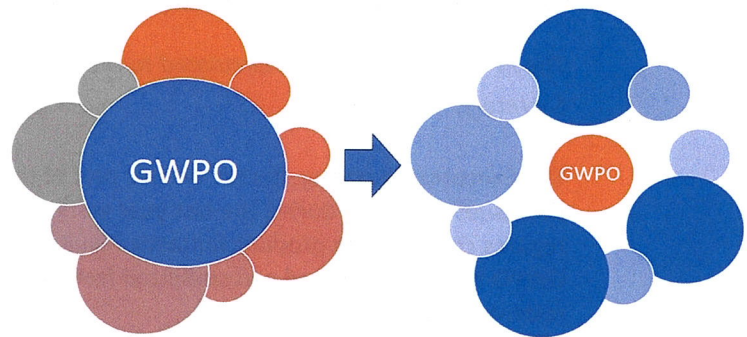
Result: A larger, more stable, better-funded organisation that is equipped to make a catalytic shift in the global arena on water, and to be a trusted implementer of water-related programs at large scale – the Second Generation of GWP

Two viable scenarios: A & B

Scenario B:

“Rightsizing” and shifting power

- Smaller secretariat
- Focus on minimal financial and administrative functions
- All programming and most economic power shifted to regions
- Phase out of IGO?



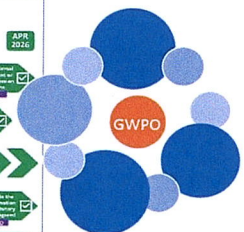
Result: A small, more decentralised global network, where the regions develop their own identities in a looser affiliation (if they choose to continue)

The Steering Committee’s recommendation:

“A and B” – Scenario A, with elements of Scenario B

Move forward on the renewal agenda

- Adding countries, preparing a new global strategy, planning for statutory reform, network changes
- Pursue the “Replenishment” concept for fundraising
- ... with these important features
- Build robust systems and platforms, but avoid creating a top-heavy secretariat
- Continue the process of shifting programming responsibility and economic power to the regions wherever possible



The Executive Secretary ended his presentation by saying that regardless of what path you indicate that our organisation should take, we need strong engagement from our Sponsoring Partners, at a higher level than previously - political commitment will be an enabling condition.

Climate change issues have become water issues, and water issues have become security and peace issues. Adding more countries as invitees and observers to the Sponsoring Partners group would generate a strengthening of GWPO as an intergovernmental platform, playing a more catalytic role in the global water agenda.

Some comments noted following the presentation:

- Wish to commend all the hard work performed by the Executive Secretary, the GWPO staff, the Steering Committee, and regions.
- The Governance reform will be a huge reform and much more time will be needed for the Sponsoring Partners to assess the various steps and suggestions on how to move forward. For the part requiring changes to the statutes, a very detailed report with explanations, pros and cons etc would be required before entering into further discussions.
- The Sponsoring Partners need to be much more involved and engaged in the design of the next strategy 2026 - 2030.
- The Sponsoring Partners should first receive more detailed information on the Governance Reform, followed by the strategy development.
- In general, supporting a combination of scenario A and B with regards to the Governance Reform.
- Right sizing the organisation is essential. The time for having a big Headquarters set up is over. Growth needs to be in the regions where the actual implementation is happening.
- Global thought leadership, a critical mass of thinkers/expertise, is crucial. Hubs of key competencies, small centres of excellence within GWP, is needed. The organisation needs to be regionally anchored.
- Despite the great turmoil there is still great energy within the organisation.
- To have an intergovernmental organisation within the water area is unique. The political aspect of this hasn't been leveraged enough. GWP should play a more active role as part of the UN Water Conferences etc.
- Ownership in the regions should be strengthened, at the same time as also strengthening the opportunity for political leverage with the Sponsoring Partners.
- A strategic dialogue on global issues, including climate mitigation, and how GWP can influence the water sector at a higher level should be discussed.
- GWP's inclusiveness of small farmers, indigenous people, youth, gender etc is a real strength for the organisation and should be made much more useful and impactful, bringing those groups of people up to the global platform.
- Amazing what has been achieved, including the turn around of GWPO. A year ago, GWPO was facing a complete break down in confidence and trust from donors and now with this amazing turn around, trust has come a long way in being built again.
- Important with right sizing the organisation without increasing the GWPO Secretariat.
- To engage with the private sector and mobilize leverage in a smart way to bring in money to the organisation will be very important going forward.
- The replenishment terminology does not fly well with Sida.
- The Sida representative made a reflection about Sida being part of making GWPO's operations more challenging due to the rather quick change from core to

programmatic support, and what that entails related to programmatic and financial set up of operations.

- The Netherlands' representative said that their present agreement with GWPO ends by December 31st, 2024, and with a new government in place, not sure what the future funding possibilities will look like.
- The Netherlands' representative also called on all Sponsoring Partners to consider becoming a financial contributor to GWPO, even for a short period.

The Executive Secretary made some reflections with regards to comments received:

- "Every crisis is an opportunity" - last year's crisis could be seen as an opportunity to re-think, re-consider and re-structure.
- Very encouraging to hear the engagement expressed by the Sponsoring Partners' group. The political support will be essential for deciding on the way forward for GWP.
- Noting the need for more thorough discussions and deliberations, right sizing the organisation, strengthening regional capabilities, the option A trajectory with a bit of the option B incorporated, the IGO status being a good asset for the global water community etc.

The GWP Chair added that:

- GWP has real unique value in being a neutral IGO and is more needed in the world than ever before.
- There is an increased interest from the private sector in water governance and collective action and GWP could play a very important role here.
- GWP could greatly benefit from enlarging the Sponsoring Partners group.
- Having the Sponsoring Partners communicating widely about the value of GWP and possibilities for the organisation going forward would be very much appreciated.

The Chair of the Sponsoring Partners thanked everyone for their high level of commitment and for sharing their thoughts and ideas. More time will be needed to digest, discuss, and engage in the many topics presented so no decisions will be made at this point.

A genuine interest from the Sponsoring Partners was noted when it comes to supporting the non-fragmentation work within the water sector and how GWP can align actors and thought leadership. GWP needs to act in a catalytical way, also with regards to the private sector.

The governance process for accessing new members to the Sponsoring Partners group is cumbersome but the GWPO Secretariat is encouraged to consult with potential interested parties, and as a first step invite them as observers, which would not require changes to the statutes.

With regards to the development of a new 2026 - 2030 GWP Strategy it was noted that a request was put forward to include indigenous people as part of the consultation process. It was also noted that the Sponsoring Partners would like to be consulted through both e-mails and intermediate meetings going forward to be part of the strategy development process and be able to provide input on an ongoing basis. For the Sponsoring Partners to be in dialogue with the Steering Committee directly on this would also be very beneficial, which the Chair of the Steering Committee confirmed would be very valuable.

7. Any other business, date for SP meeting 2025 and Summary of discussions and decisions:

No further items for discussion were brought forward.

The GWPO Secretariat will come back to the Sponsoring Partners with a date for the June 2025 meeting well in time.

Summary of discussions and decisions:

1. The meeting Agenda was approved.
2. According to the procedure of electronic approval of the SP Minutes on a no objection basis after each meeting, the Minutes from the 22nd Annual SP Meeting had been approved as of November 30th, 2023.
3. Two decisions had been taken electronically by the Sponsoring Partners since the last SP meeting (see document provided to the Sponsoring Partners as part of the meeting documentation, as well as listed in these Minutes under Agenda item 2.1).
4. Decision: The GWP Annual Activity Report 2023 of the Steering Committee to the Sponsoring Partners were received and approved.

With regards to the 2023 Annual Financial Reports, there had been a delay in the financial reporting process (reasons presented below). The Steering Committee will approve the 2023 Annual Report as soon as they receive it and the request to the Sponsoring Partners are to take an electronic no-objection decision thereafter, i.e when the financial reports (2023 Annual Financial Report, 2023 Audit Report and Management Letter) have been received.

As a consequence of the delayed financial reporting, the decision regarding discharging the GWP Steering Committee Members and the Executive Secretary of liability for 2023 will be taken electronically on a no-objection basis when the financial reports have been received, considered and approved.

5. It was noted that the Sponsoring Partners would like to be consulted through both e-mails and intermediate meetings going forward to be part of the strategy development process and be able to provide input on an ongoing basis.

Meeting closure:

The Chair of the Sponsoring Partners thanked everyone for a very constructive and fruitful meeting and thereafter closed the meeting.



Tobias Axerup
Chair of the Meeting of the Sponsoring Partners

