Roundtable 1 – Governance: moderated by Ms. Danielle Gaillard-Picher (Global Coordinator, Global Water Partnership)

o Key speakers:

H.E. Mr. Danilo Turk (Geneva Water Hub);

Prof. Olcay Unver (Member of Water Policy Group, Arizona State University);

Ms. Susanne Schmeier (IHE Delft Institute for Water Education);

o Rapporteur: Ms Leanne Burney (Senior Policy Officer, UN Water).

Ms. Danielle Gaillard-Picher opened by posing the question: what is a game changer? Asking participants to imagine what the future could look like, she suggested that game changers might evolve around legal systems, inclusive governance, a systems approach and long-term perspectives.

H.E. Mr. Danilo Turk said we can not take the mindset of yesterday to face new challenges. Stressing that peace is not only the absence of conflict, but is also a fundamental condition of human survival, he noted that water must be viewed as a global commons and that projects need to keep this view in mind. He also noted that human activities such as unchecked consumption is fundamentally changing the global hydrological cycle, which often derives from a competitive mindset in transboundary aquifers. To address this, the water community needs champions to build global monitoring and reporting systems, which led him to also express support for a possible UN Water Envoy.

Prof. Olcay Unver said the Water Policy Group (WPG) suggests three game changing proposals: (1) listening to national water leaders, (2) policy scaffolding, and (3) mainstreaming water into all UN conferences. It is essential, he said, to shift away from telling national water leaders what to do. Rather, the new approach needs to be asking and listening to what blocks progress. The WPG believes that there are real benefits for governments to have access to "policy scaffolding," a comprehensive set of basic policy principles and strategies based on successful experiences globally. Concluding, he suggested that the UN 2023 Water Conference could call upon the UNGA to authorize that all sectoral conferences of the UN include in their agendas an item about their contribution to improved water outcomes.

Ms. Susanne Schmeier said the water crisis is basically a governance crisis and that the way water is viewed must be changed. For example, by moving outside economic models to thinking about water interdependence, considering new sovereignty concepts and showcasing the benefits of water cooperation. It is also important to recognize who is impacted – in this regard, the principle of equity should be applied. To move beyond water, she said, better legal frameworks are needed as well as national level institutions which have the power to coordinate and are accountable.

During the discussion approximately 17 stakeholders took the floor. Several emphasized the need for a strong focus on human rights. One noted that human rights principles, when applied to water and sanitation naturally translate into good governance and can build trust between communities. Actually taking human rights approaches seriously is a "game changer", and the UN 2023 Water Conference could be a chance to implement the Secretary-Generals Call to Action for Human Rights. Another drew attention to the Secretary-General's call for WASH in Health Care Facilities made during the opening of the Water Action Decade in 2018. A participant said that human rights should be defined by the public

and not by corporations and another suggested that nature also has rights. One said that there is a disconnect between the right to a healthy environment and the right to water and sanitation – it is important to integrate these rights and these communities. Meaningfully including indigenous communities so that their rights can be respected is crucial.

How to look at financing in terms of governance was discussed with one saying that water financing ought to be much be more agile and flexible. The need to take a close look at public-private partnerships was stressed along with a call to reform multilateral development banks lending to the water sector. A participant called for a new multilateralism to shape a new global water governance. Water projects must involve trade unions and must be climate resilient. Another suggested that water governance be reshaped and that SDG 6 targets for drinking water and sanitation will only be achieved if nations think of financing global common goods as investments rather than aid. This means that water is priced to capture its true cost – if this is not done, then water is misused and the poor are denied access. Where transboundary cooperation works, economic growth is fostered as well as better management of floods and droughts – one called for models which incentivize investment in cooperation, where such investment is seen as decreasing risk.

The interaction between national and local levels of government was noted. For example, a territorial approach which stresses working at the most appropriate level was recommended along with clear legal frameworks which articulate who does what. One suggested that national institutions could be a bottleneck since local dynamics and politics really determine water access. A related point on the need for regulation as a positive force which clarifies the rules of the game was made. Too many countries have out-of-date regulatory frameworks. A stakeholder asked "let us consider the human face of water" which means considering human rights and holding governments accountable – she suggested that advocating Political Will for water and sanitation is a game changer.

In closing, Henk Ovink, the Special Envoy for Water from the Netherlands said that 99% of current investment exacerbates climate change. Revolutions hurt societies, they hurt individuals and feelings. If we want to change that 99%, rethinking governance and financing in a radically inclusive way is necessary. It is not easy, he said, and the UN 2023 Water Conference is only the beginning.

Potential game changing ideas for interactive dialogues:

Systemic and whole-of-society approach to deal with challenges in relation to cross sectoral benefits, taking into account externalities and co-benefits

Support for water, climate, food and related policy integration at national and regional level

Benefits:

Trust

Leveraging benefits

Creating ownership

Increasing effectiveness of national administration and regional coordination partnerships

Catalysing ideas:

Accountability and institutions need to be capacitated

Supporting political and societal will through science and information in a holistic manner

Participation, Inclusion of youth and others, human rights-based approach

New institutional arrangements, coordination across sectors and transboundary cooperation, regional economic commissions.

Valuing water and sanitation as a human right and global public good in relevant bodies and partnerships