BRIEFING NOTE

Perspectives From Water and Sanitation Practitioners on the Global Goal on Adaptation's "Belém–Addis Vision" And the Operationalization of the Belém Adaptation Indicators

Draft prepared by SWA and WaterAid (as cochairs of GGA Water for Climate Pavilion Working Group). Recognition to the dozens of inputs provided by water and sanitation partners.

1. Context

The Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) negotiations at CMA7 resulted in the adoption of 59 indicators for the targets in the United Arab Emirates Framework for Global Climate Resilience (the Global Goal on Adaptation Framework). This is a reduction compared to the 100 indicators suggested by the UNFCCC-appointed technical experts prior to the meeting, and presents challenges for the broad representation, technical depth and integrated approach aimed for the UAE Framework. Against this backdrop, Parties agreed to adopt the Belém–Addis Vision on Adaptation, which launches a two-year process to advance the operationalization of the Belém Adaptation Indicators.

The GGA CMA7 decision identifies several key elements that will shape this process:

- The adoption of the Belém Adaptation Indicators (GGA decision annex and operative paragraphs);
- The use of the indicators to assess progress toward the targets of the Global Goal on Adaptation and to inform future global stocktakes;
- A technical paper by the UNFCCC secretariat analyzing the indicators and existing synthesis processes (para 16);
- A technical workstream under the subsidiary bodies to develop technical guidance for the operationalization of the Belem Adaptation Indicators, including improving metadata and methodologies (paras 21-23);
- The establishment of a technical taskforce to support this work (para 23); and
- Engagement of relevant UNFCCC constituted bodies and expert processes (para 24).

The upcoming UNFCCC SB64 meeting in Bonn constitutes an important milestone to advance on the Belém-Addis Vision. Especially urgent is the establishment of the technical taskforce to support the operationalization of the Belém Adaptation Indicators. A clear decision on the composition, mandate and timeline for delivery of the technical taskforce would be welcomed, as this would provide the essential foundation for it to be operational and assist Parties in the indicator alignment process.

For water supply and sanitation practitioners, the progress on the GGA is particularly important because it is closely related to ongoing monitoring processes linked to related global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (7 out of 9 Belem water-sanitation indicators are directly linked to SDG indicators), but also the Sendai Framework, the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) Strategic Framework, the Ramsar Convention Strategic Plan, and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Global Biodiversity Framework.

This briefing highlights key considerations from the perspective of water and sanitation practitioners on how the different elements of the Belém–Addis Vision could be implemented effectively, and how we can support these processes.

2. The role of the secretariat technical paper

The decision requests the UNFCCC secretariat to prepare a technical paper on the Belém Adaptation Indicators and the targets of the Global Goal on Adaptation, including:

- Assessing the use of the indicators,
- Mapping existing data sources and synthesis report processes on adaptation information,
- Identifying synergies and gaps, and
- Analyzing guidelines, tools and methodologies for aggregation and comparison of aggregated figures of these indicators.

This technical paper (currently being drafted by the secretariat) will play a foundational role in shaping how the indicators are operationalized. From the perspective of practitioners working on climate-resilient water and sanitation systems, the paper could contribute in several important ways.

2.1 Assessing the use of the indicators

The Belém Adaptation Indicators are intended to be voluntary and country-driven, supporting countries in tracking adaptation progress without creating new reporting obligations. The technical paper could clarify how the indicators may be used within national and subnational monitoring systems, including within National and Sub-National Adaptation Plans, National and Sub-National Action Plans for Climate Change, and sectoral adaptation strategies. It could also explore how information generated through the indicators may contribute to collective assessments of adaptation progress, including as an input to the second Global Stocktake in 2028.

The Belem Adaptation Water and Sanitation Indicators

The Belém Indicators for target 9a on water and sanitation provide a good starting point to track climate-resilience progress. The adopted indicators reflect two interdependent clusters of adaptation action: water resources and systems resilience (Annex, Articles. 3a–d) and people-centered, service-oriented action (Annex, Articles. 3e–i). The former facilitates institutional and hydrological resilience, essential for the latter, which enables equitable, safe and dignified service delivery to people made vulnerable to climate impacts. Parties should engage with both clusters and promote integrated action between them.

Similarly, Parties should engage with the Belém Indicators for target 9d on ecosystems and biodiversity, noting that this target refers explicitly to “the protection of […] inland water […] ecosystems”. The associated Belem ecosystems indicators create vital linkages between water ecosystems' resilience and population resilience, through adaptation action.

A preliminary analysis of the water and sanitation indicators, including current data sources, metadata, potential operationalization, as well as synergies with other thematic indicators is available **here**.

2.2 Mapping existing synthesis processes on adaptation information

The technical paper could map existing processes that synthesize adaptation information under the UNFCCC and beyond. This could include synthesis reports on adaptation communications, Biennial Transparency Reports, annual NDC and NAP synthesis reports, and assessments prepared for the global stocktake. The mapping could also consider relevant global monitoring frameworks, such as the climate-related targets and indicators under the Sustainable Development Goals, Sendai Framework, the CCD, the Ramsar Convention and the GBF, as well as the, as well as monitoring systems used in National Adaptation Plans and sectoral frameworks such as water and sanitation systems.

2.3 Identifying synergies and gaps

Building on the mapping conducted, the technical paper could identify areas where existing monitoring frameworks already support the Belém indicators (e.g. through Custodian Agencies) and where further methodological work may be needed. In doing so, it could draw on the analytical work undertaken by the group of technical experts that supported the development of the indicator framework in 2024-2025.

While the 59 Belém Adaptation Indicators adopted at COP30 include some adjustments compared to the list proposed by the experts, many of the insights generated during that process, particularly regarding synergies with existing monitoring frameworks and remaining methodological gaps, remain relevant.

For example, 7 out of the 9 indicators adopted under the water and sanitation target build on existing global monitoring systems, including indicators aligned with the Sustainable Development Goal monitoring framework. At the same time, the expert analysis highlighted areas where further work is needed to better capture aspects such as the resilience dimensions of water and sanitation systems, climate-related risks to water resources and associated biodiversity, and adaptation processes and outcomes across interconnected sectors.

Revisiting the synergies and gaps identified during the expert process could therefore help ensure that the Belém indicators build on existing monitoring systems while addressing areas where further methodological or technical development may still be required.

Transboundary dimensions of indicators under the Global Goal on Adaptation

Article 18 of the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience recognizes that climate change impacts often have transboundary and cascading effects across ecosystems, river basins and socio-economic systems. However, the Belém Adaptation Indicators currently do not explicitly reflect transboundary dimensions.

For thematic areas such as water resources, nature-based solutions and ecological resilience, as well as for water supply and sanitation systems, transboundary cooperation is often essential for effective climate adaptation. Strengthening the technical treatment of transboundary aspects could therefore enhance the relevance and implementation of several Belém indicators.

Existing monitoring frameworks already provide useful methodologies and data sources. For example, the SDG indicator framework and reporting under the Water Convention include methodologies for

monitoring cooperation and adaptation planning in transboundary river basins. This perspective may be particularly relevant for the Belém Adaptation Indicator on the "proportion of the total area of basins and cryosphere for which a climate adaptation plan has been developed and implemented on the basis of different warming scenarios". Considering transboundary river basins and shared ecosystems in the application of such indicators could help better reflect the interconnected nature of climate risks and adaptation responses.

Enhancing technical guidance on the transboundary dimensions of indicators under the Belém–Addis Vision could therefore strengthen the implementation and relevance of the Global Goal on Adaptation framework.

2.4 Analyzing guidelines, tools and methodologies for aggregating indicators

The technical paper could analyze existing approaches for synthesizing and aggregating indicators across countries and thematic areas. Lessons from other global monitoring frameworks, such as the SDG indicator system, which combines national reporting, global databases, and thematic synthesis, could help inform approaches for assessing adaptation progress at the global level. Given the context-specific nature of adaptation, the analysis could also explore approaches that combine quantitative indicators with qualitative assessments.

The analysis undertaken in the secretariat's technical paper will therefore be critical in shaping the next phase of work under the Belém–Addis Vision. By clarifying how the indicators may be used, identifying synergies with existing monitoring frameworks, and exploring methodological options for aggregation, the paper can provide an essential analytical foundation for the technical work on indicator metadata and methodologies to be undertaken by the subsidiary bodies.

3. Establishing the technical taskforce

The decision requests the Subsidiary Bodies to undertake technical work to improve the metadata and methodologies of the Belém Adaptation Indicators, including through establishing a technical taskforce.

While details on the composition and mandate of the taskforce are not yet defined, useful precedents exist in the SB60 decision (June 2024) establishing a group of technical experts under the UAE–Belém work programme. In that earlier process, the Chairs of the Subsidiary Bodies convened technical experts to support the development and refinement of indicators. A similar model could be used for the Belém–Addis Vision technical taskforce.

Custodian agencies responsible for indicators that are directly linked to the Belém Adaptation Indicators should play a central role in the technical taskforce. A significant share of the Belém water and sanitation indicators (notably 7 out of 9) build on existing Sustainable Development Goal indicators, for which established custodian agencies already provide internationally agreed methodologies, metadata, and direct country support for monitoring and reporting.

These agencies bring critical technical expertise and institutional experience that will be essential for the efficient operationalization of the Belém indicators. In many cases, the task ahead is not to develop entirely new methodologies, but rather to adapt and refine existing ones to better capture climate resilience dimensions.

Ensuring the active involvement of custodian agencies would therefore help:

- Maintain methodological consistency with existing global monitoring frameworks;
- Avoid duplication of efforts and unnecessary reporting burdens for countries; and
- Enable a faster and more technically robust operationalization process by building on systems already in place.

Conversely, establishing a taskforce without adequately integrating these actors would risk overlooking existing metadata and methodologies, potentially leading to inconsistencies, inefficiencies, and reduced usability of the indicators at country level.

3.1 Possible approach for establishing the taskforce

- **Convening authority:** The Chairs of the SBSTA and SBI could jointly convene the taskforce.
- **Composition of the taskforce:**
    - Representatives of custodian agencies currently monitoring indicators directly related to the Belem adaptation indicators,
    - Technical experts involved in the development of the Belém indicators to help ensure continuity and maintain institutional knowledge
    - New experts nominated by Parties,
    - Representatives of UNFCCC constituted bodies working on adaptation,
    - Representatives from relevant sectors and international organizations, including practitioners with experience in applying global sustainability framework targets on the ground.
- **On the size of the taskforce and potential alternative:** The proposed composition of the taskforce, while ensuring broad representation and technical depth, could result in a relatively large and potentially less agile group. This may have implications for efficiency, coordination, and the timely delivery of outputs within the mandated timeframe.

  An alternative approach, would be to establish a smaller core group of experts with a clear mandate to systematically consult with a wider network of stakeholders. This could include, in particular, custodian agencies for relevant indicators, experts involved in the development of the Belém indicators, and thematic specialists from key sectors.

  Such a model could help balance inclusivity and efficiency by maintaining a manageable group size while still ensuring access to the necessary technical expertise and institutional knowledge. At the same time, careful consideration would be needed to ensure that this approach provides sufficient transparency, representation, and political buy-in across regions and constituencies.
- **Timeline:** Given that the CMA decision mandates the subsidiary bodies to undertake technical work on improving indicator metadata and methodologies, including through the establishment of a technical taskforce, early operationalization of this mandate will be important. The 2026 June session of the subsidiary bodies (SB64) could provide an opportunity for Parties to clarify the modalities of the taskforce, including its composition, mandate and timeline, and to invite submissions from Parties and observers where appropriate. This would allow the taskforce to begin its work as early as possible and contribute technical inputs over the two-year period leading up to CMA9.

3.2 Possible mandate of the technical taskforce

As a foundation, it is important that Parties agree on a clear mandate for the taskforce, and that the recommendations from the taskforce, falling within the boundaries of this mandate, are respected in future work. The CMA7 decision explicitly refers to improving metadata and methodologies for the indicators. However, the taskforce may also need to address a broader set of technical issues to enable the effective use of the indicators.

In this context, it will be essential to ensure the strong involvement of custodian agencies responsible for indicators directly linked to the Belém Adaptation Indicators. These agencies are uniquely positioned to support this work, given their existing mandates, established methodologies, and ongoing support to countries in monitoring and reporting. Their expertise will be particularly critical for tasks related to refining metadata, adapting methodologies to capture climate resilience dimensions, and ensuring alignment with existing monitoring systems.

From a practitioner perspective, the mandate of the taskforce could include:

A. Refining indicator metadata

This includes clarifying for each indicator:

- Key concepts and terminology
- Units of measurement
- Data sources
- Frequency of reporting
- Responsible institutions applicable in different contexts.

Clear metadata will be essential to ensure consistent reporting across countries.

B. Developing methodologies for aggregation

One of the most complex challenges is how to aggregate adaptation indicators in a meaningful way. The taskforce could explore methodological options for:

- Synthesizing national-level indicators into global assessments,
- Analyzing synergetic progress within different sub-components of targets and across thematic targets of the Global Goal on Adaptation, and
- Addressing differences in national contexts and baselines.

C. Aligning with existing national monitoring systems

Many countries already track adaptation progress through National Adaptation Plan monitoring frameworks or sectoral monitoring systems. The taskforce could explore how the Belém indicators can align with and build on existing national monitoring systems, while ensuring common standards are enabling global aggregation, in order to:

- Minimize reporting burden
- Support integration into national adaptation planning and monitoring processes
- Support integration into sectoral monitoring systems.

D. Supporting sectoral interpretation and refinement of indicators

Indicators may need sector-specific guidance to ensure they are meaningful and usable. For example, sectors such as water supply and sanitation require indicators that reflect:

- Resilience of water infrastructure over time
- Reliability of services under climate stress
- Protection of water resources and ecosystems
- Providing sector-relevant guidance could support implementation and reporting.

E. Capacity development to operationalize the indicators

A critical element of the operationalization is to identify capacity gaps, which in turn is contingent upon data readiness of indicators as well as of responsible institutions. Data readiness will point to the level of investment needed to get indicators ready to be reported against.

F. Cross-target coordination

Cross-sectoral coordination and coherence between the Global Climate Resilience Framework targets are vital for holistic and sustainable solutions. The taskforce could therefore:

- Update the work of the technical experts under the UAE-Belém work program on indicators, mapping each indicator's relevance to other targets, for the adopted Belém Adaptation Indicators
- Identify synergies between targets for areas A-E mentioned above, for increasing efficiency and ensuring systemic approaches.

4. Coordination with adaptation bodies and expert groups

The decision invites several UNFCCC constituted bodies to participate in the technical work, including the Adaptation Committee, the Least Developed Countries Expert Group, the Consultative Group of Experts, and other relevant bodies.

These bodies already play key roles in supporting national adaptation planning and implementation. Their involvement could help ensure that the Belém indicators are practical and aligned with existing processes. Possible contributions include:

4.1 Adaptation Committee

- Providing technical insights on adaptation monitoring and evaluation
- Linking the indicators with the Global Goal on Adaptation framework.

4.2 Least Developed Countries Expert Group

- Ensuring alignment with National Adaptation Plan processes (including the 2025 NPA guidelines)
- Supporting practical guidance (on operationalization of the Belem Adaptation Indicators) for developing countries.

4.3 Consultative Group of Experts and transparency processes

- Helping align indicator reporting with the enhanced transparency framework.

Together, these contributions could help ensure that the indicators are embedded in existing reporting and planning systems.

6. Role of international organizations and sectoral communities

The COP30 decision calls upon international organizations to support the technical work. While this provides an important entry point for engagement, the role of international organizations as currently framed remains broad and could benefit from further specification to ensure effective and coordinated contributions.

In particular, a distinction should be made between the general contributions of international and sectoral organizations, and the specific, central role of custodian agencies responsible for indicators directly linked to the Belém Adaptation Indicators. As highlighted in earlier sections, a significant share of the indicators, especially in areas such as water and sanitation, build on existing global monitoring frameworks with established methodologies, metadata, and country support mechanisms.

Given their existing mandates and technical expertise, these custodian agencies are uniquely positioned to support the operationalization of the indicators, including the refinement of metadata and methodologies, alignment with national monitoring systems, and facilitation of data collection and reporting. Their role goes beyond general technical support and is fundamental to ensuring methodological consistency, efficiency, and usability of the indicators at country level.

For this reason, it would be important for Parties to consider, in the SB64 decision, a more explicit and structured role for relevant custodian agencies within the overall process of operationalizing the Belém Adaptation Indicators, including their systematic engagement in the work of the technical taskforce.

At the same time, thematic experts, sector-leading organizations, implementing organizations, and communities, including those working on water and sanitation systems and cross-cutting issues such as gender, disability, and social vulnerabilities, can play an important complementary role by:

- Sharing existing monitoring frameworks and data systems;
- Supporting the indicator refinement process;
- Contributing sector-specific methodological expertise;
- Supporting pilot implementation of indicators; and
- Identifying practical challenges in data collection and reporting.

Such contributions can help ensure that the Belém indicators are practical, implementable, and useful for decision-making, while complementing the core technical role of custodian agencies.

Potential role of the SDG 6 Integrated Monitoring Initiative: Supporting Belém Adaptation Indicators

The Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG 6 (IMI-SDG6) brings together the UN custodian agencies responsible for monitoring global progress on water and sanitation. Through its established methodologies, global datasets and country support mechanisms, the initiative plays a central role in supporting governments to monitor and report on water and sanitation indicators.

Given the strong links between water and sanitation Belem Adaptation Indicators, and the work of the IMI-SDG6 can provide valuable experience and technical support for the operationalization of the water and sanitation indicators.

The initiative could contribute by supporting the development of indicator methodologies, metadata and data standards, facilitating data collection and reporting at national level, and helping align the Belém indicators with existing monitoring systems. Leveraging these existing monitoring efforts could help strengthen coherence between the Global Goal on Adaptation framework and the SDG 6 monitoring architecture, while reducing reporting burdens for countries.

7. Concluding reflections

The Belém–Addis Vision provides an important opportunity to translate the Global Goal on Adaptation framework into operational tools for tracking progress.

The success of this process will depend on:

- Robust technical analysis through the Secretariat technical paper;
- Clarification on the relationship between the Belem-Addis Vision and the Baku Adaptation Roadmap
- Effective coordination and co-operation through the technical taskforce under the subsidiary bodies; and
- Strong collaboration with adaptation bodies, custodian agencies, international organizations, and thematic communities.

Ensuring that indicators are methodologically sound, aligned with national systems, and meaningful for different themes, including water and sanitation, will be essential for enabling credible global assessments of adaptation progress, including through the effective use of existing methodologies and monitoring systems supported by custodian agencies.