



Report on Egyptian Efforts to Enhance the Right to Water (World Water Day, March 22nd)

On the occasion of World Water Day, celebrated by the international community on March 22 of each year, the Technical Secretariat of the Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights prepared this report on national efforts to enhance the right to safe drinking water and sanitation. This report is the second of its kind issued by the Technical Secretariat on this occasion.



The right to water is inseparable from the right to an adequate standard of living (Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights), the right to the highest attainable standard of health)Article 12 on the International Covenant of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights), and is associated with the right to life and human dignity. Article 14, paragraph 2, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women provides that States parties guarantee women the right to “enjoy adequate living conditions, especially with regard to “the supply of water”. Article 24, paragraph 2, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child requires States parties to combat disease and malnutrition “by providing adequate nutritious food and clean drinking water”. Article 28, paragraph 2, of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requires States parties to take appropriate steps to “ensure equal access by persons with disabilities to clean water services.” At the regional level, both the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa contain explicit human rights obligations related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation. The Arab Charter on Human Rights similarly recognizes the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, for which States should ensure the provision of basic nutrition and safe drinking water for all and proper sanitation systems (Article 39).

In order to address the water and sanitation crisis, that has been exacerbated by natural and human factors such as accelerating urbanization, climate change, environmental degradation, depletion of water resources, the steady rise in population growth rates, and the mega projects that are being set up to exploit international rivers in an unplanned manner and without taking into account the importance of maintaining the sustainability of international water resources, the international community has increasingly realized that it is imperative to have access to safe drinking water and sanitation services within a human rights based framework.

The Egyptian state attaches utmost importance to the issue of water, as it rises to the level of an existential issue that is related to the life and survival of the Egyptian people. The priority that Egypt accords to water issues is reflected in the comprehensive vision “Egypt 2030”, adopted by the Egyptian government, which includes an ambitious national program that addresses all aspects of development, on top of which is the achievement of the sixth goal of the sustainable development goals. The state has also developed a strategic plan for managing water resources until 2037, with investments exceeding 900 billion Egyptian pounds. The Government works on improving the use and management of water, rationalizing its use and maximizing its revenue. These efforts come in response to the scarcity of



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water resources; the per capita share of water in Egypt does not exceed 560 m³ per year, while the UN defined water poverty as 1,000 m³ per person per year. Egypt is one of the driest countries in the world, and the highest that depends on a single source of water, which is the Nile River, which provides 98% of Egypt’s water needs. The government gives priority to improving drinking water and sanitation services, extending and expanding service in deprived areas, improving operational systems and the performance of service providers, raising the efficiency of drinking water and wastewater companies to rationalize the use of existing resources and to develop new water resources, and strengthening the institutional framework by adjusting the relevant institutional and legislative frameworks.

A total number of 1131 projects for drinking water and sanitation in cities and rural areas were implemented and completed from 2014 until July 2020, at a cost of about 124 billion pounds; in addition to the implementation of 5792 replacement and renewal projects at a cost of about 9 billion pounds; and the implementation of 176424 household connections at a cost of 600 million pounds; with 200 extension and consolidation projects in all governorates nationwide at a cost of 455 million pounds; and water and sanitation projects in new cities at a cost of 40 billion pounds. The total expenditure in the water and drainage sector during the period from 2014 to 2020 reached about 174 billion pounds.

This Report reviews Egypt’s leading role within the UN on water issues, the State’s efforts to provide clean drinking water and to provide sanitation services. The Report also deals with the expansion of seawater desalination plants to provide drinking needs. Finally, it reviews the role of the Egyptian Water Regulatory and Consumer Protection Agency, and the most prominent efforts of the Holding Company for Water and Waste Water.

1. Egypt's leading role within the UN on Water issues

- Coinciding with the convening of the high-level UN meeting on water on 18th of March 2021, the Egyptian diplomacy, in coordination with a number of friendly countries, led large-scale efforts for establishing a core group, comprising 17 countries that represent the various geographical regions in the UN to draft a cross-regional statement that sets a clear international vision on water issues. UN member states were later invited to join the statement. This statement, which was presented to the UN Secretary General, sets the priorities of the UN in following up the implementation of the water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda.
- The intensive Egyptian diplomatic efforts resulted in the signature- till now- of 164 states on that statement, which presents a unified vision on multilateral action on water issues; the latter suffered for a long time from numerous divisions due to the sensitivities of such issues at the regional and international levels.
- The statement highlights Egypt's stance concerning water issues; it emphasizes that access to water is an inherent right of every human being, focuses on the crisis of water scarcity and its impact, emphasizes the need to take urgent measures to support countries that suffer from water scarcity. Furthermore, the statement underlines the importance of cross-border cooperation and political will to ensure the right of water accessibility as well as the importance of effective water negotiations to avoid conflicts and achieve regional stability. The statement raises concerns with regard to climate change challenges and water-related disasters, and emphasizes the importance of adopting an integrated management approach and good governance of water resources.
- The Egyptian efforts to advance the water agenda in the UN and multilateral forums, and to ensure that it receives the necessary attention, is consistent with the priceless value of water, which is linked to the survival of mankind. Egypt stresses the necessity of upholding the principles of international cooperation and solidarity and avoiding conflict and polarization when dealing with the grave challenges related to water issues. Egypt also underscores the importance of respecting relevant principles of the international law, most notably the rule of not causing significant harm to riparian states; and the principle of prior notification and consultation.
- The high-level meeting of the United Nations on water which was held on March 18th 2021 witnessed the participation of the Egyptian Prime Minister, which reflects the priority that the Egyptian state sets to water issues, and its related vital interests, on both the regional and international arenas. The Prime Minister expressed the concern of the government and people of Egypt over the recent developments related to the Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. The Prime Minister also expressed his deep regret that the negotiations that took place in multiple frameworks for extended years, with the participation of mediators and international

partners and sponsored by African states, did not reach the desired agreement. The Prime Minister elaborated that the past years witnessed an Ethiopian approach that seeks to impose the status quo through undertaking unilateral actions, without taking into account the rights and interests of the two downstream countries. In particular, Ethiopia has started filling the Renaissance Dam last year, and also announced that it will continue the filling process during the summer of this year, even if the three countries did not reach an agreement. The Prime minister affirmed that these measures violate all international obligations and rules, and threaten to inflict serious damage on the interests of Egypt and Sudan.

2. The State's Efforts to Provide Clean Drinking Water

- The Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities has developed a plan for the drinking water sector that works to achieve four main objectives: reducing waste, raising water pressures, replacing and renewing networks, and raising the efficiency of service provided to citizens.
- The current coverage rate for drinking water at the level of the Republic is about 98.7% (100% at the urban level - 97.4% at the rural level).
- The amount of water produced is 33.6 million cubic meters per day, 12.2 billion cubic meters per year, and the length of networks is 180,000 km.
- During the past two years, 75 drinking water projects have been implemented, with a capacity of 1747 thousand cubic meters per day, along the networks of 1,200 km. The number of beneficiaries of drinking water projects, at a cost of about 10 billion pounds, reached 10 million citizens.
- During the past four years, a plan has been implemented to rationalize water consumption, by expanding the installation of meters (prepaid - the code), and expanding the availability and use of spare parts that decrease the consumption of water.
- An awareness-raising strategy has been set up to rationalize consumption and educate citizens about the importance of rationalization and the importance of reducing the waste of drinking water in all domains to preserve this non-renewable vital source. The Holding Company for Water and Waste Water has launched public awareness campaigns in the poorest villages nationwide in the framework of celebrating the International Day for Water, and the launch of a national campaign to rationalize water consumption, in partnership with 11 concerned ministries, and on social media channels. In addition, a scholastic course was adopted as an additional educational module in the curriculum for elementary school

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students to instill a culture of rationalization among school students, in cooperation with the Curriculum Development Center of the Ministry of Education. The educational material was taught in a number of schools (5848) in all governorates, and the total number of beneficiaries of this instructive course was 984,000 students.

3. The State's Endeavors to Provide Sanitation Services

- The Government Action Program aims to reach 100% urban sanitation coverage by the end of 2022 and 60% in the countryside.
- The current coverage rate of wastewater in cities is 96% (it was 79.2% in 2014) and in villages 38% (it was 12% in 2014).
- The expected cost of reaching 100% of the sanitation services in all rural areas nationwide is 300 billion pounds.
- The designed capacity of the sewage treatment plants is 16.2 million m³ / day, and the actual capacity is 13.4 million m³ / day, 4.9 billion m³ / year, and the length of the networks is 55,000 km.
- A total number of 16 million citizens benefited from sanitation projects, with a total cost of 15 billion pounds.
- The Government expanded the establishment of sewage treatment plants in Upper Egypt governorates, where 53 improved bilateral and triple treatment plants for wastewater treatment have been established and expanded in the governorates of Assiut, Aswan, Fayoum ,Minya, Beni Suef, Sohag, Luxor, with a total capacity of 1.2 million cubic meters per day, at a cost of 9 billion pounds; in addition to many stations that have been implemented in the rest of the governorates, which benefited 8.3 million citizens.
- The quality of treated wastewater has been improved in the rest of the governorates to allow mixing and reuse in agriculture.
- Sewage plants are currently being implemented with the highest possible efficiency so that they do not pose any problem to the surrounding environment.
- Various technologies are used to deliver sanitation services to rural areas, and all stations are being constructed according to standard specifications. There are central laboratories to ensure the quality of the service provided.

4. Expansion of Seawater Desalination Plants to Meet Drinking Water Needs

- The utilization of available water resources is maximized by providing alternative sources of drinking water and desalination of water in the coastal governorates, one of the State's approaches in light of water scarcity, as well as that of using underground water stations.
- The Ministry of Housing has developed a strategy for expanding seawater desalination plants to provide drinking water needs from 2020 to 2050. The strategy consists of four goals, the first of which is to provide water needs to solve current problems and face the future increase of the existing population. The second is to provide alternative water needs to stop the transportation of drinking water to some coastal governorates. Thirdly, providing alternative water needs for surface water through the expansion of existing stations. Fourthly, providing for the water needs required for urban development. The strategy is divided into six phases, each a phase of five years.
- The amount of desalinated sea water doubled 10 times, from 80,000 cubic meters per day in 2014, now to 800,000 cubic meters per day.

5. The Role of the Egyptian Water Regulatory and Consumer Protection Agency

- The Egyptian Water Regulatory and Consumer Protection Agency was established by Presidential Decree No. 136 of 2004 as a monitoring body with the aim of achieving balance between service providers and recipients, and to improve drinking water and sanitation services by achieving a balance between the interests of all parties within a framework of transparency and efficiency and consumer rights protection.
 1. For monitoring water quality, the Agency's work involves collecting samples from water production sites in the governorates and analyzing them by independent scientific authorities' laboratories; issuing reports on the quality of drinking water and sanitation services in the governorates; conducting field visits to the central and subsidiary laboratories and the station laboratories of the service providers; and comparing between the results through the reports issued by the Agency to determine the improvement in the quality of drinking water and the efficiency of wastewater treatment.
 2. Agency accreditation of the operators of drinking water and sanitation facilities is through a program prepared to identify, build and measure the capacities of managers and operators of drinking water and sanitation plants, analysts of drinking water and sanitation facilities laboratories as well as networks, and granting certificates of accreditation to them.
 3. Agency's role in consumer protection involves following up, counting and classifying consumer complaints through various means; conducting field visits to gather and investigate

drinking water and sanitation complaints; reviewing customer service departments and centers to determine the level of service provision and development in performance; modifying negative behaviors and supporting positive behavior in the community dealing with issues of drinking water and sanitation; raising awareness among consumers; and measuring the degree of satisfaction with drinking water and sanitation services.

6. Prominent Efforts of the Holding Company for Water and Waste Water

- The Holding Company for Water and Waste Water is keen on providing distinguished service to all consumers in the governorates through a number of programs:

1. A unified commercial by-law: the Holding Company has developed a unified commercial by-law related to contracting procedures for the delivery of services to ensure that the principles of integrity are met during the completion of all procedures and contracting with consumers, and guarantee the availability of installments of debts and arrears of water company dues on consumption bills, to facilitate the procedures to citizens. The Company seeks and has been working on the simplification and automation of all procedures related to customer service centers to ensure speedy completion of procedures; in addition, extending work hours to customer service centers in some governorates and working during holidays to provide all services to customers in view of coronavirus pandemic restrictions.
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2. In the field of upgrading and improving drinking water and sanitation services: advanced customer service centers, cars and mobile customer service centers have been provided; open outlets in sports clubs, technology channels and platforms have been created to intensify communication, receive complaints and provide services to citizens, including one-line, through hotline, facebook, WhatsApp, Mobile phone application, 125HCWW. Also the provision of home delivery service for sick and elderly people who want to negotiate new contracts.
 3. In the field of partnerships: The Egyptian Qualitative Union for Drinking Water and Sanitation was established in December 2020 to strengthen the role of civil society to support drinking water and sanitation projects; and to serve as a channel for cooperation between water companies and NGOs. The "Our Healthy Schools" project has also been implemented in partnership with UNICEF and the Ministry of Education to rehabilitate and raise the efficiency of toilets in basic education schools in rural villages to help reduce the dropout rate.

4. In the field of social responsibility towards the poorest families: community surveys were carried out for targeted villages of drinking water and sanitation projects to update customer data and use them for the geographic information systems maps. These surveys determine, for example, the income level of citizens, the cultural level and the educational level, thus helping to produce comprehensive results and information that will contribute to the development of communication and service delivery methodologies according to their outputs. The cost of household connections to drinking water and sanitation implemented by NGOs for the poorest families in rural areas has also been reduced.
5. In the field of control and follow-up to raise the efficiency and ensure the quality of service: all the work of the departments concerned with communication, citizen service and dealings has been automated with the aim of planning, follow-up, evaluation and monitoring of results through Program DROPS or Digital Reporting & Operational Planning System. Efforts also include conducting monthly and periodic opinion polls to determine priorities and extract proposals by citizens, in addition to telephone follow-up with customers to ensure the quality of the service provided through all service delivery channels and complaints.