The IHP secretariat has launched a consultation on the IX IHP Strategy 2scd draft. Comments are expected for the 23rd, November. In that perspective, France and Germany would like to share with the members of the Group I their views and proposals on this strategy, and proposed if the Group I are interesting to establish a common proposal to be send on the 23rd, November.

During the last General Conference in 2019, Member States asked the IHP to focus on its organizational mandate and clear scientific mission, to ensure its integration into and the coherence of its activities within the UN system and recall their willingness for de-politicization of water issues. However, within the framework of elaborating the IX Phase of the IHP, the new President of IHP has unilaterally set new core orientations for the IHP which are based on hydrodiplomacy and conflict mediation, the water-energy-food-nexus and transboundary water management. Additionally, he intends to broaden the mandate of the IHP with regard to the UN systems task of delivering on SDG 6 and its targets. The IX IHP-Strategy 2scd draft is based on 2 strategic objectives “Improving evidence-based water management and governance” and “Enhancing resilience of societies under global change including climate change” which are declined in the 3 outcomes:

- **Outcome 1:** Enhanced capacity development and public awareness towards a sustainable water culture and water management
- **Outcome 2:** Water-related data and knowledge gaps bridged by enhancing scientific research and cooperation
- **Outcome 3:** Enhanced evidence-based water-decisions for resilient societies by reinforcing the science-policy interface

The 2scd draft of the IX-IHP Strategy for the 2022-2029 periods is driving IHP far beyond its mandate through new objectives concerning diplomacy, policy advice for decision-makers beyond is scientific mission and overlapping with the mandate of other UN agencies also working on freshwater, putting at risk the coordination and the efficiency of the global actions in the water sector.

1°/ General comment on the structure of the 2scd draft

Generally speaking, the structure of the first part of the document is not easy to follow and contains approximations. It mixes objectives, elements of context, expected result as well as new competencies. The structure could be simplified by:

- improving the distinction between issues, outcomes and the 5 priorities
- including the rational of the strategic orientations of IHP-Unesco: the objective of the first part, called “challenges and perspectives” mixes elements of context, issues, as well as objectives of the IHP Strategy whereas the rational of these objectives in regards of the mandate of the IHP-UNESCO has not been exposed. This first part will gain clarity by exposing distinguished the challenges and the rational of the IHP strategic orientation in regards of its mandate.
- clearly detailing the tools and activities expected to reach these objectives as it is a prerequisite for Member States to understand and assess the strategy.
- better defining the target beneficiary of the actions of the IHP: the term “public” is employed often without precision. Is it the large public? the specialized institutions? The government?

Also, the introduction of concepts like “hydro-sociology”, “hydro-informatics” or “hydro-diplomacy” is from our point of view not necessary and induces a focus on the concept more than on the concrete and operative tools. Then the strategy would be strengthened by emphasizing precisely
which tools or means (existing and new one) will be use to strengthen the role of social sciences, which is crucial to deal with water issues.

On the contrary, the part concerning the priorities areas is very clear and easy to read.

2°/ Content of the 2scd draft IX IHP-Strategy (2022-2029) : comments and proposals

- Improving water governance

Comments: the 2scd draft focus on water management and water governance. This second topic refers to institutional and legal frameworks, which is far beyond the IHP’s mandate, and the contribution of IHP on it remains unclear (see p. 10 Result 1).

Proposal: Instead of referring to water governance as a general concept which implies many divers fields of intervention, it may be more accurate to precise the role of IHP in making available to member states and institutions, tools and means that allow the effective appropriation of scientific data and scenario for evidence-based decision making and increased accountability.

- Hydro-diplomacy

Comment: the strategy refers to hydro-diplomacy and conflict management and negotiation on several occasions. Also, the expected result 5.6 p.36 expresses a clear ambition to intervene in the field of conflict mediation and negotiation. It is important to underline that the IHP is not an actor of the diplomacy of water, which goes far beyond its scientific mandate. Integrating water diplomacy and conflict management into the strategy will ultimately lead i) to the politicization of the water issues, which is precisely the opposite of the program’s goal and ii) undermine already existing conflict management mechanisms. In addition, IHP does not have vocation to advice decision-makers or governments in building institutional governance of the sector but to build capacities through operative tools and innovation that can help better water management and decision process.

In addition, the IHP has not vocation to mobilize “political” knowledge or sciences, contrarily to what is affirm in the description of the Mission (point b) p.9).

Proposal: There is a real need for better understanding of water issues and broader access to scientific data in the water sector and IHP, as a scientific program, can bring great contribution by focusing on the scientific issues like groundwater and aquifer conservation and management and delivering / informing / teaching data generation and operative tools for local operators and member states. Also the strategy could deepen how and on which precise topics, IHP could accompany and go with the operators and institutions to improve freshwater management, preservation and uses particularly against the backdrop of rising water demands and a changing climate.

- Coordination with other UN Agencies and nexus approach in the 2scd draft strategy

Comments: the 2scd draft proposes to deal with numerous issues. However some of the topics and outcomes mentioned are already under the mandate of other UN Agencies. In order to ensure the efficiency of the UN system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda, the IHP needs to respect its own mandate and that of other UN organizations, funds and programmes and should seek close cooperation wherever the establishment of synergies to activities of other UN organizations is possible.

- transboundary cooperation : falls under the Helsinki Convention. However, the current wording on p.7: “Education can likewise foster development of international frameworks and institutional cooperation. Catalysing international agreements for natural resource issues is difficult to achieve but can benefit from the input of the IHP experience,
especially in transboundary water bodies, comprehensive water management planning, and water conflict negotiations. “clearly denies the existence and the role of the Water Conventions, which is not acceptable for a strategy of a UN organization such as the UNESCO IHP. However IHP could contribute to the water convention’s actions through clear partnership (cf. p.33).

- Global overview of the status of rivers, p.20: While integrated river research is promoted by the Worlds Large River Initiative, the Global Quality Assessment of Fresh Waters falls directly under the mandate of UNEP and was confirmed by the UNEA-3 resolution on addressing water pollution to protect and restore water-related ecosystems. Given the risk of potential overlaps between the two initiatives but also the opportunities provided by a stronger cooperation between them, it is crucial for the strategy to outline the concrete activities suggested in this output area as well as the measures planned to link the WRLI with efforts of other UN organizations, programs and funds. An active role of the IHP in coordination mechanisms such as the World Water Quality Alliance and the Steering Committee of GEMS/Water is key to foster this cooperation.

In addition, the strategy focuses on the implementation of the water-food-energy nexus (p.7). If this approach is interesting, it involves more institutions than IHP. Also, this approach can only be effectively set up only if the other actors and organizations, most notably of the UN development system are involved from the beginning.

**Proposal:** The complexity and the interdependency of the water issues impose to set a holistic and inclusive approach as the draft recalls. In order to avoid overlapping and guarantee the efficiency of the actions in the UN system, the strategy of the IHP should focus on the specialization of the IHP and would gained in strength by detailing partnership with other UN agencies on specific topic. For example, the “governance partnership” in the transboundary water could be implemented with the Water Convention and should involve the use of the existing tools.

Also, it could be interesting to know if other institutions have been approached to implement this nexus, and to precise how concretely it will be implemented.

IHP-UNESCO benefits from a great expertise in hydrological cycles, ecohydrology and groundwater which are strong comparative advantages of the IHP. Regarding the need for a integrative approach, and the necessity to improve the understanding of the existing interdependency between water, climate, biodiversity and ecosystem, the strategy could be more detailed on these topics and could planned to work on specific issues with other UN agencies (like the partnership with the PNUE – GEMS/EAU).

Partnerships with other UN Agencies should be detailed p.18 (Innovation and Partnership).

- **Integration in the UN system reform**

The current reform of the UN system is based on the objective of strengthening the adequacy of the UN system to deliver on Member states’ needs in achieving the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda. It implies a much more pronounced alignment on specific country needs and the development of processes and mechanisms to adapt UN programs and ensure their flexibility according to local needs.

It’s important that IHP IX precisely outlines (p.8) how this objective will be implemented through its new strategy.

- **The paradigm of valuing water resources**
Comment: The present draft strategy defines its mission, among other things as “supporting Member States in better [...] valuing [...] their water resources (P.5, p.9 (Mission e.), p.12). It makes a direct link between the economic value of water and the availability of water resources. However, the concept is highly ambiguous and France and Germany do not share the strategy’s conclusions and suggestions with regard to this paradigm. From our point of view, the main constraint in water use efficiency and the prevention of water scarcity is not the use of water by domestic users, which does not represent more than 10% of the withdrawal, but the water use of other sectors (most notably, agriculture, industries and energy) who have a very strong impact on the availability and quality of the resource. In turn, the applicability of water market mechanisms need to be assessed carefully and on a case by case basis in order to not limit the access of the poor and other vulnerable groups to the resource and to ensure that no one is left behind. Focusing on public sensitization exclusively implies the risk to move the responsibility of better water management from the government to the public and undermines efforts for efficient regulation of water use as well as other aspects of water governance.

Proposal: It could have greater impact to focus the sensitization on other sectors, and provide tools to build cross-sectoral water management with a clear focus on pro-poor and human rights approaches. We therefore suggest to replace the ambiguous notion of “valuing water resources” with more explicit formulations on the protection of water resources and the promotion of water use efficiency. It is important to acknowledge in this regard, already existing activities of the UN system, i.e. the activities implemented by UNEP.