



UN-HABITAT

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME
P.O. Box 30030, Nairobi 00100, Kenya
unhabitat-info@un.org | www.unhabitat.org

FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

PRESS RELEASE

UN-Habitat and EU expand collaboration to tackle global water and sanitation challenges

Cairo, 5 November 2024 – UN-Habitat and the European Union announced the launch of the second phase of the European Union Water Operators' Partnerships Programme (EU-WOP) at the World Urban Forum. This phase will further scale up efforts to address global water and sanitation challenges through peer-to-peer partnerships, capacity-building and the promotion of sustainable, resilient water services.

The EU-WOP Programme, funded by the European Union and managed by the Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance (GWOPA) under UN-Habitat, focuses on building the capacities of water and sanitation service providers across the world. The first phase of the programme, which has been running since 2022, has been supporting 35 partner utilities in 20 developing countries across Africa, Asia, the Arab region, and Latin America, benefiting essential service providers that provide water to over 53 million people by improving their operational efficiency, financial sustainability and environmental performance.

The launch of Phase II, running from 2025 to 2030, marks a significant expansion of the programme with an additional EU funding of EUR 14 million. “This new phase of the EU-WOP will build on the successes of Phase I by establishing new partnerships and enhancing existing ones, focusing on improving linking partnerships with investments, digitalization and advancing the human rights to water and sanitation,” said **Sergio Oliete Josa**, Head of Unit Sustainable Transport and Urban Development of the European Commission Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA).

“Water and sanitation are global challenges that demand local solutions. The capacity of water operators is at the heart of delivering these solutions and directly impacts our progress toward Sustainable Development Goal 6, ensuring access to safe water and proper sanitation for all,” said **Anacláudia Rossbach**, Executive Director of UN-Habitat. “The new phase of the EU-WOP Programme will become the biggest EU-UN-Habitat collaboration to date. We are deeply grateful to the European Union for this continued collaboration, and to all partners involved in this transformative journey toward achieving inclusive, resilient and sustainable water services.”

A key feature of the EU-WOP Programme is its not-for-profit model of peer-to-peer partnerships, where utilities collaborate to share knowledge, co-learn and support each other in providing sustainable water services. These partnerships foster trust and solidarity, leading to long-lasting institutional capacity improvements.

The second phase of the programme will place emphasis on linking utilities to investment opportunities, leveraging digital tools like smart metering and asset management to increase efficiency, and anchoring partnerships within national and local frameworks. This holistic approach ensures that water services are inclusive, affordable and sustainable, while empowering utilities to uphold the human rights to water and sanitation.

The EU-WOP Programme aligns with both EU and UN strategies, offering new opportunities for cities and utilities to work together towards achieving SDG 6 on water and sanitation for all.

The call for applications for the next round of partnerships will open in early 2025.

Media contact

Lothar Mikulla, Senior Advocacy and Communications Consultant, UN-Habitat/GWOPA,
Lothar.Mikulla@un.org

About UN-Habitat

UN-Habitat is the United Nations entity responsible for sustainable urbanization. It has programmes in over 90 countries supporting policymakers and communities to create socially and environmentally sustainable cities and towns. UN-Habitat promotes transformative change in cities through knowledge, policy advice, technical assistance, and collaborative action. To know more, visit unhabitat.org or follow us on X @UNHABITAT.

About GWOPA

The Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance (GWOPA), facilitated by UN-Habitat, is a network dedicated to strengthening public water and sanitation operators worldwide through peer-to-peer support and knowledge sharing. GWOPA fosters partnerships between water utilities, enhancing their capacity to deliver sustainable, accessible and reliable water services to communities. By building resilience and promoting sustainable practices, GWOPA is working to advance global water security and safely managed sanitation towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 6, which calls for clean water and sanitation for all. More info on gwopa.unhabitat.org