



## Developing the Phase 2 of the Global Network of Water Museums (WAMU-NET)

### Proposal

#### *Call for financial support from the Member States and enlarged membership of the Global Network*

#### **Summary**

The Global Network of Water Museums (WAMU-NET) is a “flagship initiative” of UNESCO-IHP. It was endorsed in 2018 by the Intergovernmental Council through the Resolution n. XXIII-5. WAMU-NET counts approx. 60 museums/institutions located in 28 different countries globally. The network is managed by a non-profit NGO based in Venice (Italy) that has been created with the specific purpose of implementing the Resolution.

Activities implemented by WAMU-NET are of high relevance for UNESCO’s objectives. Among them, the recent communication campaign “The Water We Want” produced 22 videos and disseminated key messages on water and SDGs worldwide. The campaign reached more than 130.000 viewers (only counting Facebook in English). All videos are formally “presented by” UNESCO (and disseminated with UNESCO copyright):

<https://vimeo.com/453328289>

However, the implementation of future activities of WAMU-NET (namely in Africa, south America, and southern Asia, where spontaneous subnetworks have been created) is compromised by the lack of adequate revenues, especially during the economic crises caused by COVID.

The lack of structured professional staff working at the WAMU-NET Secretariat (located in Venice) is heavily affecting the performance of the Network.

The membership process to join WAMU-NET was significantly slowed down because of COVID, but it could be greatly improved through the active participation of Member States to this initiative. National Commissions could be informed about the existence of the Network for future cooperation / implementation of projects of common interest involving new museums and institutions from different Member States.

#### **Proposed action**

New Resolution (Call for membership & financial support at the next IHP Council, 28-30 June 2021).

## **Draft contents of the new Resolution (“2nd phase of WAMUNET”) outlined by Dutch National IHP Committee, in cooperation with the Permanent Delegation of Italy at UNESCO**

Emilie Broek, the Secretary of the Dutch National IHP Committee, is the referent with Stein van Oosteren to draft the new Resolution asking:

1. The IHP Secretariat to make a thorough inventory of Water Museums worldwide
2. The IHP Secretary to send out a call to Member States to ask their Water Museums to join the WAMU-NET, so that >
3. Member States will actually ask their Water Museums to join WAMU-NET
4. Member States to support the WAMU-NET financially and/or by seconding staff to the Global Network

### **Activities and approach of the Global Network contributing to UNESCO’s objectives**

Activities of WAMU-NET contributing to the aims of IHP and implementation of SDGs are significantly addressed to a worldwide audience. They range from educational programs for kids and youngsters, exhibitions, web platforms, communication and public awareness raising activities, to international conferences, webinars and workshops.

In particular, WAMU-NET activities are focusing on changing the people mindset, and changing common cultural attitudes towards water. The approach of WAMU-NET is purely holistic, trans-disciplinary and post-disciplinary. It aims at creating new bridges between ancient water knowledge, the inherited water assets and modern management approaches and visions.

As stated in the Charter, the Global Network “actively promotes a new relationship between humanity and water aimed at re-connecting people with the tangible and intangible heritage of water, including its social, cultural, ecological, artistic and spiritual dimensions”.

### **The Global Network of Water Museums and the UNESCO-IHP Resolution n. XXIII-5**

The Global Network of Water Museums is endorsed by the Intergovernmental Council as a “flagship initiative” of IHP through the Resolution n.XXIII-5.

The Resolution sets the main purpose of the network in raising awareness about the world’s precious water-related heritage, both natural and cultural, tangible and intangible.

In 2018, the Netherlands submitted to the Intergovernmental Council of IHP the Resolution titled “Global Network of Water Museums and UNESCO-IHP in Support of Water Sustainability Education and Water Awareness Efforts”.

The proposal was supported also by Italy and other Member States (18 in total) and was approved unanimously “to create synergies with UNESCO with the aim of better using water museums and heritage to improve water management via communication and educational activities”.

Thus, the initiative is aligned with IHP Flagship Initiatives, and future sessions of the IC will assess the performance of this network and its effective integration into IHP’s programs.

### **Formal memberships to WAMU-NET and geographical disparities**

Today WAMU-NET coordinates different museums and institutions (approx. 60 water museums in 28 different countries, which count altogether more than 25 million visitors/year) dealing with water heritage management and water education on a global scale:

[www.watermuseums.net/network](http://www.watermuseums.net/network)

Formal WAMU-NET members include not only museums but a wide range of institutions dealing with water heritage/management, also including: municipalities, universities, research centres, water agencies, regional parks, and local communities (for “community-based museums”).

All WAMU-NET members are engaged in re-connecting humanity to the heritage of water through holistic approaches, thus including social, cultural, ecological, artistic and the spiritual dimensions of water.

From 2018 to 2020, formal memberships increased from 29 to approx. 60. However, in two years the doubling of formal affiliations is paralleled by the concentration of museums in a few countries (more than 20 affiliations are concentrated in Italy, Netherlands, Spain, and China, whereas there are only 6 affiliated members in the Americas and Africa altogether).

COVID slowed down significantly the process of membership to WAMU-NET.

For these reasons, there is a need to make new Calls for membership also by taking the advantage of consolidated mechanisms of National Commissions.

### **A non-profit NGO based in Venice**

The Global Network of Water Museums (WAMU-NET) is a registered non-profit NGO based in Venice, Italy. A registered Charter sets the internal rules of the organization in line with European legislation for non-profits and the functions of its governing bodies (a General Assembly that includes all members with the same right to vote; a Management Board, a President, an Executive Director and an Advisory Committee that are nominated by the General Assembly).

Also the Secretary of IHP is a “honorary member” of the Management Board, in order to facilitate synergic coordination with the IHP Secretariat.

### **ACTIVITIES OF THE GLOBAL NETWORK**

#### **International Conferences:**

- 2017: in Venice, Italy (in cooperation with the Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe, Civiltà dell’Acqua and the Venice University).
- 2018: in ‘s-Hertogenbosch, the Netherlands (in cooperation with the Municipality of ‘s-Hertogenbosch and Kring Vrienden)
- 2019: in Valencia, Spain (in cooperation with the Tribunal of Water of Valencia)
- 2020-21: *cancelled because of COVID*
- Next Conferences (already planned after COVID): Morocco, China, South Korea.

Other planned activities at:

World Water Forum, Senegal, 2022.

#### **The Youth Prize Contest and the Campaign “The Water We Want”.**

In 2020, during the COVID, the Youth Prize Contest “**The Water We Want**” (TWWW) was implemented in order to strengthen coordination on educational activities among water museums globally.

The youth competition was implemented thanks to the financial support of UNESCO’s Beijing Office, the National Water Museum of China, and the Netherlands National IHP-HWRP Commission.

Thanks to external financial support it was possible to:

- create a **Digital Exhibition** - a new web platform hosting all artworks (selected by water museums) sent by students and schools from all over the world :

<http://thewaterwewant.watermuseums.net/>

- produce **22 Videos** that were functional to launch a new **Communication Campaign** on social media. All videos are available on Facebook and in the web site of the Global Network at: <https://www.watermuseums.net/the-water-we-want>

Main results of the communication campaign include > 130.000 viewers (only on Facebook).

It has been tested that the Youth Contest has the potential to include successfully any school at global level. However, due to the lack of WAMU-NET staff is still limited to formal members of the network.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of the contest has been launched also for 2021. However, for management reasons, participation is still restricted only to water museums associated to WAMU-NET.

### **Future activities (proposals)**

Different proposals have been made concerning future activities of the Network, including:

- Production of educational kits on SDGs for water museums / online resources for educators and schools
- Distance training activities dedicated to the staff of water museums (especially for the disadvantaged staff of museums in LICs)
- Organization of youth forums, involving the raising networks of young students
- Enlargement of the Youth Contest “The Water We Want” to a global audience (and not restricted only to WAMU-NET members)
- Dissemination in “figures for kids” of WWAP Annual Reports / other UNESCO publications on water
- Building of new eco-museums for indigenous people focusing on water heritage and assets
- Identification of / support to new potential water museums (in the last 12 months a number of requests from Cuba, India, Liberia, Ghana, Sudan, Ireland, Netherlands, etc were addressed to WAMU-NET to support the creation of new educational programmes on water and to build new water museums / interpretation centres in specific locations
- Further consolidation/creation of regional sub-networks of water museums (especially in Latin America and Africa)

WAMU-NET definitely raised many expectations worldwide, and several museums joined it. However, its impact is still limited due to the lack of adequate revenues which are needed to implement institutional activities. At present, the only safe revenue is generated by annual financial contributions of its members (for a total amount of approx. 15.000/\$ year, which is hardly enough for the running of basic institutional activities incl. secretary, Executive Director, and communication team). Thus, all proposals listed above must deal with the limited revenues / staff of WAMU-NET.

### **Strength and Weaknesses**

The Network is recognised by both the IHP Secretariat and all members for its innovative approach on water heritage and SDGs, and for its effective coordination of water museums on a global scale. Since 2019, two sub-networks of water museums have been established: one in China and one for the LAC region. A further subnetwork could be launched in Africa at the next WWF (Dakar 2022). However, the last WAMU-NET General Assembly acknowledged the lack of structured staff to coordinate both these sub-networks and an increasing number of projects on water education and SDGs on a global scale. Only a part-time secretary is working at the premises of WAMU-NET for

4hrs/week, together with a part-time communication expert (engaged for 4hrs/week to manage the web site, newsletters, and the Youth Contest “The Water We Want”).

The lack of further revenues is a serious limit to make larger impacts worldwide.

### **Threats and Opportunities**

In the medium-long term, the lack of new incomes may jeopardize the existence of the Global Network, which still relies on the availability of voluntary staff (and mainly on the support of in-kind contributions from *Civiltà dell’Acqua*, another Italian non-profit NGO based in Venice).

New opportunities can be found through the direct involvement of Member States, including financial support of specific activities/projects, in-kind contributions, new memberships (including those of Member States), or from the private sector (direct sponsorship of specific initiatives).