

## **Towards a World Water Quality Assessment:**

### **Providing evidence and understanding to tackle the global water quality crisis and help meet water related SDGs**

**Convened by Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety, Germany**

and

**UN-Water as well as the United Nations Environment Programme**

**Side Event - Budapest Water Summit 2016**

**30 November 2016, 12:00-13:00 - Tisza Gallery (Building D)**

In elaborating on the concept and objectives of a world water quality assessment, session speakers will articulate how understanding, protecting and improving water quality will help countries achieve the multiple targets of a global water agenda and interlinked goals as part of the Agenda 2030. Necessary requirements and possible partnerships for establishing a regular world water quality assessment will be discussed.

Water quality lies at the heart of SDG 6, being central for ensuring safe drinking water, sustainable sanitation and functioning ecosystems and their multiple services. It also connects to achieving many other SDGs, such as those related to human health, food security, sustainable consumption and production and biodiversity.

Yet water quality is under serious threat from pollution linked to economic development and demographic pressure, such as wastewater from expanding agriculture, industry and energy production. Climate change exacerbates the impact both in water quality and quantity. Limitations of data availability make it challenging to grasp the extent of the problem, and do not enable the setting of quality targets both for water and related ecosystems.

A new Analytical Brief produced by UN-Water, being launched at this session, makes a case for a comprehensive World Water Quality Assessment as integral to the global water agenda. The Brief features past assessments, outlines the challenge of a global assessment but also provides a plan for doing so. A global assessment would provide decision makers with the information needed to cope with the pressing water quality challenge.

The Analytical Brief builds upon a recent report by UN Environment (UNEP), Snapshot of the World's Water Quality, which articulated the global water quality challenge. The Snapshot presents a preliminary assessment of the current water quality situation, in rivers in developing countries including sources, extent, and impacts of organic and pathogenic pollution. It identifies data and knowledge gaps and methodological challenges.

The good news from this pre-assessment is that considerable parts of water bodies are still in remarkably good condition, and a broad catalogue of smart technological, structural and societal solutions could help tackle the water quality crisis. For this to be efficient, it is critical to build a consolidated evidence base on the quality of the world's water bodies, today and in future scenarios.