Foreword

Dr Uschi Eid, Chair of UNSGAB (United Nations Secretary-Generals' Advisory Board on Water & Sanitation)

The concept of water security has received increasing attention in the scientific, policy and business communities in recent years. This growing interest reflects the rise in concern about the state of freshwater resources, changing hydrological cycles and their impacts on human security. Despite efforts to reform water governance at local, regional and global levels, there is still clear evidence of growing pressures on water systems across the planet. These arise from non-sustainable water engineering practices, overuse, pollution and different biotic stressors, and are amplified by climate variability, population growth, rapid urbanization and increased economic activity.

The question arises: can the concept of water security support development and implementation of integrated solutions and provide an alternative approach to deal with these challenges? Hence a handbook on water security is timely. It is important to provide an overview and shape the fragmented landscape of contributions and approaches to water security. The *Handbook* covers the wide range of theoretical and regional perspectives required to understand water security as a concept guiding water governance, including management at different levels and in different regions. It reflects on past, present and future challenges to water security and strategies on how to overcome them. It elaborates on the pros and cons of using the water security jargon and whether this can provide the necessary conceptual baggage to address the complex issue of sustainable development.

The *Handbook* comes at a time of transition in global governance of sustainability issues. In July 2014, the intergovernmental Open Working Group of the UN General Assembly proposed draft Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They form the basis of the ongoing intergovernmental negotiations and are expected to be adopted in September 2015 to replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that have guided global development policy for more than a decade. The SDGs adopt a more comprehensive and ambitious approach by moving away from a development focus towards a broader sustainability framing. SDGs include a dedicated water goal which combine sustainable water management with the need to realize the human right regarding access to safe drinking water and sanitation services. Although stand-alone, integration with other SDGs will be key to ensure goal achievement. SDG 6 will need to be operationalized by elaborating appropriate indicators, financial mechanisms and monitoring processes for its six accompanying targets. This will pose challenges for both the scientific community as well as for communities of practice. The concept of water security could be instrumental for dealing with these challenges when implementing SDG 6. The *Handbook* of water security at hand is an important contribution to facilitate this potential to be mobilized. It can become a precious resource for scientific scholars as well as policy makers and practitioners interested in a deeper understanding of this multifaceted concept.