

## 2026 United Nations Water Conference

### Interactive Dialogue 1 - Water for People

#### I. Introduction (500 words)

Safe, climate-resilient, and accessible Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services are key to fulfill the Human right for safe drinking water and sanitation and its 5 principles of **sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible, and affordable water** and **safe, hygienic, secure, and socially/culturally acceptable sanitation**. WASH services in public institutions, particularly in healthcare facilities and schools are a fundamental requirement. Without them, these institutions cannot fulfill their core mandate of safeguarding the health and well-being of patients and learners. Particular attention is needed to ensure dignified, safe and contextually appropriate access for women and girls, other vulnerable and marginalized groups such as homeless persons, and reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities in accordance with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). WASH in healthcare facilities is critical for infection prevention and control, reduction of antimicrobial resistance, maternal and newborn health, patient and staff safety, and overall quality of care. Likewise, WASH in schools is every child's right and it is fundamental for students' health, dignity, school attendance, including continued attendance for girls, and learning outcomes.

Open Defecation Free (ODF) status is recognized as a concrete goal that must be reached on the way to safely managed sanitation. Efforts to maintain ODF status at local, regional and country levels demonstrate progress and the importance of continued visibility in this area.

#### II. Status and trends (1000 words)

Support should be put on SDG 6 targets 6.1 on drinking water, 6.2 on sanitation and hygiene, and 6.3 on wastewater treatment, safe reuse and water quality, while building on the connections with SDG 2 on zero hunger, SDG 3 on health, SDG 4 on education, SDG 5 on gender equality, and SDG 10 on inequalities.

Access to safely managed drinking water and safely managed sanitation remains out of reach for billions of people, particularly in rural areas. Pollution continues to undermine

human and environmental health. The effects of climate change compound the existing challenges, often triggering displacement.

In 2024, 176.6 million people required humanitarian WASH aid, yet only 48 million were given access. Humanitarian WASH sector received only a third of required funding with further reductions expected.

- III. **Challenges and emerging issues** (2000 words): This section will highlight challenges and opportunities relating to the topics addressed in the interactive dialogue, particularly those that have emerged or become more urgent since the 2023 Water Conference. This section will also identify interlinkages and synergies between the relevant SDG 6 targets and other SDGs.

Significant challenges remain in embedding human rights principles into national legal and policy frameworks, monitoring frameworks and budgets, particularly with regard to addressing non-discrimination and ensuring the rights of those left behind. Ensuring universal access to safe, climate-resilient and accessible WASH services in all public institutions continues to be an unmet challenge. This applies not only to addressing infrastructure gaps but also to strengthening institutional capacities for the effective management and sustainable operation and maintenance of existing systems. Funding sources are often not sustainable and not diverse enough. Adequate costing of the WASH investments and a finance strategy are lacking. It is therefore important to address the importance of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and the human rights to water and sanitation both at the Human Rights Council (HRC) as well as the UN General Assembly.

Water and sanitation utilities play a key role in ensuring the human rights to water and sanitation. Underperforming utilities lead to operational and financial inefficiencies impacting the delivery of WASH services. Universal WASH coverage in low-income and informal urban settlements and in remote rural areas remains a global challenge.

Water quality is under threat from unimproved sanitation, untreated or insufficiently treated wastewater, agricultural runoff, industrial effluents and plastic pollution. These pressures, are aggravated by the impacts of climate change, hinder the use of drinking water and recreational water, exacerbate waterborne diseases and antimicrobial resistance, and undermine both environmental and human health. Addressing these challenges require multisectoral action in a One Health approach.

Land-use degradation and changes, including forest and wetlands degradation pose a further challenge to the water cycle including precipitation, water retention and quality.

Natural ecosystems including forests and wetlands provide crucial ecosystem services on which around 1.6 billion people depend worldwide.

WASH is closely linked to nutrition and child development. WASH interventions that target nutritionally vulnerable populations can address underlying drivers of malnutrition and improve child health.

Water among other natural resources is increasingly a source of conflict, particularly in those areas hardest hit by the effects of climate change. In more than 120 ongoing conflicts, freshwater resources and related infrastructure are increasingly degraded, disrupted, and deliberately weaponized against civilians. Disrupted WASH systems force reliance on unsafe sources, undermine agriculture and livelihoods, and displace communities. In humanitarian and fragile contexts, safe, dignified and accessible WASH, including aspects of Menstrual Health and Hygiene, are indispensable for managing crisis-related mobility. In protracted armed conflicts, impacts can accumulate and lead to reduced community resilience as well as hinder post-conflict peacebuilding. Attacks on freshwater resources and related infrastructure can act as a trigger or multiplier of conflicts, intensify local grievances, fuel instability, and pose threats to regional and international peace and security. Strengthening the WASH humanitarian-development-peace nexus remains a pressing challenge to ensure that emergency responses are resilient and linked to longer-term development outcomes.

- IV. **Solutions** (2000 words): This section will offer action-oriented, innovative, and pragmatic solutions to challenges. It will shine a spotlight on impactful initiatives, programs and projects from around the world that can be scaled up and/or transferred to other contexts. Potential partnerships among Member States and with other stakeholders will feature prominently.

Embedding human rights principles into national legal, policy and monitoring frameworks and budgets strengthens accountability and guides investments. Human rights-based approaches to WASH empower communities and rights-holders to participate actively and to hold duty-bearers accountable. The Conference should provide recommendations on the fulfilment of the human rights to water and sanitation, including a sound and reliable methodology to monitor progress. Member states should commit to and be supported to align their national monitoring efforts to the human rights to water and sanitation and the existing global monitoring frameworks of SGD 6.1 and 6.2., thus harmonizing, simplifying and standardizing national and global monitoring, providing a strong foundation for water and sanitation in a post2030-framework. This also includes the process of aligning and

harmonizing already existing monitoring efforts and to support the simplification and standardization of systems, which would not only improve data quality, but also enhance international comparability and significantly reduce the administrative burden for countries.

Maintaining ODF status is an essential solution on the path to safely managed sanitation. Visibility and commitment to ODF across local, regional and national levels can support further progress and must be complemented by sustainable financing, behavior change, and long-term operation and maintenance.

Infrastructural WASH developments complemented with WASH education as well as the sustainable operation, maintenance and management of the WASH services within settings, including menstrual health and hygiene management, are key to addressing hygiene concerns, reducing water related diseases and poverty, and tackling gender inequality. Achieving sustainable WASH access in all schools and healthcare facilities requires a paradigm shift: beyond just building infrastructure, equal attention must be given to the long-term management, operation, and maintenance of these services. Gender-responsive and socially inclusive programming is needed to transform longstanding disparities.

Improving water quality requires better regulation, investment in safely managed sanitation, sustainable wastewater treatment, and sustainable water infrastructure and sustainable economic activity. Supporting establishment of finance strategies for the sector and stronger and well-coordinated efforts to develop and scale local currency financing solutions, that tap into underutilized sources of funding including private sector, local banks and the capital market. Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and approaches such as the One Health Framework can foster collaboration across sectors and strengthen responses to water-related risks, while addressing pollution challenges.

Ecosystems such as forests, wetlands, grasslands, and soils play an important role in maintaining water sources, retention and water quality. Sustainably managed ecosystems and Nature-based Solutions are therefore crucial to safeguarding ecosystem services for human well-being and resilience to climate change. More integrated approaches are needed to combine efforts on WASH and Food and Nutrition Security for stronger health outcomes and to make peoples' lives and livelihoods more resilient to climate change and other external shocks.

In fragile and conflict settings, WASH responses should be prioritized in areas with highest risks and needs. Respect for humanitarian principles and effective implementation of the

International Humanitarian Law are essential obligations of all states and parties to the conflict.

Strengthening the WASH humanitarian-development-peace nexus is necessary to ensure that emergency responses are resilient and linked to sustainable long-term outcomes. This includes addressing the needs of displaced population, and communities living in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

Infrastructural WASH developments combined with investment in a strong, diverse, and adequately trained workforce is essential to deliver sustainable and universal WASH services. Well-performing and independent water and sanitation utilities have the capacity to expand their service coverage to underserved urban-poor communities while ensuring long-term maintenance.

Digital monitoring tools, open data, and innovative approaches to financing, including climate finance and blended public–private models, can enhance accountability, improve service delivery, and ensure sustainability.

Commitment should be aimed at supporting WASH implementation worldwide. Building on existing tools and resources, such as those developed under the WHO EURO/UNECE Protocol on Water and Health and UNICEF and WHO's Joint Monitoring Programme, is a way to enhance cooperation and accelerate progress.

## **V. Recommendations and conclusions (2000 words)**

- The Conference should provide clear recommendations on the fulfilment of the human rights to water and sanitation, supported by a reliable methodology for monitoring progress. Indicators should be improved and extended to cover affordability, accessibility, quality, acceptability and availability, and reporting under the Universal Periodic Reviews should be strengthened. There should also be clear recommendations on how existing monitoring systems can be better aligned, harmonized as well as simplified to improve data quality, but also enhance international comparability and significantly reduce the administrative burden for countries.
- Particular attention should be given to WASH in healthcare facilities, schools, and public spaces, with clear recommendations on improving the long-term management, operation, and maintenance of these services, with a focus on women, girls, and persons with disabilities, and the homeless.
- Strengthen WASH in humanitarian and fragile contexts, and link short-term responses to longer-term development.

- Support initiatives aimed at strengthening compliance with International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law and the delivery of humanitarian outcomes such as ICRC Global IHL Initiative, WASH Roadmap and its Call to Action, and the Global Alliance for Sparing Water from Armed Conflicts.
- Commitment to supporting WASH implementation worldwide and underline the importance of building on existing frameworks and tools such as the WHO EURO/UNECE Protocol on Water and Health should be reaffirmed.
- Scale commitment at the highest political level by supporting relevant initiatives at the highest political level where possible.
- Promote conflict sensitive WASH service delivery that contributes to social cohesion, particularly in fragile areas.

## **VI. Guiding questions (1000 words)**

### *Human rights and inclusion*

- How to ensure the human rights to water and sanitation are embedded in national laws, policies, and budgets?
- How to address systemic inequalities in access to WASH, including in the design and delivery of services, in order to achieve more equitable outcomes? How to ensure women, girls, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups are meaningfully involved in WASH decision-making and monitoring?
- How is data used to identify gaps, target resources, and hold governments or service providers accountable?
- Are communities empowered to participate in monitoring and advocacy for WASH improvements?
- What measures ensure dignified, safe, and contextually appropriate access to WASH for vulnerable populations (including refugees, displaced persons, and the urban poor)?
- How are WASH responses in emergencies linked to long-term development and sustainable outcomes?
- How can fragile, conflict-affected, and displaced populations be adequately considered in WASH planning?
- How to make sure that humanitarian and development assistance as well as climate finance reaches those in fragile and conflict settings?
- How to reverse the trend of normalization of deliberate attacks on WASH infrastructure in armed conflicts?

## *Equity & Gender*

- How to design WASH programs designed to address gender disparities and promote social inclusion?
- How can WASH interventions be tailored to empower women and girls while improving service delivery?
- How are menstrual health and hygiene needs integrated into schools, healthcare facilities, and public spaces?
- How can Open Defecation Free (ODF) status and safely managed sanitation services be maintained and scaled?
- How can water quality be ensured and challenges such as chemical, microbial, and emerging contaminants be addressed?

## *Behavior Change and Education*

- How can hygiene promotion and behavior-change campaigns be effectively implemented in schools, healthcare facilities, and communities?
- How does WASH education integrate health, nutrition, and environmental awareness?
- *What should the role of development partners and the private sector be in supporting skill-building and institutional strengthening?*

## *Governance*

- What are best practices and institutional mechanisms for integrated water resources management (IWRM) and inter-sectoral coordination?
- How could we strengthen the capacity of regulation authorities around the globe?
- How can WASH investments be planned sustainably with life-cycle costing, including operation, maintenance, and replacement?
- What strategies are effective in training, retaining, and building capacity in the WASH workforce?
- How can governments capacitate the workforce in education or health settings, to manage and maintain the WASH Services?
- How can we build champions for water, sanitation, hygiene and wastewater treatment in national and local government and use them to accelerate action?
- How can we work across government ministries and departments (health, agriculture, hygiene, water resources) to optimize investments in water, sanitation and hygiene and ensure that they contribute to health, food security, equality and nation-building?

- What concrete actions can we take to build trust and transparency in the water, sanitation and hygiene sector, ensuring the participation and consultation of all stakeholders?

### *Innovation and Technology*

- How can digital tools, including AI, remote sensing, or data platforms help to track WASH service coverage, quality, and equity?
- How are innovative technologies and low-cost solutions applied in resource-constrained or crisis settings?
- Are emerging risks (e.g., climate change, water pollution, antimicrobial resistance) being addressed through technological and management innovations?
- What are the data gaps that are holding back planning, investment and monitoring of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals? What support do governments need to fill them?
- What is the best way to track action over the next eight years? What are the most important actions to track for governments and development partners

## **2026 United Nations Water Conference**

### **Interactive Dialogue 2 – Water for Prosperity**

#### **I. Introduction (500 words)**

Water is a critical resource. It sustains our way of life, our economy and our food system. Water is a key input for economic production and growth, particularly in the agricultural sector and water is also vital for energy and healthy ecosystems, which provide natural resources and services that support the livelihoods of billions of people.

But today, our water supply is under threat – unsustainable water management undermines our overall water security and competitiveness and increasing climate impacts (e.g. changes in rainfall patterns, extreme heat, catastrophic floods, prolonged droughts, forest fires, water quality deterioration) cause increasing impacts, disruption of energy and drinking water supply and growing economic losses. If left unaddressed, these have the potential to harm the overall economic, social and territorial cohesion globally.

The focus of this dialogue is on SDG 6 targets 6.3 on wastewater treatment, safe reuse and water quality, 6.4 on water-use efficiency, and 6.5 on integrated water resources management, with interlinkages to SDG 1 on no poverty, SDG 2 on zero hunger, SDG 7 on affordable and clean energy, SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, SDG 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure, SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities, SDG 12 on responsible consumption and production, and SDG 17 on partnerships for the goals.

#### **II. Status and trends (1000 words)**

Worldwide, many watersheds experience increasing levels of degradation, threatening ecosystem health and water availability, and worsened by climate change. Wetlands – nature’s most effective water managers – are disappearing three times faster than forests across the globe, increasing the risk of desertification and floods. While agriculture accounts for roughly 70% of freshwater withdrawals, industrial (≈20%) and domestic (≈10%) uses are the main drivers of increasing water demand. As economies industrialize, populations urbanize, and water supply and sanitation systems expand. At the current pace, global water demand is expected to surpass what is available by 40 % in 2030<sup>1</sup>. Roughly half of the world’s population currently experiences severe water scarcity for at least part of the year. One quarter of the world’s population face ‘extremely high’ levels of water stress, using

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Global Commission on the Economics of Water, 2024.

over 80% of their annual renewable freshwater supply<sup>2</sup>. Worldwide competition for dwindling supplies of freshwater exacerbates conflict and displacement; water-related disasters displaced 40 million people and inflicted more than EUR 480 billion in damages in 2024<sup>3</sup>. Water stress and climate change have the potential to slow down entire economic and trade systems.

Implementation of IWRM is progressing slowly, leaving billions of people in countries with fragmented water management structures, weak cost-recovery mechanisms, and chronically under-funded basin authorities.

Protecting water is key for socio-economic, inclusive and sustainable growth and development. The water cycle is changing, and this is a universal concern that underpins the achievement of all SDGs. Recognizing the interconnectedness with ecosystems, climate, food and feed production and energy systems is essential to managing water sustainably and equitably for both present and future generations.

- III. **Challenges and emerging issues** (2000 words): This section will highlight challenges and opportunities relating to the topics addressed in the interactive dialogue, particularly those that have emerged or become more urgent since the 2023 Water Conference. This section will also identify interlinkages and synergies between the relevant SDG 6 targets and other SDGs.

Disparities in water availability are widespread. Population growth, rapid urbanization, environmental degradation and climate change compound these disparities and pose a significant threat to shared prosperity that provides equal opportunities for all to thrive.

Water is a finite resource. Climate change impacts and increased scarcity and droughts create pressure to balance demand from different users with the protection of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. Over-abstraction, declining water quality and increasing pollution, seasonal and interannual gaps between demand and availability, and unsustainable practices remain critical challenges.

Water demand also needs to consider the transformation of water uses under the effect of climate change, for instance in agriculture with the augmentation of evapotranspiration due to temperature rise.

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<sup>2</sup> [The United Nations World Water Development Report 2024: water for prosperity and peace; executive summary - UNESCO Digital Library](#)

<sup>3</sup> Global water monitor: 2024 summary report | PreventionWeb.

Water influences the economy in many ways, and global trade dynamics and market adaptations can have direct repercussions on the water use of regional and local economies.

- IV. **Solutions** (2000 words): This section will offer action-oriented, innovative, and pragmatic solutions to challenges. It will shine a spotlight on impactful initiatives, programs and projects from around the world that can be scaled up and/or transferred to other contexts. Potential partnerships among Member States and with other stakeholders will feature prominently.

Ensuring water security and resilience for socio-economic uses requires monitoring and improving knowledge of the evolution of the global water cycle and water use. Adapting to these changes requires curbing demand, protecting water quality, diversifying supply sources, safely managing sanitation, and balancing seasonal and interannual gaps of water resources while protecting supporting aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.

It also calls for integrating water considerations across key productive sectors — notably agriculture and food security, where the sustainable and equitable use of water plays a decisive role in ensuring livelihoods, reducing rural poverty, and strengthening resilience to climate shocks.

### ***Curbing demand***

Curbing demand requires reducing consumption where water abstractions are greater than renewable water availability. Focus must be on fighting leakages and unintended losses, supported by digital tools and by increased water use efficiency.

Sustainable, fair and transparent water allocation systems must be promoted at all levels, and across sectors and value chains. These efforts should be supported by research, innovations, new technologies, and good cross-sectoral governance, notably by applying the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem (WEFE) nexus approach. Managing the WEFE nexus in sectoral policies is essential to reduce pressure on resources by promoting joint, integrated cross-sectoral solutions and investments.

Special attention should be given to the optimization of water use in agriculture, where innovative irrigation techniques, crop diversification, and soil moisture management can significantly increase productivity while conserving resources. Promoting training and capacity building for farmers and agricultural technicians can ensure the large-scale adoption of efficient and climate-resilient cultivation practices, particularly in drought-affected regions.

### ***Diversification of water supplies***

Diversification of water supply sources including reuse of wastewater should be considered. The need to integrate water storage, managed groundwater recharge, water reuse, non-conventional resources, such as sustainable seawater desalination and new technologies into sustainable water management is urgent. At the same time, it is necessary to ensure that solutions are affordable and legally feasible and do not undermine human rights, environmental standards, or equity across sectors and regions.

Urban areas play a strategic role in this regard. Improved management of non-conventional urban water resources — such as treated wastewater and stormwater — can contribute to agricultural production in peri-urban and rural areas, reducing competition for freshwater and strengthening urban–rural linkages.

### ***Non-conventional water resources***

Non-conventional water resources should be incorporated into Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) to strengthen resilience and contribute to drought risk management

Safe water reuse in agriculture, environmental and industrial sectors, energy production and industrial processes should be progressively upscaled to improve integrated water resource management. Lessons learnt and good practices on water reuse should be shared and scaled in all levels.

Research and technological innovation play a crucial role in optimizing water reuse systems — from advanced treatment and purification technologies to digital monitoring and control tools that ensure efficiency, safety, and transparency.

Non-conventional water resources, such as safe reuse of treated wastewater and, where appropriate, sustainable desalination, particularly in areas with limited freshwater availability, plays a strategic and essential role. Innovation should be supported and good practices scaled up, including the use of renewable energy, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, avoiding negative environmental impacts and mitigating brine disposal impacts, and increasing recycling and reuse of energy and minerals from brine.

### ***Nature based solutions***

Nature-based solutions should be implemented, restoring wetlands and other ecosystems, supporting quality renewable water supplies, while maintaining ecological flows.

Nature-based solutions and hybrid infrastructure offer multiple co-benefits while being often cost-effective alternatives to purely grey infrastructure. We should promote their development and implementation to enhance water resilience, support biodiversity, reduce pollution and disaster risks, and deliver long-term socio-economic gains.

Combating desertification through the restoration of degraded lands and the use of water-efficient crops can significantly contribute to maintaining ecosystem services, food security, and rural stability. These actions should be coupled with early warning systems to prevent and mitigate drought impacts, aligning with global initiatives such as the UNCCD's Drought Initiative and the "Early Warning for All" campaign.

### ***Knowledge***

Substantial data and understandable information, based on hydrological, meteorological and qualitative monitoring, spatial observation, modelling, traditional and Indigenous knowledge are necessary for sound decision-making in water. Improved data and monitoring are essential to track the changes in the global water cycle. These changes are affecting water resources in all countries which means we cannot look at the past to manage water resources and ensure water security and resilience.

Effective water management should be based and guided by sound science based on existing platforms and Earth observation products.

Greater knowledge on the costs and benefits of water resilience for the economy and the financial system can help support scaling up actions of national governments.

Investment in technologies for research and data collection, as well as in vocational and scientific training, is key to producing the evidence base required to guide decisions and innovations in sustainable water use.

### **Inclusive Governance**

Strengthening water governance is a prerequisite for achieving water security and resilience for socio economic uses. Inclusive involvement of all stakeholders in IWRM processes and planning is necessary. Advancing inclusive and sustainable governance, integration and coordination across multiple levels, with strong engagement of economic sectors through the WEFE nexus, can unlock synergies and address trade-offs. Such cooperation can improve sustainable water use in agriculture, support the clean energy transition, strengthen resilience to hydrological extremes, and make climate action more effective.

Equitable access and distribution of water resources between urban and rural areas should be prioritized to promote social cohesion and prevent resource-driven inequalities, ensuring that both city dwellers and rural producers can rely on stable, safe water supplies.

Multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary cooperation, supported by technical, financial and institutional solutions, and followed by coordinated implementation, are critical for IWRM. Private sector companies' efforts on water disclosure and water stewardship and engagement along international value chains, can support water management objectives and the development of viable solutions.

### ***Planning***

Basin management planning is essential for securing sufficient, clean water supplies, protecting ecosystems, mitigating climate change impacts like floods and droughts, and ensuring sustainable water use for economic development. It provides an integrated coordinated framework for managing water resources, integrating ecological needs, socio economics needs and climate resilience across the river basins, guiding investments.

River Basin management planning and management requires close cooperation among all stakeholders and sectors. Coordination and complementarity of all actors and policies are needed to ensure water planning (including for droughts and floods) is effective. We need the development of inclusive and integrated early warning systems, anticipatory approaches, and resilient infrastructure to enhance preparedness.

### ***Financing***

Moving towards comprehensive and sustainable water financing frameworks should be upheld, based on the recommendations of the Seville 2025 Conference on Finance for Development. Sustainable finance requires implementing adapted tariff structures, reflecting all costs of water services (including scarcity, environmental, operational and investment costs), while applying the polluter pays and do no harm principles, - in ways consistent with national legal frameworks and capacities -, taking account of users' social profiles, and without compromising the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, especially for the most vulnerable.

Investment in water-efficient agriculture, reuse technologies, and capacity development should be recognized as essential components of climate finance, enabling the long-term sustainability of both ecosystems and livelihoods.

## **V. Recommendations and conclusions (2000 words)**

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| <p>Water efficiency and fair allocation</p>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Conference should promote a water resilience approach to drive prosperity, reinforcing commitments to sustainable water abstractions and water efficiency.</li> <li>• Particular emphasis should be placed on optimizing water use in agriculture, integrating efficient irrigation systems, soil moisture monitoring, and smart technologies to reduce losses while maintaining productivity.</li> <li>• Training and education initiatives for farmers and local communities should be promoted to strengthen water literacy, improve agricultural practices, and support the development of sustainable food systems.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <p>Diversification of water supplies and NbS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversification of water supplies including non-conventional sources and nature-based solutions should be promoted. Including safe water reuse in agriculture, energy production, industrial processes. Cooperation on sustainable desalination, new technologies and digitalization within IWRM should be fostered.</li> <li>• The reuse of treated wastewater and urban runoff for agricultural and environmental purposes should be considered a key tool for improving water availability and strengthening the link between urban and rural systems.</li> <li>• Nature based solutions and sustainable food systems are a major opportunity for global water resilience. Best practices and positive investment and business cases should be promoted and shared, highlighting cross-sector positive impacts and alignment with the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.</li> <li>• Restoration of degraded lands and adoption of water-efficient crops in arid regions can contribute to combating desertification, securing food production, and maintaining ecological functions.</li> </ul> |
| <p>WRM based on sound knowledge</p>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective water management should be based and guided by sound science. The work of policy platforms, such as IPBES (notably the recent nexus report), the IPCC, UNESCO's Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme the World Water Assessment Programme and the newly established Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution, should be promoted.</li> <li>• Earth Observation products have been used to forecast droughts and floods and need to be promoted for use in</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

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|                      | <p>water management to be able to adapt to the changes in the global water cycle. Access to this water-related data, products, and tools needs to be facilitated ensuring that Copernicus products respond to the needs of users and policy makers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hydrological observatory systems, based on resilient digital public infrastructures (DPI) and partnerships should be advanced with initiatives such as the Global Climate Observing System, Global Drought Observatory, the Global Flood Awareness System, HydroSOS, the One Water Vision, GEMS/Water and others</li> <li>• Research and innovation for sustainable water use, including the development of new technologies for reuse, desalination, and precision agriculture, should be prioritized through international cooperation and knowledge-sharing platforms.</li> </ul>                                                                             |
| Planning             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• River Basin Management Plans including Drought and Flood Management Plans and sustainable, fair and transparent allocation models should be promoted.</li> <li>• On disaster risk reduction, countries should reiterate their commitments and support to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the UN Secretary-General's Early Warning for All by 2027 initiative, especially for droughts and floods.</li> <li>• Integrated early warning systems for drought and desertification should be strengthened to protect vulnerable ecosystems and agricultural zones, ensuring rapid responses and adaptation measures.</li> <li>• Essential aspects of water resources management should be integrated into National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) strategies, backed by appropriate technical and financial support.</li> </ul> |
| Inclusive governance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the OECD Water Governance principles, including inclusive involvement of all stakeholders in IWRM and planning, engagement of economic sectors through the WEFE nexus,</li> <li>• Scale up private sector companies' efforts on water disclosure and water stewardship</li> <li>• Water governance frameworks should promote equitable access and distribution between urban and rural</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

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|                       | communities, addressing disparities in availability and ensuring that water allocation supports both human consumption and agricultural production.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Economics and Finance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve knowledge on the economic and financial impacts of water resilience and the role of financial institutions and the private sector in promoting water resilience.</li> <li>• Comprehensive and innovative financing mechanisms and partnerships, incl. those involving the private sector at both global and national level should be developed and implemented to ensure resilient, inclusive and equitable water management. Support the function of International Financial Institutions, central banks and financial regulators to recognize the role of water for the national and global economies and for enabling increased investments in water.</li> <li>• Investments in sustainable agricultural water management, reuse infrastructure, and vocational training should be recognized as integral parts of climate finance and resilience-building strategies.</li> </ul> |

#### VI. **Guiding questions** (1000 words)

- How are the changes in the water cycle affecting your country and water management policies and practices? How are these changes influencing agricultural productivity and food security, particularly in drought-prone areas?
- Do you have enough information on how extreme events are affecting your country and how they will be in the future in the different scenarios of CC? Would a Global international report on the state of Water Resources management and use be useful to guide national action? Would additional monitoring systems or early warning mechanisms for drought and desertification be beneficial for national planning?
- How is water availability affecting your agricultural and energy sectors? How are uses such as tourism and data centers affected? How are you expecting they will be affected in the future? Are your economic Ministers and Financial institutions aware?
- How is water scarcity influencing rural livelihoods and agricultural exports? What role could improved irrigation and reuse systems play in reducing these impacts?
- What are the main measures for improving planning and investment on water supplies that you are taking at national level and how are you preparing to increase resilience? Are you including them in the NDCs and NAPs?

- What role can River Basin Management Plans play in securing long-term water availability while delivering on economic and social priorities? How can these plans ensure equitable water allocation between agricultural, urban, and industrial users?
- What role can National Water Roadmaps have in promoting river basin management planning, the establishing of national financial frameworks for water resources management and promoting efficiency and sustainability of water abstractions. Could such roadmaps also promote training programmes in sustainable water and agricultural management?
- What regulatory or economic instruments have proven particularly successful in reducing water consumption and enhancing water resilience while maintaining or enhancing economic growth? Are there successful examples of incentives for agricultural water efficiency or urban wastewater reuse that could be replicated?
- How can wastewater treatment, rainwater harvesting and storage solutions contribute to sustaining economic activities despite increasing climate pressures and extreme weather events? How can treated wastewater from cities be safely reused for irrigation and food production in peri-urban and rural areas?
- How can digitization (such as smart meters, remote sensing, AI) be deployed to enhance water efficiency of operators and industries.
- How can the resilience of infrastructures be enhanced? How best can successful examples be shared and replicated?
- What are the most successful examples of Nature-based Solutions strengthening the resilience of infrastructures while enhancing cost-effectiveness?

## **2026 United Nations Water Conference**

### **Interactive Dialogue 3 – Water for Planet**

#### **I. Introduction (500 words)**

This concept note should focus on SDG 6 targets 6.1 on universal access to safe drinking water, 6.2 on sanitation and hygiene, 6.3 on wastewater treatment, safe reuse and water quality, and 6.6 on freshwater ecosystems, while building on the connections with SDG 11 on sustainable cities, SDG 13 on climate action, SDG 14 on oceans, and SDG 15 on land and biodiversity.

The global water cycle is becoming increasingly volatile, with erratic rainfall, more frequent storms, and prolonged droughts becoming the new normal. This growing variability threatens freshwater supplies — the foundation of food and feed security, agriculture, biodiversity, human settlements, and the health of terrestrial ecosystems. Therefore, it is crucial to protect and restore the global water cycle.

One of the main drivers of this volatility is climate change. Therefore, climate mitigation and adaptation are key. Rising temperatures affect hydrology by altering the water cycle, while water also plays a central role in carbon storage and clean energy, making it essential to mitigate and reduce greenhouse gas concentrations. Adaptation is equally important to strengthen resilience and harness potential benefits from the shifting global water cycle under a changing climate.

#### **II. Status and trends (1000 words)**

The disruption of the global water cycle is a global concern that undermines the achievement of all SDGs. Aquatic ecosystems, notably wetlands, play a key role in climate action by storing large amounts of carbon dioxide and regulating greenhouse gas emissions, as well as biodiversity action, by supporting rich biodiversity and providing essential services like water purification, flood control, and habitat. In this context, and given the increasing water stress and vulnerabilities to climate impacts, the importance of a strategic approach to water resilience and security is reiterated.

#### **III. Challenges and emerging issues (2000 words):** This section will highlight challenges and opportunities relating to the topics addressed in the interactive

dialogue, particularly those that have emerged or become more urgent since the 2023 Water Conference. This section will also identify interlinkages and synergies between the relevant SDG 6 targets and other SDGs.

Overexploitation and mismanagement of water resources, pollution, climate change and environmental degradation have deeply affected the global water cycle and severely altered the quantity and reduced the quality of water. This situation calls for stepping up efforts on conservation, protection, restoration and sustainable use of ecosystems, including, but not limited to, wetlands, forests, floodplains, riparian zones, and soils, given their role in climate and biodiversity action and their co-benefits for carbon storage, disaster risk reduction, and ecosystem services. In the past, water governance has largely focused on managing ‘blue water’ – the visible flow of water from upstream to downstream. However, this linear approach overlooks the full complexity of the water cycle.

The Global Commission on the Economics of Water calls for a shift toward water cycle governance – recognizing the interconnections between green water, atmospheric water and blue water. Restoring the ecosystems that store and move green water –such as forests, wetlands and soils – is essential to reduce the risk of climate-driven disasters. Notably wetlands, given their role in climate and biodiversity action and their co-benefits for carbon storage, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, and other ecosystem services.

As vulnerabilities to climate impacts increase, with more frequent and extreme weather events such as droughts and floods, and with disruptions in precipitation patterns, the need for a strategic, integrated and cross-sectoral approach to water resilience for adaptation of all sectors and populations is stressed. That is why governing water as a system – not a sector – is essential for addressing the climate crisis and advancing integrated, resilient development. This approach should ensure equitable access to safe water and sanitation for vulnerable populations, and integrate urban water management and resilient infrastructure, including green and sustainable drainage systems as well as flood-risk reducing landscape-type interventions upstream.

For cost-effective and successful adaptation to climate change, planning and implementing integrated water resources management is necessary at basin scale, together with strengthened transboundary cooperation in international water bodies. Effective management also requires robust hydrological data, monitoring, early warning systems, capacity building, and adequate and sustainable financing mechanisms.

IV. **Solutions** (2000 words): This section will offer action-oriented, innovative, and pragmatic solutions to challenges. It will shine a spotlight on impactful initiatives, programs and projects from around the world that can be scaled up and/or

transferred to other contexts. Potential partnerships among Member States and with other stakeholders will feature prominently.

The water transition goes far beyond the water sector. Acknowledging the role of healthy ecosystems and of green water for the global water cycle and water resilience, further efforts are needed to improve water retention on land, using the full potential of ecosystems to store, purify, release, and restore water. Restoring the natural sponge function of landscapes is needed to replenish groundwater reserves and to protect biodiversity. In this context, water sobriety, together with ensuring both water quality and quantity, is indispensable to strengthen resilience and to preserve ecosystems that sustain the global water cycle. Relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements, including the three Rio Conventions and the Ramsar Convention, need to mainstream water in their work and priorities to enact policies and actions that value and sustain the natural cycles that underpin freshwater buffers and security.

The development of source-to-sea approaches in integrated water resources management, including integrated coastal management and pollution reduction, including plastic pollution, also provide opportunities to maintain ecosystem functions of rivers, lakes, wetlands, deltas, estuaries, coasts and marine ecosystems. In this regard, the goal to achieve the 30x30 target of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, for land, inland water, and marine and coastal ecosystems, should be recalled. Successful source-to-sea management calls for coordinated efforts among riparian countries, bilateral commissions, basin organizations, sanitation and wastewater stakeholders, and Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans to harmonize upstream and downstream measures.

Nature-based solutions and hybrid infrastructure offer multiple co-benefits while being often cost-effective alternatives to purely grey infrastructure. Their development and implementation enhance water resilience, support biodiversity, reduce pollution and disaster risks, and deliver long-term socio-economic gains by promoting sustainable livelihoods and fostering adaptive capacity within communities.

Water-related disaster risk reduction requires close cooperation among all stakeholders and sectors, with attention to the needs of the most vulnerable populations. Coordination and complementarity of all actors and policies are needed to ensure efficiency of disaster risk reduction measures. Countries need to support and develop globally inclusive and integrated early warning systems, anticipatory approaches, and resilient infrastructure to enhance preparedness.

Recognizing the importance of climate change mitigation and adaptation considerations in strategies for water and sanitation is a urgency, taking into account a forward-looking and

system wide perspective. Their co-benefits and trade-offs should be integrated in medium- and long-term water plans. Conversely, essential aspects of water resources management, including WASH, should be integrated into National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) strategies, backed by appropriate technical and financial support. The support of relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) in this effort is of critical importance, and water should be mainstreamed across climate processes, both in secretariat documentation and in consideration of parties during sessions. With both NDCs and NAPs due in 2025, it is important to shift from planning to implementation and create the enabling conditions that facilitate this.

Scientific cooperation is promoted to detect and prevent future disasters, including pandemics. Substantial data and understandable information, based on hydrological and meteorological monitoring, spatial observation, modelling, traditional and Indigenous knowledge and their exchange on relevant scales, are necessary for decision-making.

The concept note should call for alignment of existing water and climate-related initiatives, such as the Early Warning for All by 2027 initiative of the UN Secretary-General, the Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems (CREWS) initiative, the “Action on Water Adaptation and Resilience (AWARe)” initiative, the UN action programme on water scarcity, the Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG) by FAO, the COP29 Dialogue on Water for Climate Action, the Climate Resilient Sanitation Coalition, the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance and other initiatives under the Water Action Agenda. Such alignment can facilitate finance allocation and cost-effective implementation.

#### **V. Recommendations and conclusions (2000 words)**

- On adaptation and mitigation, countries should share best practices on water and sanitation integration in NAPs and NDCs, including on factors that have been conducive to or limited implementation of plans and strategies and aim for developing of guidelines on water management in for climate mitigation and adaptation such as those developed under the EU Water Framework Directive and the UN 1992 Water Convention. Recommendation may aim to create synergies with the work of the Baku Dialogue on Water for Climate Action launched at COP29
- On disaster risk reduction, countries should reiterate their commitments and support to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the UN Secretary-General’s Early Warning for All by 2027 initiative, especially for droughts and floods.
- On biodiversity, countries should be called upon to reiterate or take new commitments under the Freshwater Challenge launched at the UN 2023 Water

Conference and to scale up the initiative in synergy with the activities of relevant MEAs, including CBD, Ramsar and the Water Convention.

- On monitoring, indicator 6.6.1 should be promoted to track the extent of freshwater ecosystems. Hydrological observatory systems, based on resilient digital public infrastructures (DPI) and partnerships should be advanced with initiatives such as the Global Climate Observing System, Global Drought Observatory, the Global Flood Awareness System, HydroSOS, the One Water Vision, GEMS/Water and others. Transboundary cooperation and joint monitoring of shared water resources should be strengthened to support basin-scale management and data-sharing.
- On source-to-sea approaches, common principles could be developed based on existing guidance, such as the UNECE Water Convention Guidance Note on implementing the source-to-sea approach.
- On nature-based solutions, best practices and positive investment and business cases should be promoted and shared, highlighting cross-sector positive impacts and alignment with the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

#### VI. **Guiding questions** (1000 words)

- How can water considerations be effectively mainstreamed into climate negotiations, and facilitate better integration of water resilience into NAPs and NDCs? What are barriers and opportunities for developing implementable climate plans in which water targets are included?
- How can we fully embed integrated water resources management approaches and leverage them to advance related outcomes, including climate adaptation and nature-based solutions?
- What mechanisms can enhance coordination between different sectors, policies and levels of levels of governance?
- How can source-to-sea planning effectively integrate upstream, downstream, and coastal management measures (including implementation of urban water resilience, stormwater management, and sustainable drainage systems)?
- How can transboundary cooperation on river basins and coastal zones be strengthened to support a “source-to-sea” approach?
- How can countries strengthen hydrological and ecological monitoring, as well as incentivized their protection? Can the global water cycle approach be used?
- What are the barriers to providing data and information for improved water management, climate resilience, early warning systems and risk-informed decision-making?
- What models of transboundary cooperation and joint monitoring can be replicated to support basin-scale water management?

- What innovative financing mechanisms and public-private partnerships can accelerate the implementation of nature-based solutions, water resilience, ecosystem restoration and disaster risk reduction?
- How can water resilience initiatives ensure gender-responsive, socially inclusive, and participatory approaches, especially for marginalized and vulnerable communities?

## 2026 United Nations Water Conference

### Interactive Dialogue 4 – Water for Cooperation

#### I. Introduction (500 words)

The world is experiencing multiple crises, which reinforce each other and know no boundaries. Water is a determining factor in all of them, requiring cross-border coordination and cooperation.

The restoration and preservation of the global water cycle, which has been tipped off-balance, underpins freshwater management at all levels, from the local to the global. The application of well-informed sustainable management and inclusive governance of water resources across sectors, and the realization of the human rights to water and sanitation, can only be achieved if countries cooperate.

Transboundary waters are managed most effectively within a well-established legal framework such as a River or Lake Basin Organization or a joint commission, based on the principles of international water law, including the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), and the 1997 Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (Watercourse Convention).

Transboundary water cooperation has the potential to generate many significant benefits for cooperating countries, such as accelerated economic growth, increased human well-being, enhanced environmental sustainability and resilience, advancing coordinated and joint responses to climate change, as well as increased political stability, security and peace. In general, the greater the ambition and effectiveness of transboundary water cooperation, the greater the benefits.

#### II. Status and trends (1000 words)

**Transboundary waters account for 60 % of the world's freshwater flows**, with 153 countries having territory within at least one of the 286 transboundary river and lake basins and 592 transboundary aquifer systems. However, transboundary cooperation is lacking<sup>1</sup> – currently, only 43 out of 153 UN Member States sharing transboundary rivers, lakes and aquifers have operational arrangements in place for 90 % or more of their transboundary basin area, and only 26 countries have all their transboundary waters covered by operational arrangements. **There are**

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<sup>1</sup> [sdg6 indicator report 652 progress-on-transboundary-water-cooperation 2024 en.pdf](#)

**significant regional variations in transboundary water cooperation** with Europe, North America and sub-Saharan Africa showing the highest levels of cooperation. More cooperation is essential, especially in areas vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and where water is already scarce.

**Transboundary water cooperation is central to sustainable water management and governance.**

It is key to responding to water-related development needs and the needs of the environment, while supporting peace, security, conflict prevention and stability.

**Global legal frameworks, notably the Water Convention and the Watercourse Convention provide a sound basis for specific agreements, as well as for developing and strengthening transboundary water cooperation,** upscaling capacity development initiatives, including the exchange of experiences and best practices, innovative tools, and financing models. Broader accession to, and enhanced implementation of the conventions are therefore considered important steps for accelerating progress towards the SDG target 6.5 and increasing water resilience globally. Countries, including those that are not Parties to the UN Water Conventions, are encouraged to take part in activities supporting implementation of transboundary cooperation and to use Water Convention's institutional platform and tools when developing integrated water resources management (IWRM) at all levels.

The 2023 UN Water Conference provided a boost to transboundary water cooperation by over 40 commitments to the Water Action Agenda and 7 accessions to the UN Water Conventions (Helsinki 1992, New York 1997) broadening their membership and geographical scope.

### **Inclusive governance**

Inclusive multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral governance is at the core of IWRM at all levels. As the goals and targets of the Agenda 2030 are strongly inter-related, the water, energy, food, ecosystems (WEFE) nexus approach is essential for cross-sectoral synergies on various sectoral goals. Cooperation across sectors and diverse partnerships can make water use in agriculture more sustainable and efficient, support the clean energy transition, improve water resilience by addressing hydrological extremes, and make climate action more effective. Inclusive governance strengthens social cohesion and reduces the potential for conflicts.

### **Scientific Cooperation**

Effective and collaborative water management is based on multidisciplinary science-policy cooperation to ensure that decisions are guided by sound science, underpinned by the precautionary principle and polluter-pays principle, as well as mutual trust, and a commitment to equity.

International cooperation is essential for aligning water research agendas and policies across sectors and countries. Promotion of open scientific cooperation, data sharing and data alignment

is a cornerstone of international scientific and water cooperation. Sharing of best available knowledge and practices and global implementation of affordable innovative solutions is essential.

- III. **Challenges and emerging issues** (2000 words): This section will highlight challenges and opportunities relating to the topics addressed in the interactive dialogue, particularly those that have emerged or become more urgent since the 2023 Water Conference. This section will also identify interlinkages and synergies between the relevant SDG 6 targets and other SDGs.

### **Transboundary water cooperation**

The trend of growing water insecurity and scarcity means we are facing increasing competition over water among different users, sectors, regions and countries. Particularly in fragile contexts, changes in water availability and / or unequal distribution can trigger competition, grievances or even conflict. Actions in one country have consequences in another. Overexploitation and pollution of lakes, rivers, and aquifers can jeopardize ecosystem services across borders. Coastal resources can be jeopardized by upstream activities, hence the need to tackle issues at source.

Many large geographical areas and entire river/lake basins and aquifers lack established cooperation frameworks and effective mechanisms for transboundary management, as well as climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction provisions, and conflict-resolution mechanisms.

**Managing shared water resources presents significant challenges**, rooted in differing national interests, varying levels of development, fragmented legal frameworks, and limited technical, financial or institutional capacity to effectively participate in transboundary water management. Effective management of shared water resources requires a common understanding of the resource, its vulnerabilities, the needs and priorities of all stakeholders and the identification of problems across the entire water cycle, supported by joint monitoring, data sharing, and coordinated planning.

**Effective transboundary water management requires accurate and reliable data on water availability, water quality, and water use.** However, data sharing is often limited and makes it difficult to develop shared management plans. In terms of emerging issues, groundwater research and data collection lag behind that on surface water, limiting critical information about aquifer levels, recharge rates, and contamination. This knowledge gap makes sustainable management of underground water challenging, risking over-extraction and long-term scarcity. Therefore, reinforced political commitment and financial investment are essential to monitor, protect, and sustainably use groundwater resources to avoid the emergence of crises.

## **Inclusive governance**

Cross-sectoral cooperation remains a serious challenge at all levels. Non-transparent and non-inclusive governance persists, excluding valuable knowledge, experience and insights, and risking inequitable outcomes or even failure.

Women across various conflict communities have long proven themselves effective at bridging across conflicting communities, identities, agendas and power positions. Yet traditionally, women are effectively excluded from these spaces, or their participation marginal at formal levels.

Indigenous Peoples possess valuable knowledge and experience in sustainably and equitably managing water resources. Youth bring novel perspectives, drive and innovation. Yet too often their participation amounts to tokenism.

Gaps in capacity, data and finance hinder governance, particularly at subnational and national levels, and limit stakeholders' participation in decision-making processes.

## **Scientific Cooperation**

Science-policy interface remains a challenge, presenting an obstacle to well-informed decision making. The complexity of water science makes it difficult for scientists to explain to the policy- and decision-makers the findings, the challenges and possible solutions.

Data has been repeatedly named as one of the biggest challenges in IWRM and transboundary water cooperation: not only the availability (fit-for-purpose, disaggregated data), but also the lack of capacity to analyse and use data, and the reluctance to share data across borders. When data is shared, the lack of interoperability can impede its use.

- IV. **Solutions** (2000 words): This section will offer action-oriented, innovative, and pragmatic solutions to challenges. It will shine a spotlight on impactful initiatives, programs and projects from around the world that can be scaled up and/or transferred to other contexts. Potential partnerships among Member States and with other stakeholders will feature prominently.

## **Transboundary water cooperation**

Shared water resources can be a source of both risk and resilience. Strengthening governance mechanisms, data sharing, joint early warning systems for floods, droughts and waterborne diseases, as well as joint or coordinated disaster risk reduction and adaptation measures in transboundary basins will help countries avoid water scarcity, limit and reverse environmental

degradation, mitigate and adapt to climate impacts and ensure long-term sustainability. In addition, transboundary cooperation can be leveraged to implement a source-to-sea approach, by helping countries set up more coordinated and holistic governance and management frameworks, which take into account both freshwater and coastal and marine resources.

Cooperative water management unlocks economic and funding opportunities and enhances livelihoods. By adopting a WEFE nexus approach, countries and communities can maximize the benefits of integrated resource management while minimizing potential conflicts and inefficiencies. Transboundary water cooperation can enhance agricultural productivity, ensure reliable water supply for people, energy production and industries; and protect critical ecosystems that support livelihoods.

Having strong institutional frameworks in place reduces risks for investments and facilitate access to finance, including climate finance, to sustainably managed shared water resources. Transboundary water cooperation allows for leveraging and sharing of benefits that are not accessible at national scales, notably through engagement of economic sectors.

Existence of effective agreements and institutional frameworks reduces the potential for conflict over shared waters, and if the conflict does occur, it reduces the risk of escalation.

We need to expand the evidence base in favour of cooperation, provide cost-benefit studies, scenario-based analysis and similar. Increased fragility and lost development opportunities of non-cooperation should be clearly laid out.

Conceptual transformations are needed in order to stop perceiving water as a national treasure, or a market commodity, but rather as a global common good to be shared equitably and sustainably.

Addressing questions related to water, peace and security is of collective interest to UN Member States. To prevent and resolve conflicts involving water, it is instrumental to promote cooperation between water sector experts, peace and security actors, and diplomats. Water diplomacy must be emphasized for conflict prevention, peace and stability.

### **Inclusive Governance**

At all levels – global, regional, transboundary, national and local – the core of integrated water resources management (IWRM) lies in multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral cooperation, notably among agriculture, energy, navigation, industry, health, nature protection and environment. Delivering cross-sectoral benefits requires joint measures, investments, and transparent and inclusive decision-making processes, including at the transboundary level. Capacities of

stakeholders at all levels, including civil society, must be strengthened. The OECD Water Governance Initiative offers useful principles for organizing inclusive governance at all levels, which should be further promoted.

Strengthening water governance is a prerequisite for achieving the UN 2030 Agenda. The integrated nature of the Agenda requires a WEFE nexus approach to drive progress across sectors. Inclusive involvement of all stakeholders in IWRM processes and planning is necessary. Advancing an inclusive approach, that integrates diverse voices, from local communities to key economic sectors across multiple levels of governance, and sustainable governance and integration can unlock synergies and address trade-offs. Such cooperation can improve sustainable water use in agriculture, support the clean energy transition, strengthen resilience to hydrological extremes, and make climate action more effective.

Multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary cooperation, supported by technical, financial and institutional solutions, and followed by coordinated implementation, are critical for IWRM. Partnerships with the private sector, including water stewardship and engagement along international value chains, can support water management objectives and the development of viable solutions.

The perspectives of Indigenous Peoples, and local communities, women and girls in all their diversity, children, youth, migrants, persons with disabilities, and people in vulnerable situations must be considered. The meaningful participation of all interested groups in the Conference should be ensured. Water- and climate-related intergenerational cooperation should be highlighted and recognized as a new dimension of global social capacity. Capacity development, joint training, and knowledge exchange across sectors and countries are essential to strengthen cooperative governance and ensure equitable participation.

At the global level, dialogue and coordination on water within the UN needs to be strengthened. Organizing regular intergovernmental meetings on water within the UN, initiated by the 2026 Water Conference, is of paramount importance. Moreover, effective coordination and coherence in the UN's work on water should be ensured through the swift implementation of the UN System-wide Strategy on Water and Sanitation and its Implementation Plan coordinated by a strengthened UN-Water.

The UN Special Envoy on Water has an important role in raising awareness about water challenges and effective response actions, including on transboundary waters and the benefits of cooperation. Synergies between sectors can be strengthened by close cooperation between the Special Envoy and UN-Water, as well as other UN Special Envoys and Special Rapporteurs ensuring visibility for water across relevant UN processes.

### **Scientific Cooperation**

Research, innovation, and data and knowledge sharing at all levels are essential to implement IWRM. Collection, analysis and use of sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated data (SADDD) on water use and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) access is critical to ensure that programming is data-driven, knowledge-based and responsive to diverse needs. Shared monitoring systems and joint data platforms can enhance transparency and cooperative decision-making across borders.

Effective and collaborative water management should be based on multidisciplinary science-policy cooperation, to ensure decisions including on shared water resources, are guided by sound science, mutual trust and equity. The Conference should serve as a platform to strengthen science-policy cooperation and knowledge-based decision-making, including Indigenous science. Nexus approaches and the work of science-policy platforms, such as IPBES (notably the recent nexus report), the IPCC, UNESCO's Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme and the newly established Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution, should be promoted and water more closely incorporated into their work-streams. Co-development of innovative solutions within and across countries and sectors, including shared digital tools and early warning systems, should be encouraged to support cooperative water management.

International cooperation is essential to align water research agendas and policies across sectors and countries. Promotion of scientific cooperation, data sharing and alignment are cornerstones of international water cooperation. Sharing of best available knowledge and practices and global implementation of affordable innovative solutions is of importance, including Indigenous and traditional knowledge.

Science diplomacy and international collaboration must be advanced by promoting scientific integrity, global responsibility, and the protection of researchers at risk, while upholding scientific freedom, democracy and human rights. Effective and problem-targeted international research collaboration requires stable and enhanced long-term structures, such as established international partnerships and funding frameworks/mechanisms. Collaboration between researchers, universities and the private sector increases the impact of knowledge, innovation and technology in delivering solutions. Strengthening these structures also reinforces water as a platform for cooperation, supporting peace, sustainable development, and regional resilience.

## **V. Recommendations and conclusions (2000 words)**

- Create enabling legal, policy and institutional environments as well as economic, financial and political incentives for cooperation, across borders and sectors.

- Facilitate a high-level discussion around the interlinkages and opportunities between water, peace and security, and provide more capacity building for negotiating agreements for shared water resources, as well as to mediate in water-related conflicts.
- Encourage signature of new operational arrangements for the transboundary basins of rivers and lakes, as well as for transboundary aquifer systems and wetlands.
- Improve the governance framework for transboundary water cooperation in existing agreements between riparian States so that they are better able to respond to changing pressures, such as climate change. Develop climate-resilient management and investment plans at the basin level;
- Encourage new accessions to the UN Water Conventions at the 2026 UN Water Conference increasing the number of parties to the Convention in all regions of the globe, with increased awareness raising on the benefits of membership, leading to further accessions after the Conference.
- Engage science to help expand the evidence base on benefits of transboundary water cooperation, among others through inclusive governance.
- Promote and share experience about cross-sectoral WEFE nexus solutions that create synergies between sectors, enhance overall resource security and sustainability while minimizing trade-offs. Showcase illustrative examples about feasible cross-sectoral solutions reconciling competing water demands (e.g. agriculture, energy, ecosystems)
- Strengthen existing financing mechanisms and promote innovative financial instruments to support inclusive governance, transboundary water cooperation and science-policy interfaces. Examples include water stewardship action of private sector in order to ensure their sustainable and fair water use throughout their international value chains.
- Increase financing from all sources for transboundary water cooperation, strengthen the financial sustainability of transboundary basin organizations, and increase public and private investments across sectors in transboundary basins, which combine regional and national benefits, such as investments in joint investment plans, cooperative infrastructure, and nature-based solutions.
- Involve all stakeholders through partnerships and coalitions to advance scientific cooperation and support transboundary cooperation and action on water, including by mobilizing the Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition launched at the UN 2023 Water Conference and supporting other platforms such as the Global Network of Women in Water Diplomacy.
- Strengthen the representation, participation, and influence of women, Indigenous, and young water experts and decision-makers in water resources management, water diplomacy and transboundary water cooperation.
- Enhance capacity at all levels to manage shared water resources in an integrated, sustainable and inclusive manner by increasing education and training, as well as through

technical assistance and the sharing of best practices. Promote regional capacity-building programs, particularly on WEFE nexus.

- Set up robust information systems and mechanisms for data exchange.
- Promote the use of innovative information systems, such as remote sensing, satellite imagery data and AI, which offer opportunities for neutral, reliable and transparent data and information gathering and sharing.

#### VI. **Guiding questions** (1000 words)

- What more can be done to promote accession to the UN water conventions and what barriers or concerns prevent countries from joining or implementing the UN Water Conventions?
- How can science help in advocating the benefits of transboundary water cooperation and demonstrating the costs of non-cooperation? What other tools can we use?
- What are the pathways for a more effective uptake of science, technologies and innovative solutions, citizens' science and Indigenous knowledge into policies and decision-making?
- What are best practices in ensuring equitable and meaningful participation of all stakeholders, including marginalized groups in water governance, including at transboundary level?
- What joint monitoring systems or data sharing approaches/solutions are needed to support evidence-based decision-making?
- Which innovative financial instruments could mobilize resources for improving water management across sectors and for transboundary water cooperation, e.g. from the private sector and climate funds?
- Which innovative solutions or technologies can address challenges of sharing water in transboundary basins and/or across sectors? How can such cooperative solutions be promoted?

## **2026 United Nations Water Conference**

### **Interactive Dialogue 5 – Water in Multilateral Processes**

#### **I. Introduction (500 words)**

The 2023 UN Water Conference, only the second in the history of the UN, and held 46 years after the first in 1977 in Mar del Plata, brought the much needed attention to water, and created a strong political momentum for water governance. It pointed to the need for a less fragmented and more effective multilateral governance on water, including a more strategic approach of the UN on water, and enhanced integration of water-related priorities in relevant multilateral processes.

As a result, the UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation has been adopted and the new UN Special Envoy on Water has been appointed as a strong international voice on water.

However, further steps are necessary to address the needs and deficits identified. Therefore, the momentum from 2023 needs to be maintained at the UN Water Conference 2026 in order to further strengthen the structures and processes for effective global cooperation on water.

#### **II. Status and trends (1000 words)**

Addressing water challenges requires effective multi-level governance. But in the meantime, fragmented governance from the local to the global level persists. The cross-cutting nature of water calls for its systematic integration at all levels, into all sectors and in all global processes, yet this remains a serious challenge.

At the same time, while the water-related challenges are increasing and accelerating, there are no regular UN Water Conferences with agreed outcomes so far, and with the 2030 Agenda coming to an end, there is currently no perspective for an agreed monitoring mechanism beyond 2030. All these factors are undermining the global water agenda and hindering progress on the ground.

The follow up since the 2023 conference clearly demonstrates the intention of UN Member States to continue the intergovernmental discussion in providing strategic guidance to the UN system for the achievement of the SDG6, with the mandate for the 2026 UN Water Conference to Accelerate the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6 and

another UN Conference on the Final Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028. However, beyond 2026 and 2028, there is no mandated UN Conference on water where UN Member States and stakeholders come together at high political level to jointly promote and accelerate global water action.

Following the 2023 Conference, first steps towards strengthened water governance were taken at the UN level: a UN System-wide Strategy was adopted in July 2024, followed by its Implementation Plan in July 2025; a UN Special Envoy on Water was appointed in October 2024. Yet, these were only first steps. Fragmentation, inefficiency and lack of coordination prevail and call for urgent action. Amidst the prevailing global water and climate crises, intergovernmental responses and joint solutions are more needed than ever.

**III. Challenges and emerging issues** (2000 words): This section will highlight challenges and opportunities relating to the topics addressed in the interactive dialogue, particularly those that have emerged or become more urgent since the 2023 Water Conference. This section will also identify interlinkages and synergies between the relevant SDG 6 targets and other SDGs.

There is a pressing need for a strategic, coordinated and less fragmented global water agenda in the context of the SDGs and beyond, building on existing mechanisms, work streams and processes under the UN Water Conventions, as well as under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Ramsar Convention.

To effectively tackle the interconnected crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, it is essential to recognize water as a unifying element across these domains. Water connects ecosystems, sustains biodiversity, and is both a victim and vector of climate impacts and pollution.

Encouraging the swift implementation of the UN System-wide Strategy on Water and Sanitation and its Implementation Plan, as well as the strengthening of UN-Water within the UN system is essential. These measures are not only important to improve UN assistance to Member States, but with their goal of stronger synergies and efficiency they are also crucial in achieving the objectives of UN80 in the context of water and sanitation. Enhanced engagement of UN-Water with the UN Regional Economic Commissions and the UN development system’s country-level support, as foreseen in the Global SDG 6 Acceleration Framework, is considered essential.

The 2026 UN Water Conference should also initiate reflections on global water governance in the post-2030 context. Discussions should address possibilities for joint action and long-term commitments beyond 2030, also considering ongoing restructuring processes within the UN and growing geopolitical complexities. Exploring possible avenues for, and mainstreaming of water in multilateral processes under different post-2030 scenarios, is a priority.

- IV. **Solutions** (2000 words): This section will offer action-oriented, innovative, and pragmatic solutions to challenges. It will shine a spotlight on impactful initiatives, programs and projects from around the world that can be scaled up and/or transferred to other contexts. Potential partnerships among Member States and with other stakeholders will feature prominently.

An intergovernmental process on water structured through regular UN conferences, initiated by the UN 2026 Water Conference, is necessary to provide strategic political guidance on the global water agenda and to the UN system. It would provide a forum for Member States and stakeholders to identify priorities, accelerate implementation of international water-related goals, guiding cooperation beyond 2030.

These UN Conferences should:

- 1) Be organized at a high-political level;
- 2) Be clearly mandated in a way that allows for focused discussions and the building of joint ambitions among Member States;
- 3) Include processes that allow the Conferences to be organized in an inclusive, cross-sectoral and action-oriented manner to ensure meaningful implementation in practice and closely involving all relevant stakeholders;
- 4) Provide direction to the necessary action and cooperation among Member States and stakeholders within the UN system through negotiated outcomes;

These regular UN Water Conferences should identify common priorities and actions to accelerate the implementation of the human rights to water and sanitation and international water-related goals and targets, including beyond 2030. They would provide a forum for Member States and stakeholders to discuss challenges and provide guidance to galvanize necessary action for the global water agenda, contributing to the mainstreaming of water across global political agendas in order to tackle the triple planetary crisis. These regular Conferences should allow for the promotion of solutions to pressing issues such as the fulfillment of the human rights to water and sanitation for all, sustainable funding mechanisms to bridge the water financing gap, integrated water resources planning and management, effective transboundary water cooperation to better address challenges of climate resilience, the role of water in maintaining peace and stability, and other pressing

challenges. Therefore, it should be supported that the 2026 Water Conference leads to the establishment of a UN intergovernmental process on water, with regular conferences and negotiated outcomes, and at least to an agreement on the next comprehensive UN Water Conference, for example in 2031.

Joint efforts are required to strengthen multilateral governance, ensuring that water-related priorities are systematically integrated into relevant multilateral processes.

Securing and strengthening the coordination within the UN system and the role of UN-Water in this, embedding the new UN Special Envoy on Water in processes in a useful way, and linking the UN Regional Economic Commissions and the UN development system's country-level support into this work are essential steps. Building upon existing conventions and global frameworks ensures continuity while reducing fragmentation. In addition, budgetary matters should be therefore considered, particularly with regard to UN80 negotiations.

Encouragement should be put on fostering inclusive, cross-sectoral, and action-oriented approaches to organizing UN Water Conferences. Such approaches will enhance cooperation between governments, civil society, and other stakeholders, ensuring that global political attention is translated into concrete actions.

#### **V. Recommendations and conclusions (2000 words)**

- Establishment of a UN intergovernmental process on water with regular UN Water Conferences with negotiated outcomes. IAD 5 to provide suggestions and a proposed timeline for implementing this process.
- Support a follow-up resolution of the UN 2026 Water Conference to make use of the momentum created.
- Encourage a formal dialogue between UN Special Envoy on Water with other UN Special Envoys and Special Rapporteurs on devising effective ways for mainstreaming freshwater issues into other global processes.
- Support strengthening of UN-Water from technical coordination to policy impact.
- Promote meaningful civil society involvement and the inclusion of UN Major Groups and other stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of conclusions of the Conference to enhance impact-oriented action.

#### **VI. Guiding questions (1000 words)**

- How can multilateral water governance be strengthened to ensure coherent integration of water priorities across all relevant UN processes?

- How could an intergovernmental process built around regular UN Water Conferences be structured, and what functions should it serve? What role should UN-Water and its members play within such a process?
- How can we ensure a holistic and cross-sectoral consideration of the role of water in all three dimensions of sustainable development post 2030 and in overarching international agendas? How can this be done to avoid creating another silo?
- How can existing indicators, milestones, and reporting mechanisms be leveraged to ensure effective implementation, monitoring, and accountability of global water-related goals (beyond 2030)?
- How do we see water positioned in a post-2030 Agenda, in the context of the UN80 reforms?
- How might outcomes from UN Water Conferences feed effectively into broader UN decision-making and global policy frameworks?
- Which role could regular UN Water Conferences play in the realization of international goals on water and in promoting the implementation of joint multilateral ambitions/solutions?
- What would be useful scientific, technical and political inputs/background documents for such conferences?
- How can we mainstream water better in other international processes, such as the Rio conventions?
- What mechanisms could safeguard inclusivity, ensure meaningful engagement of civil society, private sector actors, Indigenous Peoples and balanced participation of all relevant stakeholders?
- How can we improve donor coordination at the global level (and linked to existing country-level coordination) to enhance alignment and effectiveness of financial and technical assistance and leverage other forms of public and private engagement?

**2026 United Nations Water Conference**  
**Interactive Dialogue 6 – Investment for Water**

**I. Introduction (500 words)**

Efforts to address the considerable financing gap in water and sanitation through improved management efficiency, improved cost recovery, better targeting of the use of investments, adequate water pricing and ensuring a sustainable, innovative, and inclusive additional and diversified sources of funding should be welcomed. This must go hand in hand with updating targeting, fostering the effective use of existing funding and financial instruments, and mainstreaming sustainable water management into other policy areas. Strengthening a diverse water and sanitation workforce is the foundation for impactful investment and the successful scaling of technology and innovation.

**II. Status and trends (1000 words)**

Investments in water and sanitation bring high economic and social benefits, given the environmental, climate and health-related risks of poor water management. Therefore, investments must be planned in an integrated manner, by addressing all components of the global water cycle and all stages of water and wastewater management, and desalination as a last resort after exhaustion of demand reduction, water-efficiency, and reuse measures, making efforts to reduce its environmental and energy-related impacts, while factoring in future climate scenarios and related risk assessments. Financing and investments for water remains a significant challenge. As of late 2024, only 8.9% of total official development assistance was allocated to water supply and sanitation sectors, according to the OECD.

Investments in efficient governance of the sector and management of the operations (e.g. assets management, costs management or digital monitoring), the deployment of effective tools to better target the use of funding, incl. subsidies, and the development of adequate cost recovery and water pricing strategies are critical to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the sector. Delivering on global water-related goals, including SDG 6, requires a robust enabling environment, as articulated in the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework. This includes not only sufficient and accessible financing but also timely, disaggregated data and information systems, cutting-edge technology and innovation,

strengthened institutional and human capacities, and inclusive and effective governance for accelerating progress.

Through initiatives such as the Global Gateway, private sector engagement is mobilized, including via the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD+). The European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, together with other multilateral development banks, have committed to increase financing for water security and reinforce cooperation<sup>1</sup>.

III. **Challenges and emerging issues** (2000 words): This section will highlight challenges and opportunities relating to the topics addressed in the interactive dialogue, particularly those that have emerged or become more urgent since the 2023 Water Conference. This section will also identify interlinkages and possible synergies between the relevant SDG 6 targets and other SDGs.

This dialogue should also aim to increase the understanding and assessments of how water-related risks can translate in financial risks, in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and growing water demands, as a key component to ensure sustainable investments in water in particular from private sectors or national and multilateral development banks etc.

There is a considerable financing gap in water and sanitation, which requires sustainable, innovative, and inclusive approaches to address, alongside an enabling environment characterized by strengthened sector governance, enhanced stakeholder capacity, clear mandates, and the ability to make sustainable decisions—including on long-term sector financing and cost recovery. Significant scale-up investments in nature-based solutions are needed. Mobilizing private sector engagement and using Development Finance Institutions to catalyze investments are central.

The World Bank report “Funding a water secure future”, underlines that beyond low funding, the sector faces low budgetary execution, significant inefficiencies leading to hidden monetary losses and stark disparities in funding incl. subsidies for households.

It is necessary to use a variety of economic mechanisms, including devising efficient and well targeted funding schemes, improving cost recovery and appropriate pricing of water uses, without compromising the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, especially for those living in conditions of poverty and vulnerability.

The debate around technology and innovation needs to focus on those technologies, that increase efficiency of a sustainable water-use and management and have the best leverage regarding implementation and deployment. This could touch upon various areas, such as

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<sup>1</sup> See the **European Water Resilience Strategy**

the combination of grey and green infrastructure, nature-based solutions and desalination that respects the “Do no Significant Harm Principle” - as a last resort after exhaustion of demand reduction, water-efficiency and reuse measures, or digital public infrastructure. These are particularly critical in regions where vulnerable societies are severely affected by water scarcity driven by climate change or unsustainable water use practices or insufficient water infrastructures. It is equally important to consider the needed time and investment for capacity building for water professionals to align with climate and environmental goals while contributing to resilient societies and human rights.

- IV. **Solutions** (2000 words): This section will offer action-oriented, innovative, and pragmatic solutions to challenges. It will shine a spotlight on impactful initiatives, programs and projects from around the world that can be scaled up and/or transferred to other contexts. Potential partnerships among Member States and with other stakeholders will feature prominently.

Commitments to fund water and sanitation infrastructure and nature-based solutions from both private and public sources of funding, including the needed workforce capacity, improving the operation and performance of existing systems, and nature-based solutions, from private and public sources of funding are encouraged.

This dialogue should also recall that adequate and inclusive local governance of water, based on participation of all sectors and actors, supported by coherent and integrated water planning and multi-sectorial policies at the national level, are essential to provide an enabling environment for water investments. The OECD Water governance initiative through its principles and work on finance would be an important partner.

Focus should be on means to *leave no one behind* and allow equal and universal access to water and sanitation by developing innovative new technologies and non-technical approaches. Implementing a multi-stakeholder approach is central to ensure appropriate local governance in the use of technologies, ensuring sustainable access to water resources for all.

Valuing water, devising efficient and well targeted subsidy schemes, improving cost recovery, and developing adequate water pricing are key.

We believe exchange of knowledge, experiences and good practices, notably on water operators governance and management are substantial to achieve SDG 6 worldwide. We should commit to stimulate dialogue and exchange of knowledge, information and data between different multi-sectoral scientific, technical and professional networks.

At the same time, the debate should focus on how to promote investments in innovative financially accessible technologies can be stimulated, e.g. by using new digital tools, and to increase impact and deployment.

**V. Recommendations and conclusions (2000 words)**

- Strengthen capacity building programmes, e.g. public-private partnerships, technology transfers, innovation, awareness raising and knowledge sharing on ways to attract and retain a diverse workforce, and the elevation of existing initiatives.
- Enhance new public-private cooperation to ensure diversification of funding sources.
- Sharing practices on appropriate water-pricing, which will not compromise the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation.
- Scaling up coalitions supporting technology implementation in water governance, policy and planning (for instance spatial technologies, water efficiency technology)
- Supporting and scaling up initiatives enabling coordinated approach at national level on water and sanitation access and resource management, to catalyze coherent investments (with national development banks, public-private partnerships, SWA head of state initiative etc.).
- Scaling up investments in cost-effective and sustainable nature-based solutions and climate-resilient infrastructure
- Promote solutions to adequately implement the global acceleration framework for SDG6 (financing, data and information, capacity development, innovation and governance).
- Link investments to structural reforms, including stronger governance of utilities, life-cycle based investment planning, and integration with national water financing frameworks.
- Safeguard affordability of water services. Investment strategies should incorporate tariff and subsidy systems that guarantee long-term reinvestment capacity without sharp price increases, while protecting vulnerable households through targeted social protection mechanisms.
- Strengthen resilience and crisis preparedness. Water investments should systematically include risk assessments and preparedness measures for climate extremes, pollution accidents, and supply disruptions, including back-up systems and alternative sources of water.
- Enhance cybersecurity and digital resilience. As water and sanitation are essential services, investment frameworks must also prioritize cybersecurity, protection of digital infrastructure, and workforce training to prevent and respond to cyberattacks on water utilities.

**VI. Guiding questions (1000 words)**

- How can local and national stakeholders better understand and address the factors contributing to financing and service delivery gaps, such as enabling environments, sector governance, cost recovery, water pricing, effective and well targeted use of subsidies and local capacity?
- How to ensure an overview of available water resources and existing infrastructure, for actors to adequately identify national water priorities and develop a cross-sectoral water-planning adequately?
- How can investments in the water sector be systematically linked to structural reforms and governance improvements rather than fragmented, short-term infrastructure projects?
- What mechanisms can ensure that affordability of water services is safeguarded in the long term, while enabling utilities to reinvest and maintain financial sustainability?
- How should risk assessments and crisis preparedness (including droughts, floods, contamination incidents, and supply disruptions) be integrated into all water investment strategies?
- What are effective approaches to strengthen the cybersecurity and digital resilience of water and wastewater utilities, given their role as essential services?
- How can digital innovation (smart metering, AI, remote sensing, open data platforms) be developed and implemented not only to improve efficiency but also to reinforce transparency, resilience, and security in the water sector?
- What are the constraints on the ground for implementing the innovations needed locally?
- How can an inclusive, gender-responsive, and human-right based approach be ensured in national water planning and investments?
- How to support the financial sector and donors in identifying the national needs in an integrated manner and to ensure the adequate coordination between these investments?
- What support can provide the UN resident coordinator to bridge the gap between the various needs in the water-sector?
- What information is needed to better assess the financial risks in water-investments?