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2026 UN Water Conference: Expression of Interest by Germany to co-chair Interactive Dialogue 5 „Water in Multilateral Processes”

- **The Federal Republic of Germany expresses its interest to co-chair Interactive Dialogue 5 “Water in Multilateral Processes”.**
- **The co-chair will be assumed by H.E. Carsten Schneider, German Federal Minister for the Environment, Climate Action, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety.**

We believe that the Interactive Dialogue 5 “Water in Multilateral Processes” (IAD 5) can be a central instrument to strengthen the role of water as a fundamental resource for development and sustainability at the multilateral level. While we are witnessing a growing water crisis across the world, existing structures of international cooperation are under scrutiny. There is a clear need to transform our instruments and discuss cooperative water and sanitation solutions for all. This includes the implementation of SDG 6 and the 2030 Agenda, but also considerations beyond 2030 and the catalytic role of water in all three dimensions of sustainable development. Building on the achievements since 2023, the 2026 UN Water Conference should not be an interim step, but a real milestone that moves water at the multilateral level forward.

Building on our strong track record on the topic of global water governance and our experience from the Bonn Water Dialogue Process, Germany stands ready to support Senegal and the United Arab Emirates in their work on an ambitious, successful conference. We offer to continue our engagement by co-chairing Interactive Dialogue 5 “Water in Multilateral Processes” in an ambitious, reliable and inclusive way, to provide guidance, recommendations and flagship initiatives to a strengthened position of water in multilateral processes.

In the following, we outline the (I) potential framing and guiding questions, our (II) ambition for an inclusive preparatory process and (III) ideas for potential deliverables. Overall, we aspire a close cooperation with the conference co-hosts, the other co-chairs of the Interactive Dialogues, as well as UN DESA, UN-Water and the UN Special Envoy on Water, to ensure a coordinated approach and overall coherence with key actors.

I. Framing and guiding questions

Global water governance is highly fragmented. While a multitude of forums and organisations inside and outside the UN system work on water and sanitation challenges, they often treat it as a sub-topic within their work and/or look at it from single-issue perspectives. Unlike for other topics, there is no dedicated overarching intergovernmental coordination for water under the UN, mandated by UN Member States. Such coordination in a comprehensive and integrated manner at the political level is needed to address the water crisis’ global dimension. This would also enable the water and sanitation sector to act upon and contribute to overcoming other global challenges. Finally, against the backdrop of the UN80 initiative, it would strengthen accountability and efficiency in water-related UN processes.

Furthermore, sustainable management of freshwater and sanitation through SDG 6 and other water-related goals and targets are vital elements of the entire 2030 Agenda. With only five years left until the end of the 2030 Agenda, first considerations need to be given on how a holistic approach to water as well as the valuable monitoring and implementation structures under SDG 6 can be safeguarded for any potential post-2030 development objectives or framework. In the meantime, a global vision on water needs to take into account adjacent processes and target frameworks that include water aspects, e.g. stemming from the Rio Conventions and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), or other relevant UN processes.

Potential guiding questions for Interactive Dialogue 5:

- How can multilateral water governance under the UN be strengthened in-line with the objectives of the UN80 initiative to ensure coherent integration of water priorities across all relevant UN processes, incl. climate change, biodiversity, food security, pollution, land degradation, etc.? What are short, medium and long-term steps in that regard?
- 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, and the UN Special Envoy on Water play within such a process?
- How can we amplify the voices of particularly vulnerable countries and communities, and include their perspectives effectively in a global water process?
- How can existing indicators, milestones, and reporting mechanisms be leveraged to ensure effective implementation, monitoring, and accountability of global goals related to water and sanitation, also beyond 2030?
- How can the water sector ignite a better alignment and coordination for UN Members States in terms of review, monitoring and reporting to different multilateral processes?
- How can Member States and other stakeholders work together to ensure water remains on top of the agenda in global policy discussions, especially in the face of new and evolving global challenges?

II. Ambition for an inclusive preparatory process

As a co-chair of Interactive Dialogue 5, we plan to advocate for an ambitious, transparent and inclusive preparatory process. Represented by H.E. Carsten Schneider, Germany plans to champion its engagement through:

- **Actively engaging and supporting**, from appointment until December 2026, the **preparatory process for the 2026 UN Water Conference** and in this regard ensuring **personal participation of H.E. Schneider** at the **Dakar Preparatory Meeting** on 26-27 January 2026 as well as at the **UN Water Conference** in the United Arab Emirates on 2-4 December 2026.
- **Actively contributing** to the following **milestone events**: 7th UN Environment Assembly, Dushanbe High-level International Conference 2026, High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development 2026, Stockholm World Water Week 2026, as well as potentially further multilateral events.
- **Mobilize engagement, collect perspectives and facilitate inclusive dialogue** between representatives of UN Member States, relevant stakeholders and civil society, to base the recommendations from Interactive Dialogue 5 on wide variety of voices.
- **Actively engage** in possible **political follow-up** dialogue to the UN 2026 Water Conference.

Beyond this engagement, Germany is willing to raise the ambition as co-chair for Interactive Dialogue 5 through one or more of the following elements:

- **Open consultations** with **UN Member States, relevant stakeholders and civil society**, for example through an online format or on the sidelines of international events.
- Together with the co-chair, create **additional opportunities** for **dialogue and input** by UN Member States, relevant stakeholders, civil society, etc.) to **collect and discuss central messages** that can build a basis to feed into the summary of IAD 5.
- **Continuous exchange** with the Conference co-hosts and other co-chairs to take into account developments and ideas of the work in other IADs. We would welcome a regular exchange among all co-chairs and the co-hosts
- Develop new and/or consolidate and shape existing initiatives, e.g. taking into consideration the Water Action Agenda, that can serve as **selected flagship initiatives for IAD 5** (*cf. Chapter III*) to ensure high impact and increased collaboration between different actors, rather than collecting many fragmented commitments.
- **Support diplomatic efforts** by the co-hosts of the conference for the possibility to table a **follow-up resolution on the 2026 UN Water Conference**.

III. Potential deliverables

As co-chair, we see our role in facilitating discussions between UN Member States and stakeholders that lead to tangible outcomes with high impact. Aspired outcomes for an ambitious UN Water Conference, guided by Interactive Dialogue 5, could be:

- **Establishment of an intergovernmental process on water under the UN** based on **regular UN Water Conferences with negotiated outcomes**. IAD 5 is to provide suggestions and a proposed timeline for implementing this process.
- **Timely follow-up resolution** to the 2026 UN Water Conference to ensure an initial mandate.
- **Identify the role of UN-Water** in supporting an intergovernmental process with regular UN Water conferences.
- Promote **meaningful civil society involvement** and the **inclusion of UN Major Groups and other stakeholders** in the preparation and implementation of conclusions of the Interactive Dialogue and Conference to enhance impact-oriented action.
- Encourage a formal **dialogue between UN Special Envoy on Water and other UN Special Envoys and Special Rapporteurs** on devising effective ways for mainstreaming freshwater and sanitation issues into other global processes.