



**UN**  
**2023 WATER**  
**CONFERENCE**

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## **Historic UN conference marks watershed moment to tackle global water crisis and ensure water-secure future**

**New York, United States, 24 March** – The UN 2023 Water Conference in New York culminated today with a breakthrough response to the global water crisis, with governments, businesses and civil society committing billions of dollars to advance the water agenda, a dealmaker for accelerating sustainable development overall.

Some 10,000 participants gathered at UN Headquarters and online from 22 to 24 March 2023, to urgently scale up action to address the water crisis and ensure equitable access to water for all. Co-hosted by the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Republic of Tajikistan, the Conference brought together world leaders, civil society, business leaders, young people, scientists, academics, the UN System and others from across sectors — agriculture, energy, environment and water — around a common goal: to urgently tackle the water crisis and set the world back on track to achieving [Sustainable Development Goal 6 – On Clean Water and Sanitation](#).

“The commitments at this Conference will propel humanity towards the water-secure future every person on the planet needs,” noted UN Secretary-General António Guterres at the closing ceremony.

To achieve this, the Secretary-General highlighted key game-changers: from reinforcing water’s place as a fundamental human right and reducing the pressures on the hydrological system, to developing new, alternative food systems to reduce the unsustainable use of water in food production and agriculture and designing and implementing a new global water information system to guide plans and priorities by 2030.

The Secretary-General also advocated for integrating the approach on water, ecosystems and climate to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen communities — from resilient infrastructure, water pipelines and wastewater treatment plans, to ensuring every person in the world is protected with early warning systems against natural disasters by 2027; and continued to press for climate justice and global action to limit global warming to a 1.5-degree rise. Lastly, he called for a dramatic acceleration in resources and investment into the ability of all countries to reach SDG 6.

### **UN 2023 Water Conference – A watershed moment for the SDGs**

Access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene is the most basic human need for health and well-being, and a declared human right. But some 2 billion people around the world still lack access to safe drinking water and 40 per cent of the world’s population are affected by water scarcity. Agriculture demands alone account for some 70% of water usage. Adding to the pressure, more than 90 per cent of disasters are water-related, with climate change hitting hardest through water. And humanity’s demand for water keeps growing, with pressure on freshwater projected to increase by more than 40 per cent by 2050.

Against this background, conference deliberations ranged from the urgency of the water crisis, including its role in forced migration, climate change and conflicts to stressing its critical link to good health, poverty reduction and food security. Attention was also given to solutions, with deliberations spanning the need for better data collection, enhanced governance systems, capacity development opportunities and funding gaps in the water sector. With financing needs at between US\$182 to more than US\$600 billion annually, the importance of unlocking financing and innovative funding schemes, calling for new innovations and investments at scale in the water economy was also underscored.

### **Transformative Water Action Agenda**

Responding to this, the Water Action Agenda, the key outcome of the Conference, captured over 700 commitments aimed at driving transformation from a global water crisis to a water-secure world. The agenda represents the global community's bold resolve to address the water challenges through a more coordinated and results-driven approach (see select list of commitments below). A number of other follow-up steps are also under consideration – including the appointment of a Special Envoy on Water.

The conference outcomes will also receive concrete follow-up in three key upcoming Summits: the SDG Summit during the UN General Assembly in September 2023, the Summit of the Future in 2024, the World Social Summit in 2025, and through the annual High-level political forum on sustainable development, Conference of Parties and other United Nations processes, as well as the Dushanbe Water Process.

“At the 2023 UN Water Conference a determined global community came together to make a difference not only for the future of water but for the future of the world,” said Mr. Li Junhua, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and Conference Secretary-General.

“I hope that the energy we experienced at this Conference will flow on to the SDG Summit in September when the world gathers together to advance the transformative actions that we need, to realize all SDGs, and secure a sustainable future for everyone, everywhere, on a healthy planet.”

### **Snapshot of Commitments**

#### **Member States**

- The US announced a commitment of up to \$49 billion in investments to support climate-resilient water and sanitation infrastructure and services.
- Japan will proactively contribute to the solution of water-related social issues faced by the Asia-Pacific region by developing “quality Infrastructure”, providing financial assistance worth approximately 500 billion yen (\$3.65 billion) over the next five years.
- Vietnam pledged to develop policies for major river basins management by 2025 and to ensure all households would have access to clean running water by 2030.
- Switzerland submitted 5 commitments to contribute to the UN's work, including in the areas of the Water Convention and transboundary cooperation. Switzerland is the co-chair of the Interactive Dialogue on Water for Cooperation.
- The Niger Basin Authority (NBA) and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV) made a joint commitment of \$21.2 million in funding for a project that strengthens the Niger Basin Authority (NBA) and its member countries.
- The Government of Mozambique committed to taking all necessary steps to accelerate achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 by 2030 with investments of \$9.5 billion.

- With the Continental Africa Investment Programme (AIP), the African Union Commission aims to close Africa's water investments gap by mobilising at least US\$30 billion/year by 2030 through a range of initiatives, including the International High-Level Panel on Water Investments for Africa.
- By 2030, the EU aims to support the access of 70 million individuals to an improved drinking water source and/or sanitation facility. The EU will also support Member States with €20 million funding to accelerate the deployment of wastewater surveillance for COVID-19.
- More than 50 leading global companies unite to make collective commitment to SDG 6.

#### **Multilateral Banks**

- The Asian Development Bank commits to investing \$11 billion dollars in the water sector in the Asia-Pacific Region and \$100 billion to the water sector globally by 2030.

#### **Private Sector**

- Starbucks, Ecolab, Gap Inc., Reckitt and DuPont joined forces with U.S. Government to invest nearly \$140 million in Water Access Fund with the goal of reaching 5 million people with access to water, sanitation and hygiene.
- DANONE is launching a water acceleration blending fund to give daily safe water access to 30 million people in need.
- Xylem and 16 other companies commit \$11 billion dollars in Research and Development.
- World Benchmarking Alliance has pledged to assess 1,000 global companies across 22 industries on their impact towards achieving water-related goals every two years to help close the corporate accountability gap.

#### **NGOs**

- World Vision committed to raising and investing \$2 billion by 2030 to extend the impact of transformative water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services work across 50 countries in six regions.

*Note: All Water Action Agenda commitments are posted [here](#).*

#### **Key Links**

- UN 2023 Water Conference [website](#)
- Expert list for media is available [here](#)

#### **Social Media**

Please follow any highlights and updates for the UN 2023 Water Conference using the main hashtag #WaterAction.

**On Facebook:** [United Nations](#), [Global GoalsUN](#), [DESA](#) | **On Twitter:** [@UN](#), [@GlobalGoalsUN](#), [@UNDESA](#)

#### **Media Contacts (Interviews available upon request)**

UN Department of Global Communications | Francyne Harrigan | [harriganf@un.org](mailto:harriganf@un.org)  
 UN Department of Global Communications | Sharon Birch | [birchs@un.org](mailto:birchs@un.org)