

Expression of Interest to Co-Chair Interactive Dialogue 5

I. Introduction

Water is at the heart of sustainable development and lies at the centre of global efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) - *ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all* - is both a standalone objective and a critical enabler for the achievement of all other SDGs, including those related to health, food security, energy, gender equality and climate resilience. Recognizing the interconnected and cross-cutting nature of water, multilateral cooperation has emerged as an essential driver of progress toward SDG 6 implementation and beyond.

Since 2015, the international community has made important advances to better address water-related issues throughout the 2030 Agenda and other major multilateral processes and initiatives, including the three Rio Conventions (UNFCCC, CBD, UNCCD) and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, among others. The adoption of the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development,” 2018-2028, which was initiated by Tajikistan, bolstered the critical role of water across the 2030 Agenda covering all three dimensions of sustainable development and provided a political platform for the discussion of water issues by Member States and stakeholders.

In this regard, Tajikistan is honoured to express its strong interest in co-chairing Interactive Dialogue 5 of the 2026 UN Water Conference, titled: "Water in Multilateral Processes: Sustainable Development Goal 6, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Beyond, and Global Water Initiatives", to be held in the UAE from 2-4 December 2026. As co-host of the UN 2023 Water Conference and host of the UN 2028 Water Conference, Tajikistan can offer a strategic contribution to the 2026 Conference by reinforcing continuity and ensuring linkages between the outcomes of the 2023, 2026 and 2028 UN Conferences on Water.

Should our request be successful, this high-level role will be undertaken by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan H.E. Mr. Sirojiddin Muhriddin.

Tajikistan’s Global Leadership

As a globally recognized champion for the water agenda, Tajikistan has consistently led efforts at the highest multilateral levels for over two decades. This extensive experience directly aligns with the focus of Interactive Dialogue 5 on SDG 6, the 2030 Agenda and beyond and how water is integrated into global, multilateral and intergovernmental processes and frameworks.

At the initiative of Tajikistan, the UN General Assembly has adopted 14 resolutions, establishing landmark international years and decades related to water, climate, and cryosphere preservation, including:

- International Year of Freshwater, 2003
- International Decade for Action, "Water for Life," 2005-2015
- International Year of Water Cooperation, 2013
- International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development," 2018-2028
- International Year of Glacier Preservation, 2025
- Decade of Action for Cryospheric Sciences, 2025-2034

These initiatives have created crucial political momentum, mobilized global coalitions, and driven concrete action to address global water and climate challenges.

Institutional Capacity and Networks

To ensure an inclusive, intersectoral, and action-oriented approach, Tajikistan together with partners have established and actively manage several key institutional mechanisms whose extensive networks will be fully leveraged to support the success of Interactive Dialogue 5:

- The Group of Friends of Water (New York): Comprising of more than 60 UN Member States.
- The International Advisory Committee of the Dushanbe Water Process: A diverse group of approximately 40 officials and leading water experts from governments, UN agencies, multilateral development banks, the private sector, and civil society, ensuring regional, sectoral, and gender balance.
- The International Advisory Board of the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation: A unique body of scientists, practitioners, and officials representing the climate, environment, water, agriculture and other sectors.
- The Ad Hoc Committee of the Decade of Action for Cryospheric Sciences: Bringing together representatives from governments, UN agencies, the scientific community, development banks, etc.

These platforms enable Tajikistan to ensure coherence and complementarity in international efforts and guarantee an inclusive preparatory process for Dialogue 5.

Strategic Contribution via Preparatory Processes

The 4th Dushanbe Water Conference. The Government of Tajikistan will host the 4th Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference in May-June 2026. This event is expected to be a key preparatory event for the 2026 UN Water Conference. It will build on the outcomes from the high-level international meeting that will take place in Dakar from 26 to 27 January 2026. The programme will include a segment dedicated to bridging actions

from the 2023 and 2026 UN Water Conferences. Six thematic sessions will be organized around the six themes of the interactive dialogues of the 2026 UN Water Conference. We will fully utilize this opportunity to contribute to all Interactive Dialogues, specifically Dialogue 5, by planning:

- A dedicated session on Interactive Dialogue 5.
- A dedicated session exploring the role of water in the post-2030 agenda.

The Conference will convene high-level representatives from all major stakeholder groups at a critical midpoint between the Dakar preparatory meeting and the 2026 UN Water Conference, as well as provide a timely input into the 2026 High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in-depth review of SDG 6 that will be held in New York in July.

The UN 2028 Water Conference. As a host of the UN 2028 Water Conference, in accordance with UNGA 77/334 resolution, we will soon start working on the modalities for the UN 2028 Water Conference. This work ensures that the critical need for inclusiveness and a cross-sectoral approach is reflected early and addressed throughout the preparations for both the 2026 and 2028 UN conferences. Initial informal discussions on the themes of the UN 2028 Water Conference Interactive Dialogues and possible outcomes are planned within the framework of the 4th Dushanbe Water Conference, providing a unique opportunity to align the 2026 and 2028 UN conferences.

Key Substantive Priorities for Dialogue 5

Through our co-chairmanship, Tajikistan commits to driving three fundamental and measurable outcomes:

1. *Elevating water as a priority across multilateral processes:* This priority area will explore the current status of water in different multilateral processes and identify opportunities to feature water with greater consistency, coherence, prominence and effectiveness, including in key milestone events such as the 2027 SDG Summit, the Pact for the Future high-level meetings and reviews and various COPs.
2. *Integrating Water into the Climate Agenda:* Our top priority will be advancing the full integration of water issues into national climate planning, particularly in the next updates of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). We aim for concrete outcomes from Dialogue 5 that call for the inclusion of water aspects in the official outcome documents of upcoming COPs.
3. *Defining Water's Place in the Post-2030 Agenda:* We will actively promote the essential role of water by defining its explicit place in the post-2030 global agenda. This includes advancing the discussion on a potential future standalone water goal and ensuring water's full integration into other sectoral goals.

Furthermore, we intend to promote inclusive and intersectoral approaches to ensure that global commitments are effectively translated into action at the local, national, and regional levels. Other initiatives will be developed through robust consultations and stakeholder engagement as part of the preparatory process.

II. Status and Trends

Over the past decade, global attention to water and its interlinkages with sustainable development and climate action has intensified. The international community has recognized that achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6), “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”, is fundamental to realizing the entire 2030 Agenda. Despite progress in some areas, the world remains off track to meet most water-related targets by 2030. Accelerating progress requires strong multilateral cooperation, policy coherence, and integrated approaches that link water management to climate resilience, adaptation, energy security, food systems, biodiversity and human health.

Global and Multilateral Context

Multilateral processes have become indispensable for addressing complex water challenges that transcend national boundaries. The **UN 2023 Water Conference** marked a historic milestone, bringing water to the forefront of the global political agenda for the first time in nearly five decades. The Conference mobilized over 830 commitments under the **Water Action Agenda**, reaffirming that water is not only a development priority but also a foundation for global growth and prosperity. The follow-up **UN General Assembly resolution 77/334** established a new momentum for system-wide coherence, calling for strengthened global water role, enhanced coordination within the UN system, and systematic monitoring of progress toward SDG 6.

Water issues have been increasingly incorporated into the international agendas of sustainable development, climate, biodiversity, desertification and drought, disaster risk reduction, environment and oceans, among others. Some examples include:

- **2030 Agenda and the High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development.** Since 2026, there have been three in-depth reviews of SDG 6. As part of the Decade of Action for the 2030 Agenda, an annual special event on SDG 6 has been convened since 2020. Water was included in the outcome document of the 2023 SDG Summit. Regional Sustainable Development Forums have also provided a regional platform for water dialogue.
- **Summit of the Future.** Water is included in the Pact for the Future outcome document as part of three Actions (6, 10 and 29).

- **Three Rio Conventions.** Since COP26, water has been increasingly visible in UN Climate Conferences of the UNFCCC, particularly in relation to the global goal on adaptation. Targets on climate-resilient water and sanitation are included in the UAE Climate Resilience Framework adopted at COP28. Freshwater ecosystems figure prominently in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) adopted in 2022, including linkages with SDG target 6.6. The discussions on drought and desertification as part of the recent UNCCD COPs have increasing been linked with the global water agenda.
- **Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction.** Water is linked with DRR through the Sendai Framework and SDG Target 11.5 that includes water-related disasters.
- **UN Oceans Conferences.** A Special Event linking freshwater (SDG 6) and oceans (SDG 14) was held at the 2022 UN Oceans Conference.
- **Food Systems Summit.** Water was included as part of the 2021 Global Dialogues to explore the fundamental inter-connections between food systems and water systems.
- **International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development, 2018-2028.** The UN declared 2018-2028 as the Water Action Decade to accelerate efforts to address water-related challenges. The midterm comprehensive review of the Decade provided the mandate for the UN 2023 Water Conference. The final comprehensive review provided the mandate for the UN 2028 Water Conference.
- **International Year of Glaciers' Preservation 2025.** The International Year has emphasized the interlinkages between the climate and water agendas by raising awareness about the global consequences of accelerated melting of glaciers.
- **Decade of Action for Cryospheric Sciences, 2025-2034.** This Decade aims to boost research and global action to protect the cryosphere.

The Role of the Dushanbe Water Process

Within this evolving landscape, the Dushanbe Water Process, launched under the initiative of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, has emerged as a leading multilateral mechanism dedicated to supporting the implementation of the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development,” 2018–2028. The Process provides an inclusive platform for governments, UN entities, international organizations, academia, civil society, and the private sector to regularly exchange experiences, assess progress, and catalyse partnerships for action.

The Dushanbe Water Process serves as a bridge between global and regional efforts. In Central Asia, it complements regional water cooperation efforts under the frameworks of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) and the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program. It offers a mechanism to prepare for major

international milestones. The series of Dushanbe Water Conferences, held biennially since 2018, have become an integral part of the global water architecture, supporting the implementation of the International Decade for Action and providing valuable input to the UN system and Member States.

Building on this foundation, the Dushanbe Water Process is also making a substantial contribution to the preparations for the UN 2026 Water Conference, co-hosted by the United Arab Emirates and Senegal. Through its inclusive consultations, thematic meetings, and expert discussions, the Process serves as a key channel for generating substantive inputs, aligning stakeholder priorities, and promoting coherence across all Interactive Dialogues of the 2026 Conference. A preparatory meeting for the 2026 UN Water Conference is scheduled for **26–27 January 2026 in Dakar, Senegal**, where the outcomes of the Dushanbe Water Conference will provide valuable contributions to shaping the agenda and expected results. Tajikistan will continue to work closely with the co-hosts of the 2026 Conference to ensure that the outcomes of the Dushanbe Water Process directly inform the deliberations in 2026 and help lay the groundwork for the UN 2028 Water Conference and beyond.

Through these efforts, the Dushanbe Water Process has positioned Tajikistan as a global convener and bridge-builder on water diplomacy. These efforts not only amplify the voices of **landlocked developing countries (LLDCs)** but also foster cooperation among diverse actors, including Member States, UN agencies, financial institutions, and youth organizations.

Trends and Opportunities

Several important trends are shaping the global water agenda and influencing the work of multilateral processes:

- **Integration of water and climate agendas:** Water is increasingly recognized as a central element in achieving climate resilience. In the context of the UNFCCC, the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience provides an important pathway forward, recognizing water as a key sector and setting water-related targets. The ongoing development of indicators aligned with SDG 6 presents a valuable opportunity for a coherent and integrated approach to water and climate. It also serves as a strong example of how the SDG 6 framework can be effectively leveraged to mainstream water and sanitation across other intergovernmental processes. Initiatives like the Water and Climate Coalition and the Dushanbe Water Process emphasize nature-based solutions, transboundary cooperation, and water-smart adaptation measures.
- **Strengthened global role of water:** The international community is exploring ways to enhance coordination and delivery of water priorities across the UN system. The

appointment of a Special Envoy for Water and the establishment of the UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation illustrate this renewed focus.

- **Gaps in financing and innovation:** Addressing the global water and sanitation gap requires innovative financing models, technology transfer, and stronger engagement of the private sector. Multilateral development banks have committed to strong joint action through enhanced coordination, increased financing and a focus on sustainable water management. The recent 4th International Conference on Financing for Development and G20 Presidency highlighted water as a priority for investment. Global water initiatives, such as the Dushanbe Water Process, offer platforms to connect investors and innovators with local needs.
- **Improved data and monitoring systems:** Reliable data remains a prerequisite for effective decision-making. Multilateral platforms are increasingly investing in joint monitoring systems to track SDG 6 indicators and water-related climate risks.
- **Active, inclusive participation:** The growing engagement of youth, women, and local communities in the 2023 and 2026 UN Water Conferences, Dushanbe Water Process, and other global convenings demonstrate an encouraging trend toward inclusivity and shared responsibility in water issues.

Outlook: Sustained national leadership and multilateral cooperation can generate global impact. Maintaining continuity between successive global UN Water Conferences in 2023, 2026 and 2028 ensures that water will remain a central pillar of multilateral cooperation. As the world approaches 2030, this continuity is essential for preserving momentum, aligning commitments, and translating them into transformative action.

III. Challenges and Emerging Issues

Despite growing international recognition of water as a critical driver of sustainable development, the world remains significantly off track to achieve SDG 6 by 2030. Billions of people still lack access to safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene services. Water scarcity, pollution, climate change, and the increasing frequency of extreme weather events continue to threaten lives, livelihoods, and ecosystems across all regions. At the same time, insufficient financing, and inadequate data hinder coordinated action at the global level.

Against this backdrop, multilateral cooperation on water has become more urgent and complex than ever. The following subsections outline key global and regional challenges, as well as emerging issues that require collective response through inclusive and action-oriented multilateral processes.

Persistent Gaps in Access to Water and Sanitation

Despite progress over the last two decades, 2.2 billion people worldwide still lack safely managed drinking water, and 3.5 billion lack access to safely managed sanitation services. The gap is most pronounced in developing, landlocked, and least developed countries, where rapid population growth, urbanization, and weak infrastructure compound existing inequalities. Rural and remote communities remain particularly vulnerable, with limited investment in water supply networks and sanitation systems. In some regions, access to safe water is also constrained by geographical challenges, such as mountainous terrain and arid climates — conditions that are characteristic of many countries in the world.

Multilateral processes and global initiatives provide valuable venues for periodically sharing lessons from countries that have made tangible progress in expanding access under challenging conditions. By highlighting successful community-based and nature-based solutions, global initiatives, such as the Dushanbe Water Process can help to inform global policy dialogue and inspire replication across similar contexts.

Climate Change and Water-Related Disasters

Climate change is primarily a water issue. Over 90 percent of climate impacts manifest through changes in the water cycle — including droughts, floods, glacier melt, and water scarcity. Rising temperatures accelerate the retreat of glaciers, threatening water availability for over 1.9 billion people who depend on mountain ecosystems such as the Pamir, Tien Shan, and Hindu Kush ranges.

The UN 2023 Water Conference Interactive Dialogue 3, which will be continued during the 2026 UN water Conference as part of the theme “Water for Planet”, has played a key role in elevating the link between water and climate at the global level and encouraging uptake of water issues in UNFCCC-related processes. The integration of climate and energy discussions, particularly at the 2024 Dushanbe Water Conference, reflects the growing consensus that climate-resilient water management must be central to both mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Transboundary Water Cooperation

More than 60 percent of global freshwater flows cross national borders, and 153 countries share at least one transboundary river, lake, or aquifer. Yet, fewer than one in four countries with shared basins have operational arrangements for cooperation. The absence of such mechanisms increases the risk of tensions, undermines regional stability, and limits opportunities for joint development and climate adaptation.

The UN 2023 Water Conference and forthcoming 2026 UN Water Conference contribute to fostering a spirit of cooperation and mutual understanding by providing a neutral and inclusive platform for Member States and stakeholders to exchange experiences, share best practices, and explore innovative transboundary mechanisms.

Insufficient Financing and Investment

The global financing gap for achieving SDG 6 is estimated at over US\$ 1 trillion per year. Current levels of investment are insufficient to meet growing demand for water infrastructure, innovation, and capacity building. Moreover, financing is unevenly distributed, with low-income and fragile countries facing the greatest shortfalls.

Innovative financing mechanisms, such as blended finance, green bonds, and climate funds, are gaining attention but remain underutilized in the water sector. There is also a need for greater integration of water into national budgetary planning, climate finance, and development cooperation frameworks.

Multilateral processes and global water initiatives can be a catalyst for identifying scalable and replicable projects that link water management with economic development and climate adaptation. For example, through its high-level dialogues, the Dushanbe Water Process encourages international financial institutions, development partners, and the private sector to engage more actively in financing sustainable water solutions.

Data Gaps, Monitoring, and Knowledge Sharing

Reliable and timely data are essential for effective water management and decision-making. However, **significant data gaps** on water and sanitation persist in many regions, particularly in developing countries. Inadequate monitoring networks, lack of technical capacity, and inconsistent reporting impede the assessment of progress toward SDG 6 targets.

Synergies across the SDGs and beyond 2030

Water is a connector across the entire 2030 Agenda. Progress on SDG 6 accelerates achievement of goals on poverty eradication (SDG 1), food security (SDG 2), health (SDG 3), gender equality (SDG 5), sustainable energy (SDG 7), climate action (SDG 13) and the environment and biodiversity (SDG 15). Yet, current planning often occurs in silos, limiting the realization of these synergies.

Cross-sectoral dialogue is vital to ensure that water is mainstreamed into national development strategies and that post-2030 frameworks continue to reflect its central importance. Building on the outcomes from the **2026 UN Water Conference**, the **UN 2028 Water Conference** hosted by Tajikistan will provide a timely opportunity to shape the “beyond 2030” water agenda, informed by lessons learned from the SDG 6, the Water Action Decade and other global experiences.

Strengthening Multilateralism and Political Will

Ultimately, addressing global water issues requires political commitment at the highest level. Sustained national leadership, combined with international partnership, can

generate significant global impact. As global issues - from climate change to conflicts and economic instability - intensify, the role of multilateral platforms becomes even more vital. Consistent water dialogue builds mutual trust and shared responsibility that can drive transformative change and ensure that water remains a unifying force for peace, stability, and development.

The **2026 UN Water Conference** followed by the **UN 2028 Water Conference** will play a pivotal role in advancing dialogue, fostering partnerships, and sustaining momentum for the implementation of SDG 6 and the broader 2030 Agenda, as well as shaping a forward-looking global water agenda beyond 2030.

IV. Solutions

Accelerating progress toward SDG 6 and the broader 2030 Agenda requires concrete, scalable, and coordinated solutions that address the interconnected dimensions of water, climate, energy, and sustainable development. The growing number of water-related issues - ranging from shortages and pollution to transboundary cooperation - demands a paradigm shift from fragmented interventions to integrated, action-oriented partnerships. The following section highlights key areas of solution-oriented progress inspired and advanced through multilateral processes and global water initiatives.

A. Strengthening Global and Regional Water Cooperation

Integrated and coherent water cooperation is the foundation for effective water management. The fragmentation of global water efforts has long hindered policy coherence and accountability. A strong cooperation framework should ensure coordination between national, regional, and global levels, while aligning water-related actions with climate, energy, and biodiversity goals.

Proposed actions and solutions:

- **Institutional strengthening:** Support the implementation of the UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation to ensure coordinated follow-up mechanisms for SDG 6 implementation.
- **Link national and global agendas:** Encourage Member States to integrate global water commitments into national strategies and report progress through the Water Action Agenda and other commitment platforms.
- **Promote coherence and continuity:** Global water initiatives, such as the Dushanbe Water Process, can serve as a platform for structured monitoring and review of global water commitments between UN Water Conferences, promoting coherence and continuity within the multilateral framework.
- **Enhance inter-regional cooperation:** Use multilateral processes and global initiatives as a bridge between regions, especially between Central Asia, Europe,

Africa, and the Middle East, to exchange experiences on integrated water resource management and transboundary cooperation.

Maintaining continuity between the **2023, 2026, and 2028 UN Water Conferences** ensures that political momentum is sustained, knowledge is shared, and lessons learned are systematically incorporated into future multilateral actions.

B. Climate-Resilient Water Management

Climate change is reshaping the global hydrological cycle, making climate-resilient water management a priority for all nations. Addressing the impacts of glacial retreat, floods, and droughts requires integrated approaches that link water management with climate adaptation and mitigation strategies. Successive UNFCCC COPs have progressively elevated water as a priority in the climate agenda.

Proposed actions and solutions:

- **Global advocacy:** Elevate the link between water and climate at forums such as COPs (UN Conferences on Climate Change), reinforcing the message that water must be central to national adaptation plans and global climate financing mechanisms.
- **Nature-based and ecosystem approaches:** Promote watershed restoration, reforestation, and the protection of mountain ecosystems to enhance water storage, regulate flows, and mitigate climate risks that can address multiple sustainable development objectives. Use multilateral processes to showcase best practices that can be replicated and scaled up by countries.
- **Promote investment in resilient infrastructure:** Leverage processes related to the UNFCCC and the Sendai Framework to encourage investment in climate-resilient water supply systems, flood control structures, and sustainable irrigation practices, particularly in arid and mountainous regions.
- **Share latest data and scientific findings:** Use multilateral processes and global water initiatives as a platform to share data and scientific findings on glacial monitoring, hydrology, and adaptation practices.

Tajikistan's leadership in highlighting the **mountain–water–climate nexus** through the Dushanbe Water Process offers a replicable model for other regions facing similar vulnerabilities.

C. Financing the Water Agenda

The implementation of SDG 6 requires a step-change in investment and financing. Current levels of funding are far below what is needed to achieve universal access to water and sanitation and to build resilient systems. Innovative financing mechanisms must complement traditional public funding to close the gap. Use multilateral processes to

promote water as an investment priority and opportunity. Strengthen linkages between water and the Financing for Development agenda and SDG 17.

D. Innovation, Digitalization, and Knowledge Sharing

Technological innovation offers powerful tools to enhance water management efficiency and transparency. However, many developing countries face capacity gaps and limited access to digital technologies.

Proposed actions and solutions:

- **Digital water management:** Promote adoption of remote sensing, AI-based hydrological forecasting, and digital twin technologies for better decision-making.
- **Build capacity:** Develop global training initiatives in partnership with UN agencies and research institutions to strengthen human capital for digital water management.
- **Open data platforms:** Support the creation of a Global Water Data and Knowledge Platform, facilitating access to real-time data for policymakers, researchers, and communities.
- **South–South cooperation:** Encourage technology transfer among developing countries, including through regional centres of excellence hosted under the Dushanbe Process.

E. Empowering Communities, Women, and Youth

Sustainable water management cannot be achieved without the active participation of all stakeholders, particularly those most affected by water scarcity and climate change. **Empowering women, youth, and local communities** is essential for equity, ownership, and sustainability.

- **Incorporate gender equality.** Ensure that water policies and investments incorporate gender equality considerations, providing women equal access to decision-making and leadership roles at all levels, including in multilateral processes and global water initiatives.
- **Institutionalize youth participation.** Dedicated youth forums, mentorship programs, and innovation competitions can provide young people entry points for engaging in multilateral processes and global water initiatives.
- **Strengthen water education at all levels.** Strengthen water literacy programs, integrating sustainable water use principles into national education systems, including through collaboration with education sector (SDG 4). Promote publicly accessible information on water-related issues as part of multilateral processes to build greater awareness and support.

- **Engage local stakeholders.** Promote local ownership of water supply and sanitation systems through community-led monitoring and maintenance schemes.

A good example of inclusive participation in global water initiatives is the **Dushanbe Youth and Women Water Forums**, which have become global models for sustained, multistakeholder engagement.

F. Building Partnerships and Coalitions for Action

Effective multilateral cooperation requires strong partnerships that combine technical expertise, financing, and political will.

Examples and proposed actions:

- **Public–private–civil partnerships:** Promote collaboration among governments, private companies, NGOs, and academia for innovation and implementation.
- **Cross-sectoral coalitions:** Establish and reinforce existing coalitions on Water and Energy, Water and Health, and Water and Climate Resilience to promote integrated approaches and elevate water across related intergovernmental processes.
- **UN cooperation:** Strengthen collaboration with UN-Water, UNDP, UNESCO, and other UN entities to ensure policy coherence and knowledge exchange.
- **Water Action Agenda follow-up:** Align Dushanbe Water Process objectives with the global tracking of commitments under the Water Action Agenda. Partnerships have transformed the Dushanbe Water Process into a living mechanism for translating global commitments into tangible progress at all levels.

G. Preparing for the UN 2028 Water Conference

As preparations for the 2026 UN Water Conference advance, preliminary efforts are underway to prepare the UN 2028 Water Conference, which will be hosted by Tajikistan.

Key preparatory steps:

- **Inclusive preparatory dialogues:** Hosting thematic forums and regional consultations under the Dushanbe Water Process to gather inputs from governments, youth, and stakeholders.
- **Tracking progress:** Developing a final assessment of the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development,” 2018–2028.
- **Legacy of continuity:** Ensuring that the 2028 Conference builds upon the outcomes of the 2023 and 2026 Conferences, consolidating a sustained global water agenda.

By serving as a bridge between these milestones, the global dialogue on water remains continuous, inclusive, and impact oriented. Fostering strong partnerships, advancing

scientific cooperation, and catalysing investment, ensures that the 2023, 2026 and 2028 UN Water Conferences not only supports the implementation of internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, notably SDG 6 and the broader 2030 Agenda, but also paves the way for a coherent and forward-looking global water agenda beyond 2030.

V. Recommendations and Conclusions

With less than five years remaining in the 2030 Agenda, it is increasingly clear that achieving SDG 6 will require accelerated, coordinated, and transformative action. Building upon lessons from the UN 2023 Water Conference and looking ahead to the 2026 and 2028 UN Water Conferences, this section outlines a set of strategic recommendations and policy directions to guide global and regional efforts on water, climate, and sustainable development. These recommendations emphasize strengthening, deepening cooperation, mobilizing finance, and ensuring inclusivity.

- 1. Strengthen the Multilateral Framework for Water Cooperation.** The global water cooperation landscape remains fragmented, with limited institutional mechanisms to coordinate efforts across sectors and regions. Strengthening multilateral frameworks will ensure continuity, coherence, and accountability in implementing global water commitments. Lessons from the Dushanbe Water Process offer a unique model for continuity and accountability within the UN system.
- 2. Promote Integrated Water-Climate-Energy-Food-Ecosystem Approaches.** Water is a cross-cutting resource that connects climate adaptation, energy generation, agriculture, and ecosystem health. Integrating these dimensions coherently across multilateral processes is essential for resilience and sustainable growth at all levels.
- 3. Mobilize and Align Financing for Water and Sanitation.** Meeting global water and sanitation targets requires a substantial increase in financial flows. The estimated financing gap of over USD 1 trillion annually cannot be closed without mobilizing new sources of capital and ensuring that existing resources are used effectively. A better-financed water sector will enable countries to build resilient infrastructure, expand services, and close the investment gap for SDG 6.
- 4. Strengthen Transboundary and Regional Cooperation.** More than half of the world's population lives in transboundary river basins, yet cooperation frameworks remain limited. Joint management of shared water resources can foster peace, stability, and prosperity.
- 5. Expand Innovation, Technology, and Knowledge Exchange.** Scientific knowledge, technological innovation, and digital tools are vital for effective water management. However, unequal access to technology and data continues to limit progress in many countries. Multilateral processes can enhance international cooperation and facilitate knowledge-sharing.

- 6. Strengthen Data, Monitoring, and Accountability.** Robust monitoring and accountability mechanisms are essential for tracking progress and ensuring transparency in the implementation of water-related goals. Substantial progress has been made to strengthen national monitoring systems and reduce data gaps for most SDG 6 indicators, which can be leveraged for incorporating water and sanitation-related targets into other multilateral processes.
- 7. Strengthen Partnerships and Multistakeholder Collaboration.** No single actor can solve the global water issues alone. Partnerships are the foundation of effective and inclusive implementation. Multilateral processes can build on experiences from global water initiatives to strengthen and sustain multistakeholder engagement.
- 8. Looking Ahead: A Renewed Global Water Agenda Beyond 2030.** The 2030 Agenda has provided a powerful framework for action, but the vision for sustainable water management must extend beyond it. The outcomes from the 2026 and 2028 UN Water Conferences will serve as the bridge to a post-2030 global water agenda. Sustained political will and consistent dialogue are crucial for maintaining momentum on water.

Conclusion

Water stands as the defining challenge of our era — a vital connector across all dimensions of sustainable development and across the three Rio Conventions: the UNFCCC, the CBD, and the UNCCD. Steadfast leadership, international solidarity, and multilateral cooperation can transform this global challenge into an opportunity for shared progress.

As we move beyond the mid-point and approach the final years of the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development,” 2018–2028 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, there is a pressing need to ensure continuity of tackling water issues and sustaining the global momentum. The outcomes from the 2023, 2026 and 2028 UN Water Conferences will provide a cornerstone for lasting global coordination, partnership, and multilateral action for water. This collaborative effort will ensure that water remains not merely a policy priority but a shared global mission - uniting nations in the pursuit of a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable future for all.

VI. Guiding Questions

The following guiding questions are intended to facilitate inclusive and action-oriented dialogue during the 2026 United Nations Water Conference. They aim to promote reflection, exchange, and partnership-building among Member States, UN entities, international organizations, civil society, academia, and the private sector.

Each question is designed to deepen understanding of key issues related to water in multilateral processes, strengthen linkages between SDG 6 and other global goals, and identify pathways to accelerate progress toward universal access, sustainability, and resilience.

1. How can multilateral cooperation be enhanced to accelerate implementation of SDG 6 and related targets across the 2030 Agenda?
2. What specific mechanisms or institutional arrangements are needed to improve coherence and coordination among global, regional, and national water initiatives?
3. How can global water processes and initiatives, including the Dushanbe Water Process, serve as a structured follow-up mechanism between global UN Water Conferences to ensure accountability and sustained political momentum?
4. In what ways can multilateral processes promote more effective cross-sectoral water policy dialogue and facilitate integrated planning among governments, UN agencies, and financial institutions?
5. How should the global community frame the post-2030 water agenda to ensure that water remains central to sustainable development beyond the 2030 horizon?
6. How can multilateral processes support joint planning and investment in transboundary water infrastructure and climate adaptation projects?
7. How can digital tools, remote sensing, and artificial intelligence (AI) be better harnessed to improve water resource monitoring and use of data and evidence for decision and policymaking, including tracking process nationally, regionally and globally?
8. How can multilateral processes and global water initiatives support countries to better integrate water management into national climate adaptation and mitigation plans?
9. How can countries and UN entities more effectively share lessons and best practices on water and sanitation through multilateral platforms like the HLPF, UN Water Conferences, COPs and other global processes and initiatives like Dushanbe Water Conferences and World Water Week events?
10. How can the outcomes of the UN 2026 Water Conference inform preparations for the UN 2028 Water Conference in Dushanbe?
11. What should be the key priorities and expected outcomes of the 2026 and 2028 Conference to ensure a strong bridge toward the post-2030 global water agenda?