



All Permanent Representatives and
Observers to the United Nations in
New York

Permanent Mission of the
Kingdom of the Netherlands to
the United Nations

666 Third Avenue, 19th floor
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Date

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Our reference

NYV/2022/304

Excellencies,

In its resolution 75/212 entitled “United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028,” the General Assembly decided that the United Nations 2023 Water Conference will comprise of five interactive dialogues. The President of the General Assembly is requested to hold a one-day preparatory meeting by November 2022 at UN Headquarters in New York to “finalize the themes of the interactive dialogues and other outstanding organizational matters” pertaining to the Conference.

The General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General of the Conference (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) to prepare the proposals for the themes of the interactive dialogues in a background note, in consultation with Member States, with the support of UN-Water and relevant UN entities. These proposals should be ready for finalization at the preparatory meeting.

To that end, the Secretary-General of the Conference, in his letter dated 21 January 2022, invited all Governments to submit their proposals on possible themes for the five interactive dialogues. Submissions from Member States were posted online, with their consent. UN Water also submitted proposals on behalf of the UN system, through a non-paper¹. In addition, the Secretariat held a global online stakeholder consultation from February to March 2022, seeking proposals on the themes. The outcomes of the above steps were presented by the Conference Secretary-General at the Briefing to Member States held on 12 April 2022. On 13 July at the SDG 6 Special Event held at the margins of the 2022 High Level Political Forum on sustainable development, participants were briefed on the preparatory process of the UN 2023 Water Conference.

In this letter Co-hosts of the UN 2023 Water Conference, the Republic of Tajikistan and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, present their suggestions for the themes of the interactive dialogues for your further consideration. The proposal takes into account the consultations that have taken place over the last months, yielding input from Member States, UN entities and relevant stakeholders. The results of these consultations are published on the UN 2023 Water Conference website.

In addition to the consultations, the Co-hosts also incorporated the outcomes of the preparatory process, including the Water Dialogues for Result in Bonn, the World Water Forum in Dakar, the Asia Pacific Water Summit in Kumamoto, the UN 2022 Ocean Conference and the High-Level Symposium on Water in Lisbon, in their proposal. The main outcomes were reflected in the Dushanbe Declaration adopted at the Second International

¹ https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/UN-Water_Contributions_%20Interactive_Dialogues_v25March2022.pdf

High-Level Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028.

The proposal also considers the rapidly changing global context and the challenges the world faces. The ongoing water and sanitation crisis is a threat to everyone as poor water management increases the risks in all aspects of life. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed our shared vulnerabilities and reminded us of our common destiny. Populations are growing, agriculture and industry are getting more water-intensive, and climate change is worsening. Without a functioning, resilient water cycle for all people everywhere, human health and environmental integrity will always be threatened and a sustainable, equitable future will remain out of reach.

The proposal furthermore takes into account the principles as defined by the Co-hosts of the UN 2023 Water Conference in their Vision Statement. The Co-hosts aim to make the interactive dialogues *inclusive*, both in terms of the process (ensure vertical and horizontal inclusiveness) and in terms of the results (leaving no-one behind); *action-oriented*, leading to results through concrete actions and plans on the ground; and *cross-sectoral*, mobilizing all other sectors to improve the way they manage and utilize water resources. Lastly, the proposal reflects the Co-hosts’ ambition of consistency, continuity and commitment, building on the UN Secretary-General’s Plan: Water Action Decade 2018-2028 and the SDG6 Global Acceleration Framework.

Considering the above, the proposal for themes of the interactive dialogues by the Co-host of the UN 2023 Water Conference is as follows:

1. Water for Health: Access to safe drinking water, hygiene and sanitation (SDG 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 and SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 17);
2. Water for Development: Valuing Water, Water-Energy-Food Nexus and Sustainable Economic and Urban Development (SDG 6.3, 6.4, 6.5 and SDGs 2, 8, 9, 11, 12);
3. Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment: Source to Sea, Biodiversity, Climate, Resilience and DRR (SDGs 6.5, 6.6, 7, 11.5, 13, 14, 15);
4. Water for Cooperation: Transboundary and International Water Cooperation, Cross Sectoral Cooperation and Water Across the 2030 Agenda (SDG 6.5, 6.b and SDGs 16, 17);
5. Water Action Decade: Accelerating the implementation of the objectives of the Decade, including through the UN Secretary-General’s Action Plan.

The themes are supported by the five principles of the SDG6 Global Acceleration Framework (Financing, Data and Information, Capacity Development, Innovation, and Governance) and the three principles of the Conference (Inclusive, Cross Sectoral and Action Oriented).

The themes of the interactive dialogues and other outstanding organizational matters pertaining to the Conference will be finalized during a one-day preparatory meeting by November 2022 at UN Headquarters in New York. The indicative timeline of the process leading up to the preparatory meeting is:

- August: Interactive technical briefing on the themes at UN Headquarters in New York
- August: Roundtable session on the themes at the Stockholm World Water Week
- First week September: Written feedback from MS and stakeholders
- September: Discussion on the themes in the Group of Friends of Water in New York
- By November: Decision on the themes during PGA preparatory meeting

As per resolution 75/212, each interactive dialogue will be presided over by two co-chairs, one from a developing country and one from a developed country, to be appointed by the Presidents of the Conference. After the themes are finalized, Member States will be able to submit applications for co-chairing a theme. The Co-hosts will appoint the co-chairs, taking into account the principles of transparency and of equitable geographical representation. Contributions to the preparatory process and level of participation are also taken into account.

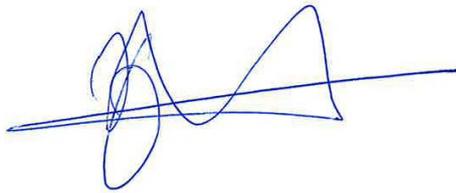
The Secretary-General of the Conference will select a moderator and up to four panelists for each of the interactive dialogues. The panel discussions, facilitated by the moderator, will be followed by an interactive debate among all participants.

In addition, the Secretary-General of the Conference will prepare concept papers on each of the themes of the interactive dialogues. These concept papers will incorporate input from the preparatory process as well as from informal preparatory working groups. The composition of these working groups will be collaborative and multi-stakeholder in nature, with due regard for gender and geographical balance. The concept papers will serve as the substantive foundation for the discussion of the interactive dialogues.

Each dialogue will be structured along the lines of the five accelerators of SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework, such as financing, data and information, capacity development, innovation and governance. The interactive dialogues will aim at yielding action-oriented commitments to fill the Water Action Agenda. The Co-hosts strongly encourage multi-stakeholder commitments for every theme that are transformative in nature: game-changing commitments that have the ability to shift our global trajectory towards a water secure world for all.

The Netherlands and Tajikistan, as Co-hosts of the Conference, will strive to make the Conference a watershed moment for the world. Our vision for the Conference is that we all fundamentally understand, value and manage water better and take concerted action to achieve the internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

With that in mind, please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest considerations.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

H.E. Yoka Brandt, Ambassador Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations

A handwritten signature in blue ink, featuring a large, stylized initial 'J' and 'H' followed by several horizontal strokes.

H.E. Jonibek Hikmat, Ambassador Permanent Representative of the Republic of Tajikistan the to the United Nations