

Concept Note

Stakeholder consultation on the preparation of the 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

24 October 2022

Conference Room 2, UN Headquarters and online (hybrid format)

Background

The world will come together during the [UN 2023 Water Conference](#) to address the critical role of water on the path to a more sustainable future. It is crucial to translate political ambition into local, regional, and global action. The co-hosts of the Conference the Republic of Tajikistan and the Kingdom of the Netherlands have proposed the [Water Action Agenda](#) to provide a platform for commitments and transformative game changers across sectors and actors, to further strengthen global action on water.

On 25 October 2022, the President of the General Assembly will hold a day-long preparatory meeting to finalise the themes of the interactive dialogues, which will frame the discussions throughout the UN 2023 Water Conference. The co-hosts have proposed the following interactive dialogues:

1. Water for Health: Access to safe drinking water, hygiene and sanitation
2. Water for Development: Valuing Water, Water-Energy-Food Nexus and Sustainable Economic and Urban Development;
3. Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment: Source to Sea, Biodiversity, Climate, Resilience and DRR
4. Water for Cooperation: Transboundary and International Water Cooperation, Cross Sectoral Cooperation and Water Across the 2030 Agenda;
5. Water Action Decade: Accelerating the implementation of the objectives of the Decade, including through the UN Secretary-General’s Action Plan.

This proposal is based on ample consultations that have taken place over the last few months.

Stakeholder consultation

The President of the General Assembly will host stakeholder consultations on 24 October 2022. These consultations will allow civil society, economic sector actors and scientific community members to share and discuss proposals for potential game changers for the Water Action Agenda based on the [Global Accelerator Framework for SDG 6](#).

A game changer can be a method, an approach, a cooperation strategy, capacity development activity, or agreement that will transform the way we think, do business, plan and implement policies, or govern at local, regional and global levels. A game changer is catalyser to becoming more resilient to water, climate, food and energy crises, as well as to economic, ecological, social and political changes. Ultimately, the goal is the enhancement of cooperation to leverage benefits across actors, sectors and scales, and serves as means for sustainable development.

Outcome

- 1) A list of game changers that:
 - inform and support the Members States' discussions on the interactive dialogues of the UN 2023 Water Conference on 25 October.
 - serves as inputs for the Water Action Agenda.

- 2) Initial partnerships that will:
 - continue working together to refine game changers to be presented at the UN 2023 Water Conference.
 - rally political and financial support for game changers.
 - propose a process with clear requirements, goals, procedures and milestones by 2030.

The outcome aims to support the Water Action Agenda, ensuring that game changers are effective, action oriented, inclusive and integrative - based on:

- the mandate (the partners that come together to define, refine and propose the game changers);
- the support (the political, capacitating, scientific, technological, and financial resources);
- the way forward (goals, milestones, monitoring and evaluation, readjustment mechanisms).

Format

The meeting will be held in hybrid format. Participation is possible both in-person at the UN Headquarters in New York, and virtually. The registration link can be found [here](#).

The meeting will be held from 10 am EDT to 6 pm EDT at United Nations Headquarters in New York and will be streamed live on <https://media.un.org/en/webtv>. The Opening and Closing sessions will take place in Conference Room 2 of the Headquarters Building. The meeting will then break out into parallel roundtable discussions in Conference Rooms 11 and 12. For more information, please see the event [webpage](#).

Each roundtable will have a moderator, a rapporteur and up to 3 short orientation inputs to initiate discussions. Participants can ask to intervene from the floor or through the video conference system. Interventions should aim at contributing to cooperative game changers

rather than promoting existing activities. The roundtables are intended to maximise speaking opportunities for stakeholders. Each stakeholder will be given a maximum of 2 minutes to make remarks or contribute to the discussion.

The roundtables will be guided to address the breadth of themes proposed for the interactive dialogues of the UN 2023 Water Conference. Each will be concluded with a short summary by the moderator. The outcomes of the discussions will be the basis of the input presented to Member States on 25 October.

A set of overall guiding questions and an initial framing is outlined below, as a starting point to the roundtable discussions. It is the intention and aspiration of the consultation process that participants suggest game changers based on their assessment of its transformative potential in governance, capacity development, data and information, innovation and financing.

Guiding questions:

- How to ensure that human rights related to water become a reality?
- What type of operational warning/ information is needed to save lives and livelihoods?
- What is needed to shift action from crisis response to strengthening resilience?
- What kind of monitoring and forecasting systems are needed to ensure services support pre-emptive action?
- How do we transform siloed operations into a systems-wide approach to avoid losses and leverage benefits?
- How to ensure inclusion, accountability and transparency?
- What regional and global level indicators are needed to monitor the transition to more sustainable pathways?
- How to balance demand and supply in a sustainable, equitable and affordable way?

The following introduction of roundtables is to be understood as a starting point to spark discussions. The aim is to wrap up the roundtables with a few, actionable game changers that emerged from the discussions.

1) Roundtable on Governance

Governance within countries, sectors, communities and across scales as well as national, sectoral and cultural boundaries, is not yet able to leverage benefits of integrated water, climate, food, health and energy, land use and environmental management and planning. This needs to change.

Potential game changers may evolve around:

- integrating national and regional governance and legal systems;
- integrating governance, policy and operations across sectors and actors;

- ensuring inclusive governance based on transparent stakeholder participation;
- supporting governance and policymaking with appropriate scientific information and a long-term perspective;
- providing legal tools that can be used on a voluntary basis to catalyse and ensure integration of relevant policies and transformation.

2) Roundtable on Capacity Development

Personal, expert and institutional capacity worldwide is insufficient. We need more science, better education, and the capacity to build, transfer and share knowledge. Our current levels of integrated earth system and socio-economic capabilities have not yet allowed us to ensure that we are on a path to a water, food and energy secure future, that is less discriminatory and extractive and more socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable than today's world. We need to develop our capacity to transform our economies for water, food and energy to support nature, human development and well-being.

Potential game changers may evolve around:

- benefiting from the possibilities of modern technology and traditional learning to exchange knowledge and wisdom;
- scaling up our level of consciousness about earth system interdependencies and to create capacity to apply this across sectors like trade, transport, tourism, agriculture;
- creating a global system of centres and networks for education on sustainability;
- establishing global, regional and national science cooperation that assesses risk and evaluates water, climate and food action.

3) Roundtable on Data and Information

Mutually supportive water cooperation arrangements need to be based on transparent information and trust. Optimal management of water, land-use, energy and food systems require appropriate data and information. Water supply and demand can only be optimised sustainably and justly if we cooperate on data and information integration across scales, disciplines, boundaries and economic competition. It is imperative that we work together to assess what climate change, economic and social development and the changes in our biosphere and land-use will bring about. This can only work if we have information on the relevant resources. Strengthening existing water and climate forecast and outlook capabilities is part of the solution we need to design to protect people and the planet. Hydro-climate-social data is crucial to engage all societal stakeholders in designing and implementing sustainable solutions.

Potential game changers may consist of:

- establishing and implementing integrated global water information services that allow for improving water and land management, adapting to climate change and improving socio-economic and environmental resilience;

- feeding a global system that produces early warnings for all and provides information that is necessary to mitigate negative impacts of natural disasters;
- ensuring that the integrated monitoring initiative of UN water is referenced with necessary physical, social and economic baseline data and indicators to inform transformative actions and financing for development;
- facilitating the recognition of data and information that is necessary to save lives as global public good;
- integrating surface water, atmospheric water, groundwater, water quality, cryosphere into a coherent information system that can support integrated water and climate services.

4) Innovation

Innovation in integrated earth system analysis, operations and management as well as in policy development and local and regional cooperative frameworks is a necessary condition to address current and new challenges. We are constantly exposed, and increasingly so, to challenges in the form of transient social, environmental and economic conditions and shocks. Innovation is also a powerful means to bring together people from different backgrounds, sectors and philosophies. A feature needed by today's world more than ever before.

Game changers will spark innovation by:

- linking traditional knowledge fields, solutions and technologies;
- creating cooperation and integration of different scientific disciplines;
- optimising operating systems for water management;
- including a wide constituency in decision making;
- allowing access to digital solutions to those who lack access.

5) Finances

Financing is fuel for development and change. Financing is still mostly planned, targeted and disbursed according to principles that were defined and valid in the last century. We need a new way of thinking as regards to finances for sustainable development. Water is a central link in terms of adaptation and resilience. Finance game changers allow us:

- to redirect existing investments towards climate and water smart solutions;
- to allow for marginalised communities to participate in deciding about financing;
- to build new cross-sectoral partnerships including private and public finance;
- to focus on mid- and long-term support instead of off the shelf short term solutions;
- to prioritize funding of sustainable solutions over return-on-investment solutions;

Target audiences

- Key actors from Major Groups: private and public sector, academia, youth, women, indigenous people and civil society.
- Key stakeholders' actors from the water, climate, food, oceans and energy community, including Member States, United Nations system, multi-stakeholder partnerships, science organisations, civil society and private sector.
- UN Member States.

Deliverables

- Summary to be presented to Member States on 25 October;
- Reports from the roundtables to be published on the UN 2023 Water Conference website.
- List of proposed transformative game changers to be shared via the UN 2023 Water Conference website and presented at the conference.