

Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW)

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Roundtable 1: Governance

Water governance is a mainstay for the sustainable management of water resources. Under the increasing climate uncertainty, the way water policies and programmes are envisioned decides the social, economic and environmental outcomes. Policy responses to water challenges will be effective if they have a comprehensive outlook, inclusive in terms of stakeholder engagement, backed by regulatory frameworks, based on data and information, and if sufficient technical and financial capacity exists for implementation.

In many parts of the world, policies and programmes are based on insufficient data, follow incremental approaches, and are patchy in implementation. This is evident from the United Nation's 2022 assessment of global efforts towards meeting the targets under Sustainable Development Goal 6 which highlights that at the current rate of progress, 1.6 billion will lack access to safely managed drinking water services, and 2.8 billion will lack access to safely managed sanitation services in 2030. The creation of water infrastructure alone will not solve the problem, concentrated efforts are required to ensure water availability. This will be a challenging task as already more than 700 million people live in countries with high and critical levels of water stress and there are competing water demands from the domestic, economic, and environmental sectors.

The 'decade of water action' and 'the 2023 UN Water Conference' provide the perfect opportunity for the world to cooperate, partner, and learn from each other's experience in improving water governance. For instance, there are enough experiences in the world in designing incentives for improving water use efficiency (United Kingdom), developing river basin management plans (Australia and the European Union), allocating investments for research on improving water management (Canada), and creating strategic infrastructure for early warning system for meteorological disasters (Korea and India). The way water is governed now will decide the future of humanity.