

UNITED NATIONS



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AFFAIRS

OPENING REMARKS

**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**

Monday, 24 October 2022, at 10:00AM
In-person, Conference Room 2

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to join this stakeholder consultation on the preparation of the UN 2023 Water Conference.

Let me start by congratulating the President of the UN General Assembly for convening this important meeting, and for creating this space for different stakeholders to share their views, ideas and solutions towards the implementation of global water-related goals.

Distinguished participants,

Next year will mark the mid-point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Already prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the world was not on track to meeting the SDGs. The pandemic, combined with conflicts, social unrest, and a growing cost-of-living crisis, has further undermined progress.

Our planet is also in peril, facing the dire impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Without addressing these environmental challenges, there can be no durable social and economic development.

A well-managed water cycle lies at the nexus of these interrelated challenges, critical both to human society and the integrity of the natural environment.

Yet, according to the 2022 SDG progress report, issued by UN DESA, meeting the water, sanitation and hygiene SDG targets by 2030 would require a four-fold increase in the pace of progress.

At current rates, in 2030, 1.6 billion people will lack access to safe drinking water and 2.8 billion people will lack access to safely managed sanitation

The United Nations 2023 Water Conference, to be held next March, here at the UN headquarters, is a much-needed opportunity to ramp up global momentum and generate solutions by governments and all other actors to address the broad challenges surrounding water, at accelerate action on SDG 6.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Member States have called for the UN 2023 Water Conference to involve all relevant stakeholders - Governments, UN-system partners, civil society and grassroots organizations, academic institutions, the private sector, the scientific community, and many others.

In this regard, UN DESA as the Secretariat of the Conference, in close collaboration with UN-Water and the co-hosts of the Conference, Tajikistan and the Netherlands, has been actively working to raise awareness and share information about the Conference, and provide opportunities for stakeholders to contribute to the preparatory process and to the Conference itself.

The mobilization of stakeholders in the lead up to the UN 2023 Water Conference is happening at several levels, including in local, national, regional and global spaces.

I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Government of Germany for funding stakeholder engagement during this process.

These funds are facilitating strategic action at the regional level. For instance, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean has recently conducted an open consultation on water challenges in the Caribbean subregion. It compiled more than 500 inputs across 15 Caribbean countries, from stakeholders representing the public sector, private sector, NGOs, academia and others.

Additionally, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia organized a policy dialogue in water-scarce countries, during the 2022 Cairo Water Week, to catalyze regional action for the Water Action Decade.

More activities are currently being implemented by UN Regional Commissions and information is regularly shared as part of the UN 2023 Water Conference newsletters.

At the global level, through a recent online stakeholder consultation, DESA has collected over 700 inputs from stakeholders in more than 70 countries on the themes that have been proposed by the co-hosts for the five interactive dialogues of the UN 2023 Water Conference.

These inputs have been summarized in a report that is available on the Conference website.

Some of the key messages have emerged from this consultation, which I now invite you to consider.

On the proposed theme “Water for Health”, stakeholders have called for the water sector to embrace a more inter-disciplinary approach and urge that new partnerships be forged with local communities, including vulnerable and marginalized groups.

Stakeholders have also called on the Conference to discuss ways to mobilize additional and innovative financing mechanisms, including enabling conditions for public-private partnerships, to facilitate access to water and sanitation services for everyone.

On the theme “Water for Development”, stakeholders have underlined the need for transformative actions led by governments, and proposed that the Conference consider approaches to improve legal frameworks towards better protection of water ecosystems.

There were also calls for developed countries to strengthen support to developing countries in their efforts to achieve the water-related goals.

On the proposed theme of “Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment”, stakeholders have suggested that the Conference seek ways to strengthen and update research connected to water availability and changes in weather patterns.

There were also calls for more educational campaigns on the interconnection between climate change and water.

On “Water for Cooperation”, stakeholders have called for multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral dialogues and mobilization efforts at all levels. The important role of local and regional governments in decision-making processes was highlighted.

On the final proposed theme, “Water Action Decade”, stakeholders have called for strengthened intergenerational collaboration, including ensuring the meaningful engagement of youth, indigenous peoples, the scientific and technological community, and others.

There were also suggestions for the Conference to discuss interdisciplinary approaches to raise awareness and exchange knowledge.

The submissions were very rich in substance and covered a broad range of issue areas, sectors and geographies. I would like to thank all stakeholders who have contributed and invite all participants to review the summary report on the UN 2023 Water Conference web site.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

UN DESA, as the Secretariat of the UN 2023 Water Conference, is committed to facilitating strong stakeholder participation both in the lead-up to, and during the Conference.

Time and time again, stakeholder groups have demonstrated that when diverse sectors of society and groups work together to achieve a shared aim, it can strengthen a sense of renewed solidarity and international cooperation.

And when governments form partnerships with stakeholders, there is much potential for progress and transformative action.

This approach will be essential for a successful UN 2023 Water Conference. We count on your active participation!

I wish you all very fruitful discussions.

Thank you
