



Input to Preparatory Meeting of the UN 2023 Water Conference

Dear UN 2023 Water Conference Secretariat,

I submit this written statement on behalf of the Water Youth Network and the Major Group for Children and Youth, as an SDG 6 Global Focal Point.

When the last UN Conference on water was held in 1977, my generation was still over a decade away from being born. It's a different world today than it was then – and as was stated at the IWA World Water Congress in Copenhagen recently – youth today have inherited more problems than solutions. As a result of the digital revolution and increasing recognition of the benefits of prioritizing diversity and inclusion in shaping water governance, management and investment – youth engagement on water is now more important than ever.

Yet – there is a lack of agreement on youth engagement definitions and objectives across the water sector, and clearly articulated strategies in response. The challenges of youth engagement are consistent with broader water governance challenges. Many of the problems we face are created by a lack of goal setting; poorly defined roles and responsibilities; the inability to prioritize action; weak monitoring for performance and accountability for results; and inadequate frameworks to drive efficient planning and investment.

As youth, we recognize that these factors are plaguing our ability to effectively engage with, and influence, the water sector. As a result, we are taking action to unify our voices and communicate a pathway forward. Water-related youth groups have initiated a 'Global Youth Movement for Water' to decrease fragmentation and increase coordination within our generation. We have been working on youth engagement strategy and planning documents, outlining specific actionable recommendations and targets, and we hope to share this work at the UN 2023 Water Conference in March.

Youth groups are mobilizing at regional, national and global levels to actively engage in the UN Water Conference, but we need you to be our allies.

We call on all United Nations Member States to advocate for a '303030 Youth Target', which means ensuring at least 30 percent of people represented in water management are under 30 years old, by 2030. The UN Water Conference represents an early opportunity to show commitment to this target by seeking 30 per cent participation from people under the age of 30.

To help us get there, we appeal to all United Nations Member States to designate a youth representative to your national delegation to the conference in March – and for all to consider how youth perspectives can be integrated into each dialogue theme and associated sessions.

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