

## **Addressing Water Scarcity to Achieve Climate Resilience and Human Health**

Statement from the Side Event at the UN Water Conference 2023:

Water scarcity is a significant contributor to societal and economic development challenges, adversely impacting human health and food insecurity. The IPCC AR6 Synthesis Report highlighted worsening challenges in the coming years. Bold approaches are needed to establish resilience to climate change and protect human health.

To achieve a resilient and equitable water future, we need to create informed cooperation between water users, especially agricultural producers, while ensuring continued food security. Similarly, groundwater resources must be protected for the future generations and not over-exploited for current economic benefit. For example, over-exploitation in the Mekong Delta threatened long-term water security and economic development; it was through an approach of understanding the long-term implications of improperly managing groundwater, that the stakeholders were able to adopt more sustainable practices. The international community must address water scarcity with location-specific, equitable, culturally safe, locally acceptable, and scalable solutions, using the SDG framework as a mechanism for channeling investments. This support includes capacity building for UN Member States and local decision-makers facing water scarcity to fully understand their challenges and create effective responses - for instance, using data to forecast long-term changes to water availability and enable citizen science.

Academia has an important role for braiding diverse ways of knowing, informing critical knowledge gaps and serving as key player in enhancing capacity. In particular, academia and the wider research community should: (a) strengthen understandings of the complex and multi-faceted linkages between addressing water scarcity and enhancing climate change resiliency; (b) prioritise and respect other forms of science and evidence; (c) creating and sharing case studies on water cooperation and management to inform government policies and investment approaches towards enhancing public health and societal resilience by systematically addressing water scarcity, building on evidence of the socio economic impacts of improved water resilience; (d) provide advice on flexible policies that can be effective in different scenarios, and (e) identify success stories and document lessons learned from failures that serve as the foundation for scaling up local, national, regional, and global responses to water scarcity.