

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**MR. LI JUNHUA  
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
AFFAIRS**

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**Opening 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  
(UN 2023 Water Conference)**

**22 March 2023**

Thank you, Mr. President,

His Majesty, Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands,

His Excellency, Mr. Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan,

His Excellency, Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, President of the 77th Session of the United Nations  
General Assembly,

Her Excellency, Ms. Lachezara Stoeva, 78<sup>th</sup> President of the United Nations Economic and  
Social Council,

His Excellency, Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Conference Secretary-General, I warmly welcome you to the opening of the  
United Nations 2023 Water Conference. A convening of this type is long overdue. The last  
UN Water Conference was held in 1977, in Mar del Plata, Argentina.

This conference will tackle key priority areas for advancing action and progress on  
global water and sanitation-related goals and targets. Its preparation has underscored the  
irreplaceable role of multilateralism and inclusion in ensuring our human right to water.

This United Nations 2023 Water Conference will emphasise water’s role and impact  
in the areas of health, development, climate, resilience and the environment and cooperation.  
And attention will also be given to the Water Action Decade itself, with an aim to

accelerating the implementation of its objectives, including through the Secretary-General's Action Plan.

As we stand at the half-way point of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and of the Water Action Decade, some 2 billion people do not have equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water, and 3.6 billion do not have access to adequate and equitable sanitation.

We need to think about how we value water. We must consider both the role and impact of water in driving sustainable economic and social development, urban development, environmental protection, and peace. A close look at the water-energy-food nexus is also critical.

Sustainable water management is also one of the best responses to climate change adaptation and mitigation, to build resilience and protect and restore ecosystems. Sound water-related data and information is key.

Delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

This UN 2023 Water Conference will only be as successful as your willingness to engage in candid dialogue. And its impact depends on your willingness to bring forward and follow-up on your voluntary commitments to secure a water-sustainable future.

To close, I extend a special note of thanks to the Co-Hosts of the conference, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Republic of Tajikistan, for your outstanding leadership in driving the conference forward. I must also thank the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Economic and Social Council for your unfailing support.

Thank you.

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