

Presidents of the UN Water Conference 2023

24 March 2023

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of the [Glasgow Declaration for Fair Water Footprints](#), Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs, would like to submit the below statement.

The need for Fair Water Footprints

- New research reveals that high-income economies of the Global North are profoundly dependent on water use beyond their borders to produce the food, clothes, and goods they consume.
- Typically, between 40% and 80%, but as much as 94% of their water footprints are external, and this dependency is steadily increasing.
- External water footprints can be traced via crops, commodities and products to economies and river basins of production in the Global South which face extreme water insecurity and climate vulnerability.
- Half of the external 'blue' water footprint of the Global North is assessed as being unsustainable. Analysis suggests that drawing water from rivers, lakes, and aquifers to produce crops and goods for the Global North is a primary driver of resource depletion, ecosystem degradation, and conflict. As well as locking communities into climate vulnerability, such high levels of unsustainable use threaten the viability of these strategically important supply chains.

Priorities for the Water Action Agenda

- Investigation, research, and accountability monitoring so that water injustice and unsustainable use within supply chains is pinpointed and acted upon, supported by an SDG6 Accountability Facility.
- Business, retailers and investors associated with unsustainable or at-risk supply chains must now proactively demonstrate credible water stewardship and engage in collective action to guarantee shared water security.
- Intergovernmental collaboration between consumer and producer nations, targeted aid and technical assistance for water security which prioritises those most vulnerable.
- Systemic change in global financing, trade, procurement to ensure that water footprints support rather than undermine SDG6 delivery including via the Fair Water Footprints Initiative.
- Establish a new transnational water governance regime and a new UN Convention for Equitable and Sustainable Water Use to set binding rules, mitigate risks, and arbitrate fair use of the water upon which we all depend.

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The Royal Institute of International Affairs

Chatham House

10 St James's Square, London SW1Y 4LE

T +44 (0)20 7957 5700 | contact@chathamhouse.org | chathamhouse.org

Patron: Her Majesty The Queen | Chair: Sir Nigel Sheinwald GCMG | Director: Bronwen Maddox | Charity Registration Number: 208223

Sincerely,

Anum Farhan
Project Manager, Environment and Society Programme
Chatham House
afarhan@chathamhouse.org

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