

## WATER STEWARDSHIP ESSENTIAL FOR CONSERVING THE WORLD'S FRESHWATER RESOURCES

### Written Statement: Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) - Adrian Sym, Chief Executive Officer

With global demand for freshwater expected to outstrip supply by 40% by the end of this decade<sup>1</sup>, this written statement emphasises the power of a multi-stakeholder standard to drive effective, verifiable collaboration to deliver common good outcomes through water stewardship<sup>2</sup>.

The [Alliance for Water Stewardship \(AWS\)](#) emerged from dialogues between public, private, and civil society organisations, with the aim of creating a mechanism for businesses that are major users of water to systematically act on the diverse water-related challenges encompassed within the sub-targets in SDG 6. The result is a water-focused sustainability standard, the [AWS Standard](#), that is widely recognised as best practice for businesses to manage their own water use and to engage with wider catchment dynamics. It is bolstered by a verification and certification system that ensures the credibility of actions, outcomes and claims.

As part of AWS-convened Side Events at the UN 2023 Water Conference, AWS members<sup>3</sup> highlighted water stewardship as an opportunity for the private sector to take action to address shared water challenges and achieve progress in meeting the targets outlined in SDG 6. Members shared case studies about how they have implemented or engaged with the AWS System to drive verifiable progress at business sites and promote impactful collaborations with stakeholders at the catchment level. Presentations concluded that engagement with AWS to better understand water stewardship may provide strategic benefits to national governments, multilateral agencies, businesses and NGOs.

#### Key messages:

- Global demand for freshwater is expected to outstrip supply by 40% by 2030
- Water stewardship enables private sector leadership to address shared challenges and achieve common good outcomes
- The AWS Standard provides a systematic approach to implementing water stewardship
- Certification against the AWS Standard enables credible claims by major water users
- Incentives for credible and verified water stewardship can build confidence and help to scale common good outcomes.

#### A way forward:

AWS is a signatory of a [Joint Statement](#) from the International Water Stewardship Community shared at the UN 2023 Water Conference. Together with fellow members of the water stewardship community, we call on governments and the business community to accelerate credible, verified corporate action on water.

The importance of water stewardship as defined by the AWS Standard is clear: It has the power to drive credible, verifiable corporate action on water. It also enables business sites to become 'collective action ready', creating opportunities for collaboration between business, civil society and government to achieve common good outcomes through SDG 6.

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1. *Turning the Tide: A Call to Collective Action, Global Commission on the Economics of Water, March 2023.*
  2. *AWS defines water stewardship as 'the use of water that is socially and culturally equitable, environmentally sustainable and economically beneficial, achieved through a stake-holder-inclusive process that involves site and catchment-based actions'.*
  3. *Apple, Deutsche Investitions- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft (DEG), Diageo, Dole Plc, Global Water Partnership (GWP), H&M Group, International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Mars, Inc., Nestlé S.A., Netherlands Entrepreneurial Development Bank (FMO), Nutrien, PepsiCo, South Pole, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), WaterAid and WWF*