

## Press announcer

### **UNDP at the UN Water Conference: Robust actions needed to manage, conserve, protect water and improve lives**

**New York, 21 March** – World leaders will convene from 22-24 March at the UN 2023 Water Conference in New York to scale up action to tackle the global water crisis. The last UN Conference on the theme of water was 44 years ago, in 1977. This week’s Conference comes at a critical time when the world is facing a global water emergency that puts at real risk progress towards reaching the Sustainable Development Goals and even sustaining our current way of life. SDG 6 calls for universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water by 2030. Yet, climate change, pollution and mismanagement of resources is sharply decreasing water access and security every day.

Access to water is gravely unequal and this Conference is a key opportunity and a call to action to restore that balance. Today half of the world population, four billion people, live with severe water scarcity for at least one month of the year. About half a billion face water scarcity year-round. Approximately 4.2 billion lack sanitation, 2.2 billion people lack safe drinking water, and 700 million people could be displaced due to scarcity of water by 2030, 250 million in Africa alone.

According to the World Meteorological Organization, the number of weather-related disasters – floods, droughts, storms and extreme temperatures – has increased by a factor of five over the past 50 years, claiming, on average, the lives of 115 people and causing \$202 million in economic losses daily.

“This is not inevitable, solutions exist, and we know what they are”, said Usha Rao-Monari, UN Under-Secretary-General and Associate Administrator of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). “Water is central to achieving the 2030 Agenda. By improving how we manage, conserve, and protect our water, we can improve lives. Enhanced water management can be catalytic in leaving no one behind, in communities fighting poverty and hunger, safeguarding health and reducing child mortality, and protecting natural resources. We need to get the incentives right, both in terms of financial instruments, political will and

behavioural change at a scale we haven't seen before – on both the supply and demand side,” she reiterated.

UNDP's global portfolio of water management solutions is valued at US \$3.8 billion, in more than 130 countries worldwide, and is a key contributor to the [Water Action Agenda](#) and the [Water Action Decade](#). UNDP works across the full range of water challenges and is engaged in water management across portfolios from Nature to Climate, Transboundary Waters, Energy, Waste, Inclusive Growth, and Disaster Risk Reduction.

UNDP's long history of programming in the water sector, along with local, national and global partnerships and innovation in sustainable and integrated water resource management, will be showcased at the conference. UNDP's flagship event: "Accelerating Sustainable Development through Water Innovations and Solutions" will take place on Thursday, 23 March, 13:15-14:30 EDT at Conference Room 2 with live UN Web TV coverage. To register: <https://bit.ly/undp23watersideevent>

UNDP's multiple events at the Conference will bring ministers, experts, civil society and youth leaders together in different discussions and sessions with a solution-facing lens under three pillars: water access, water security, and water quality. Full list of side-events: <https://www.undp.org/events/un-2023-water-conference>

Water and its integral relationship with climate change and biodiversity is part of a larger ongoing global conversation. Building momentum on urgent need for systemic policy change and actions has been the mantra including at last year's [climate change conference COP-27](#), and the UN Biodiversity [COP 15](#) meeting in Montreal. This week's UN Water Conference is expected to culminate in the [Water Action Agenda](#) — commitments that will mobilize the urgent progress to ensure a water-secure world.

Chronic underinvestment in infrastructure dedicated to water persists. Going forward, UNDP is committed to embracing digitalization, strategic innovation and new forms of development financing to achieve equitable access to clean and sustainably managed water for all, across the 170 countries where it works.

**Media Contacts:**

**UNDP**

Oisika Chakrabarti: [oisika.chakrabarti@undp.org](mailto:oisika.chakrabarti@undp.org)

Guilherme Larsen: [guilherme.larsen@undp.org](mailto:guilherme.larsen@undp.org)

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