



# UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

## Nature-based Solutions for Water and Peace

Friday March 24<sup>th</sup> 2023, 09:30 –10:45 EST, UN Headquarters

Organised by [The Weather Makers \(TWM\)](#), [The Hague Center for Strategic Studies \(HCSS\)](#), [Tamatta](#), [Anthesis](#)

### Background on the event:

The thematic focus of this event is the reciprocity between the state of the biosphere, global freshwater distribution and social stability—corresponding to the interactive dialogue themes three and five, ‘Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment’ and ‘Water Action Decade’, respectively.

Wide-spread land degradation, biodiversity loss and soil erosion puts pressure on the availability of fresh water resources, which poses a direct risk to human livelihoods—especially those of vulnerable communities. Their lower adaptive and coping capacity to mitigate these risks also make them more susceptible to the emergence of conflict. Consciously resituating ourselves as stewards of the Earth by leveraging the power of the biosphere through large-scale restoration is key to enhance food and water security and thereby lay the foundations for a peaceful society. This requires multi-disciplinary, cross-scale, security-proof collaboration amongst indigenous communities, governments, industries, financial institutions and academics, such that efforts to improve the water situation in fragile contexts don’t lead to further strains and stresses at local level.

The event consisted of a 30-minute introductory presentation delivered by Juliette Kool from The Weather Makers (Geospatial Analyst, TWM) and Laura Birkman (Strategic Analyst, HCSS). Followed by a 45-minute panel discussion moderated by Bianca Nijhof (Associate Director, Anthesis) and with the following panellists: Tom Middendorp (Chair, International Military Council on Climate and Security), Dennis Kerkhoven (Co-founder, Tamatta Foundation), Robert de Bruin (Director Corporate Affairs, Van Oord), Lara Muller (Director Public Sector, Invest International) and John D. Liu (Advisory board member, UN Decade on Restoration).

### Key issues discussed:

- How landscape-scale, collaborative implementation of Nature-based Solutions can restore water cycles and used as a leverage for positive societal transformation and novel economic opportunities.
- Global trends of climate change, depleting natural resources, population growth and global fragmentation: How is the climate induced changes in water availability (longer periods of intense drought, shorter periods of intense rainfall) is a crucial issue that leads to social tensions, shortages, disruptions, migration flows, extremism, organised crime – climate change is not just an environmental issue, it is also a security and geopolitical issue.
- New ways of doing business, what is the role of the private sector (dredging industry) in applying Nature-based Solutions (NbS): how the knowledge held by large corporates can be redirected to apply NbS
- Real-life examples of large-scale NbS and their local to regional affects on climate and community: how people can become the agents of change by altering landscapes at large-scale and how our actions determine the future of life on Earth

- New economic models: fundamental, transformative change of our economy is necessary to order to support life on Earth and to give rise to a regenerative society
- How large-scale NbS can be employed to restore the hydrological climate and re-regulate the climate
- Sustainable finance: from a business-case to a value case

#### Key recommendations for action:

- We cannot bridge the gap by producing more in the way we have, we need to work multi-laterally towards new circular solutions in order to meet the needs of future generations
- The private sector must invest their time and energy into;
  - o Redirecting their scientific and engineering knowledge to applying NbS
  - o Developing new metrics (eg. KPI's, criteria) to value natural capital
  - o Producing not only a masterplan but also lay out clear pipelines to speed up the pace in these projects
  - o Partnering with NGO's, scientists, indigenous communities is necessary to ensure the solutions are holistic, inclusive and future-proof
- We must include everyone in NbS projects – to protect or restore their autonomy and value in society
- Changing the financial systems and reforming capital markets is a crucial step we have to take *now* in order to mitigate global economic instability due to the impacts of natural resource depletion and climate change
  - o Top-down financial incentives are necessary: policy change and regulation change must make certain thing mandatory to change the way banks and financial take into account impact and value into their investment decisions and monetizing externalities
- Include security dimension in policy and plans, develop tools and engagement strategies that are security proof

#### Main takeaways:

- Why: We need to find new ways to meet the needs of future world populations in the backdrop of decreasing natural resources and a changing climate
- How: Integrate landscape-scale Nature-based Solutions (NbS) into our ecological, social and economic systems
- NbS must be applied on landscape-scale in order to go from local to regional to global effects, and mitigate climate change to ensure access to sufficient food and water for the population and reduce the risk of extreme weather events and preserve vital ecosystems
- NbS must be grounded on indigenous knowledge and within an inclusive, hybrid governance structure. This will help improve stability in fragile regions and prevent and mitigate resource-related security risks and impacts
- NbS must be supported by new blended finance and governance instruments by redirecting the purpose of industry to use all our capital and allow scaling of the solutions. This will lead to new public-private win-win situations towards circular economies on the short, medium and long term

**Water Action Agenda:** [Bardawil & Sinai Initiative](#) | [Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(un.org\)](#)