



UN
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CONFERENCE

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UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

United Nations Regional Commissions: Regional Dialogue on Accelerating Implementation of the Water Action Agenda

24 March 2023, 8-9:15 AM, UN HQ Conference Building – Special
Event Room 2 (CR2)

Event ID HQ142

Organized by: United Nations Regional Commissions in support of
the UN-Water Regional Level Coordination Expert Group
contributions to the Water Action Decade and in collaboration with
the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation,
Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV) of Germany

Background on the event (one paragraph)

In preparation for the midterm comprehensive review of the Water Action Decade, the five United Nations Regional Commissions engaged member States and stakeholders in regional consultations during 2022 and 2023. These consultations assessed progress and identified regional priorities and initiatives for mobilizing water action. This side event shared the outcomes of the regional consultations together with forward looking commitments for achieving water-related goals.

Water Action Agenda (one paragraph, if possible, please include the link to your commitment in the [Water Action Agenda database](#))

No specific commitment to the Water Action Agenda was made as part of this side event, rather, the individual regional commissions and participants made separate commitments.

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points) :

While there are many regional variations with respect to the context surrounding the achievement of water related SDGs, there were several cross-cutting themes presented by the side event participants:

- Equitable access and rights to water and sanitation facilities is a challenge in all regions, particularly with respect to the urban/rural divide and for vulnerable groups. Several regional representatives spoke of the need to empower rural water management leaders and women in water management decision making.
- Water is a key input across all sectors and thus action on the topic must be cross-sectoral in nature.
- Water scarcity is a challenge in several regions. The demand for water is increasing due to population growth while climate change and excessive use leads to the depletion of groundwater and other water resources.
- Water scarcity can contribute to socio-economic instability. Conversely, cooperative water solutions are important to maintain peace and stability.
- Extreme weather events impact the water sector in all regions and necessitate the development of better early warning systems.
- Financing for the water sector is a challenge that requires both more and better targeted funding from national governments, as well as private sector investments.

Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)

Cross-cutting regional priorities for action include:

- **Climate change** impacts on water resources and the need for more transboundary collaboration, support by data and finance, to support adaptation and mitigation efforts
- **IWRM and overcoming siloed policy-making** – which require strong policy coherence, synergies, and legal frameworks for effective governance and capacity building, including inclusiveness and participatory engagement with all stakeholders such as youth, at the national and transboundary levels
- **Water scarcity**, which is exacerbated by water pollution and environmental degradation – the use of non-conventional water resources and the improved collection of data on water demand can help to better assess water availability as a resource and its use in various systems.
- **Water pollution** – and the need for improved infrastructure and the safe management of pollution or production of water resources from accidental pollution
- **Transboundary cooperation** – which is being strengthened, including through growing participation in the two UN global water conventions and their implementation, and is needed to support economic development, food security, ecosystems and livelihoods under the pressure of climate change.
- **Urban-rural divide on WASH delivery** – water is a fundamental human right which is why we should highlight the inequalities that exist at the national level on access to water services, as well as highlight the need to prioritize support for vulnerable groups and basic services (schools, hospitals, workplace, etc.). The need to prioritize finance for water resources management, especially in rural areas, was highlighted.
- **The UN's role in the water sector** - UN-Water should be strengthened to support regional delivery on water related SDGs. Regional commissions play a crucial role

in supporting the achievement of SDG 6 and other water-related goals, including through fostering cross sectoral and multistakeholder dialogue.

A ceremony of depositing the instrument of accession to the Water Convention by Iraq was held at the end of the side-event, with participation of Executive Secretaries of ESCWA and ECE. Iraq became the 49th Party to the Convention and the first country in the Middle East to join this instrument.