



UN  
2023 WATER  
CONFERENCE

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## UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

Together We Walk

Placing Water at the Centre of Urban Development

24 March 2023, Woolworth building, CRTCL office

Organized by: Arcadis and UN-Habitat

ID number **OS181**

### **Background on the event (one paragraph)**

The session discussed challenges and opportunities and showcased integrated water strategies and actions for rapidly growing cities implemented by partnerships of different stakeholders. These strategies and actions go beyond sectoral or linear approaches by making smart use of this precious resource to tackle increasingly complex urban water issues. A diverse panel highlighted solutions on urban river regeneration, urban water resilience and water supply, and Urban Water Planning and Operations with representatives from Central Asia, Africa, Southeast Asia, Europe and the USA. Together we Talked to exchange knowledge and commit to collaborative action placing water in the center of urban development and Together we Walked guided by an app to learn from best practices in New York. Partners and speakers: UN-Habitat, Arcadis, Aga Khan Agency for Habitat, US-ASEAN Smart Cities Partnership, Nairobi River Commission, New York City Economic Development Cooperation, Netherlands Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management and Rotterdam Climate Adaptation Plan.

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

### **Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)**

- Together we Connect!  
Partnerships are key for success. Public and Private partnerships can drive change and form a reliable partner for communities, especially when driving change in

underdeveloped regions that are currently facing the most setbacks due to climate change. These partnerships are focussed on action and steady financing is critical.

- **Together we Communicate!**

Communication between varying levels of Private, Public and Communities help to make better designs and optimize the impact. By making connections we can learn from each other and can Assess and Examine what others are doing and how to incorporate this into our own working.

- **Together we Value Nature!**

Society is built on the Biosphere and Economy is built on Society. Therefore, Natural Capital should be the basis of urban development and guiding our solutions for a sustainable urban future. Nature Based Solutions are often Low-tech but are just as innovative and can not only help with climate adaptation but also mitigation.

- **Together we Place Water at the Center!**

Social and Cultural Development, Economic Development, Ecosystem Health all intersect in river regeneration and water management. Therefore, water is a critical urban service that should be the basis of urban planning and design. Placing water at the center provides opportunities for flooding and water shortages as it helps with economic circularity (sustainable water sourcing, and water can be treated based on its final intended use).

- **Together we Include!**

The SDGs cannot be achieved without the consideration of “Leave no one Behind”. In every phase of development, we should ask ourselves; Who have we left behind? Localize the SDGs to incorporate the needs and capabilities of the communities. But make sure to do this with the communities not for the communities.

- **Together we implement at scale!**

There is a need to exchange knowledge and learn from projects to replicate and scale good practices, while considering the local context. The global water crises, including freshwater shortages, water pollution and rapid climate change in the context of rapid urbanization is a challenge, but urbanization also provides an opportunity to build more sustainably in the future.

### **Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)**

- UN-Habitat and Arcadis will continue to work together including other partners in developing countries on water infrastructure and planning and management where communities are placed at the center of urban development and will advocate for that.
- It is key to develop guidelines for Nature-Based solutions for urban planning and water management, in participation with communities to make use of existing knowledge and to respond to local needs. Financing solutions for NBs are critical and arises from partnerships built through action.
- Equity should be the lens for every urban plan and design related to water.
- Innovation to communicate, exchange and connect with partners and platforms, such as the app Together We Walk, are key for building partnerships to take collaborative action at scale.