



General Statement by the European Union and its Member States

2026 United Nations Water Conference to Accelerate the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Organisational session, 3 March 2025

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

Thank you for organising today's organisational session to prepare the themes of the 2026 UN Water Conference.

We believe that a lot has been achieved since the 2023 UN Water Conference. That Conference brought political drive and tangible results in the form of a first UN System-wide Strategy on Water and Sanitation, among other things. The EU stands ready to support all UN entities to deliver this Strategy and the upcoming Implementation Plan.

We also wish to commend the work and tireless efforts of Senegal and the United Arab Emirates in the preparations for the 2026 UN Water Conference. Furthermore, we warmly welcome the appointment of the UN Special Envoy on Water. We are particularly grateful for Her Excellency's active engagement in the follow-up to the 2023 Conference, the preparation of the 2026 UN Water Conference on SDG 6 and the 2028 Conference concluding the Water Action Decade, as well as her efforts to promote the implementation of the Water Action Agenda. We strongly believe that the Envoy's leadership and advocacy for enhanced global water cooperation will help countries and citizens understand the importance, urgency and criticality of water and sanitation in achieving sustainable development.

Excellencies,

The EU is strongly committed to the implementation of its 33 commitments under the Water Action Agenda, as a contribution to accelerating progress towards the achievement of SDG 6 and other water-related goals and targets. We want to increase access to water and sanitation globally, to promote the human rights to water and sanitation, and to support a stocktaking of the Water Action Agenda's implementation on a yearly basis in the margins of the HLPF.

As a sign of our continuous commitment to global water cooperation, we would also like to highlight that the EU has put water resilience on the top of its political agenda, with the expected adoption of an EU Water Resilience Strategy foreseen for adoption later this year. We intend for this strategy to be comprehensive, supporting both already ongoing initiatives and promising innovative approaches. This new EU Strategy will also include a forward-looking international dimension, building on the outcomes of the 2023 Conference and preparing for the 2026 Conference and the post-2030 Agenda. Among the priorities will be supporting enhanced global, transboundary and bilateral cooperation on water, mainstreaming water in relevant international processes, funding access to drinking water and sanitation, and integrated water resource management.

To mainstream water on the global political agenda, we also wish to underline the positive impact of holding regular intergovernmental meetings on water within the UN. This will ultimately aid the identification of common priorities and actions for accelerating the implementation of the international water related goals and targets.

Excellencies,

The 2026 UN Water Conference should in our view build on the achievements of the 2023 Conference, contribute to pursuing the establishment of a regular intergovernmental process on water, and provide political guidance on the global water agenda. Furthermore, we need cross sectoral and cross level cooperation to turn the commitments of the Water Action Agenda into collective action which encourage state and non-state actors to progress. In this context, it is also essential that the 2026 Conference will be inclusive. It should engage representatives from other sectors, notably agriculture and energy, from civil society, and from all relevant stakeholders, both in the preparation phase and at the Conference itself.

As regards the themes of the Interactive Dialogues, the EU proposes to maintain the themes from the 2023 Conference as they still capture the relevant aspects to accelerate implementation

of SDG 6. However, we do propose to consider changing the title of former Interactive Dialogue 5 to ‘Enhancing global governance of water’, given the mandate of the 2026 Conference.

For the theme of the new Interactive Dialogue 6, we would like to share two ideas.

Our first idea centres on technology and innovation.¹ We believe this could be a good topic, because the existing and future water-related challenges we face require the rapid development and deployment of innovative and transformative ideas. The sixth Interactive Dialogue could accordingly focus on means to allow equal and universal access to water and sanitation, applying innovation, nature-based solutions, and new technologies and approaches. This would be consistent with numerous voluntary commitments already submitted as a part of the Water Action Agenda and with other environmental and climate goals. This theme should also cover exchange of knowledge, experiences and good practices, as well as appropriate local governance for the use of these technologies.

A second idea we would like to share for Interactive Dialogue 6 relates to addressing water pollution and scarcity.² We are concerned about water pollution, because it further limits availability of water resources, especially in areas that are already under pressure due to water scarcity and drought. We therefore consider this a relevant topic. As part of a dialogue on addressing water pollution, we could also explore links with various other ongoing international processes on pollution. In addition, we could cover relevant new technologies and innovative approaches, including nature-based solutions, for example in relation to potential re-use of wastewater and its by-products.

In conclusion, we look forward to today’s discussions and to working together in making the next Conference ambitious and successful. I thank you.

¹ A possible theme could be: “Technology and Innovation: share innovative approaches to accelerate action towards achievement of internationally agreed water-related goals and targets”.

² A possible theme could be: “Addressing water pollution in a water scarce era to increase global water availability”.