

EU+MS additional input for UN 2026 Water Conference, elaborating further EU+MS statement of 3 March 2025

EU+MS express **readiness to engage in discussions on the preparation and outcome** of the UN 2026 Water Conference, with the aim to increase the ambition on keeping water high on the global agenda. In this respect:

- The 2026 UN Water Conference should **build on the achievements of the 2023 Conference** and contribute to pursuing the establishment of a regular intergovernmental process on water under the UN, to provide political guidance on the global water agenda.
- **Mainstreaming of water in other intergovernmental processes should be considered a priority.**
- Regarding the **official outcome** of the UN 2026 Water Conference, **we support the identification, proposal and debate of tangible outcomes as the main task of the Interactive Dialogues**, to support countries moving towards specific results, to adopt real and practical political decisions. We support the follow up of these outcomes to contribute to regular inter-governmental process on water.
- **The commitments of the Water Action Agenda should be discussed to draw lessons on how they have turned into collective action.** We encourage full implementation of the existing Water Action Agenda's commitments and submission of new commitments looking towards the UN 2026 Water Conference and beyond.
- For the preparation of the UN 2026 Water Conference, EU+MS support the following guidelines:
 - **Inclusive, cross sectoral and action-oriented**, ensuring broad multistakeholder engagement (also from outside the UN-system, including civil society, women and youth, Indigenous Peoples, private sector) and consultation from all regions, sectors (such as, but not limited to: food, climate, security, energy, biodiversity, etc.), and backgrounds with a transparent and science-based preparatory process;
 - The preparatory process should contribute to **the timely and quality delivery of the 2026 Conference background documentation and concept notes**, foster an effective high-level and regional dialogue and international debate on water, and allow MS and stakeholders to be actively involved in the preparation of the UN 2026 Water Conference, by:
 - **Explicitly incorporating relevant COPs and other intergovernmental processes and meetings** into the preparation process (e.g. UNFCCC COPs, CBD COPs, UNCCD COPs, UN Oceans Conference) and reflect other relevant meetings/steppingstone events to be held before December 2026.
 - Ensure that all relevant stakeholders can contribute to the preparatory process in a meaningful way.
 - Using the **UN Special Envoy's leadership and advocacy** for enhanced global water cooperation through active engagement in the preparation of the 2026 UN Water Conference.
 - **Following-up on the recommendations from the UN 2023 Water Conference's Interactive Dialogues (IDs)** as documented in the outcome summaries, as well as on the related commitments in the Water Action Agenda.

- **UN-Water should** be actively engaged to support MS and UN DESA as well as the Special Envoy, in the drafting of clear and concise concept notes for the IDs.
- **Informal Preparatory Working Groups (consisting of all relevant stakeholders) to be established in a transparent and inclusive manner** to help to prepare the concept notes for the IDs, incorporating the guidance provided by the preparatory meetings and finalized well in advance of the actual 2026 conference.
- Regarding the process for nominating the co-chairs, EU+MS request sufficient time and clarity of the process to propose candidacies.

For the themes of six Interactive Dialogues of the UN 2026 Water Conference:

- **EU+MS recommend maintaining the themes of 2023 Interactive Dialogues**, to ensure continuation and building upon the summaries and the PGA recommendations. This refers particularly to the themes of 2023 Interactive Dialogues 1, 2, 3 and 4. **EU+MS remain open to adapt former sub-topics of these IDs** in order to reflect the 2026 Conference mandate and accommodate respective priorities, like global food security/ agriculture in particular, but also pollution, financing, technology and innovation, and building resilience.
- **For ID 5: Water Action Decade: Accelerating the Implementation of the Objectives of the Decade**, including through the UN Secretary-General's Action Plan, EU+MS support pursuing the discussion focused on general aspects for enhancing global water governance, going beyond the Decade of Action to lead the Global Water Agenda. Given the mandate of the 2026 Conference, EU+MS suggest considering a slight modification of the title, **i.e. "Enhancing the Global Governance of Water"** if suggested without a reformulation of Interactive Dialogues 1, 2, 3 and 4.
- **The importance of timely implementation of commitments submitted to the Water Action Agenda is underlined.** Moreover, appropriate reporting of the contributions will provide stakeholders with an opportunity to highlight lessons learnt, share the best practices and identify the key challenges arising during their implementation. There is a need for a close follow up of the WAA across relevant UN processes.
- The co-chairs of Interactive Dialogues are encouraged to focus on the specific topics within the six ID themes, the implementation of the Water Action Agenda commitments and to come up with a few selected flagship initiatives with high impact for each ID. This could give the Conference a clear action- orientation and tangible outcome on concrete initiatives.

For the theme of Interactive Dialogue 6 and in line with EU+MS statement of 3 March, EU+MS propose:

- **Technology and Innovation: to share innovative approaches to accelerate action towards achievement of internationally agreed water-related goals and targets.** EU+MS propose to focus on means allowing equal and universal access to water and sanitation, by applying innovation and new technologies and approaches, including indigenous and local knowledge as well as digitalisation, non-conventional water resources or the efficient reuse of wastewater. The topic relates to numerous WAA voluntary commitments and should also cover exchange of knowledge, experiences and good practices, as well as the appropriate

local governance and regulation in the use of these technologies ensuring sustainably and context-sensitively managed water resources for people and the environment. The debate around the technology and innovation should focus on how diverse technologies, including the combination of grey and green infrastructure and NBS to guarantee that they are sustainable and aligned with environmental and climate goals, contributing to resilient societies and human rights, and to make them applicable in practice and financially sound.

- **Addressing water pollution and water scarcity in a water scarce era to improve water availability for all.** The theme is considered since these aspects are not adequately covered by any other of the 2023 IDs' themes. EU+MS would like to stress that water pollution further limits water resources' usability when the availability of water is already under pressure. Addressing this theme provides an opportunity to relate discussions to different international processes and debates such as the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution, the Global Framework on Chemicals, or in the sector of food and agriculture. Against this background, wastewater could be a particular area of interest: The potential of aspects such as safely treated and reused wastewater and sludge remains largely untapped and could benefit from new innovative technological developments. It can be the key to progress in many areas of development, from freshwater protection and marine water quality to health, sanitation, urban development and climate resilience.