

IMO contribution for the 2026 UN Water Conference

Water is essential to both people and the planet. However, challenges surrounding water resources are growing increasingly complex: ranging from scarcity to excess, and from contamination to depletion.

The 2026 UN Water Conference, co-hosted by the United Arab Emirates and Senegal, and to be held from 2 to 4 December 2026 in the UAE, represents a pivotal opportunity to help achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 on Clean Water and Sanitation and to progress on the 2030 Agenda as a whole.

As a United Nations specialized agency, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) is committed to supporting the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the associated SDGs. Since 2017, the IMO Technical Cooperation Committee considered and approved the linkages between IMO's technical assistance work and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

While SDG 14 on Life Below Water is central to IMO, the Organization's work can be linked to all SDGs. In 2020, IMO published "[*IMO and Sustainable Development*](#)" showcasing how international shipping and the maritime community contribute to sustainable development.

IMO also provides the Secretariat for the 1972 London Convention and its associated more modern 1996 London Protocol (LC/LP), the two global treaties that regulate the prevention of marine pollution by dumping of wastes and other matter at sea, and in doing so contribute to SDG 6 on the sustainable management of water by prohibiting unregulated dumping of wastes and other matter at sea. LC/LP encompass a precautionary and risk-assessment-based approach to waste management, stressing the need to prevent, reduce and, where practicable, eliminate pollution caused by the dumping of wastes at sea. The London Convention was one of the first global conventions to address human impacts on the marine environment, and has been strengthened significantly over the years, not least through the adoption of the 1996 London Protocol. Under LC/LP, no waste is allowed to be dumped at sea without a prior, thorough waste assessment and permitting procedure, stressing the importance of addressing sources of pollution at source.

With the two treaties being an essential part of waste management in general, their effective implementation is crucial for ensuring access to clean water. While the planet holds sufficient fresh water for everyone, economic mismanagement and inadequate infrastructure lead to millions of preventable deaths each year due to diseases caused by insufficient water supply, poor sanitation, and lack of hygiene.

In 2024, IMO published "[*Guidelines for selecting sites for the dumping of wastes and other matter at sea and for developing site management and monitoring plans*](#)" with step-by-step guidelines on the selection of dump-sites for the dumping of wastes and other matter at sea and on development of site management and monitoring plans to help manage dump-sites during and after use.

To assist current and prospective Parties to implement the LC/LP, IMO provides support to developing countries by helping them strengthen their legislative, scientific and technological capacities in this regard, through its Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme as well as a dedicated LC/LP Technical Cooperation Trust Fund.

To further strengthen this important work, [the recently agreed SMART-C LC/LP Project](#) (Capacity-Building for Sustainable Seas: Supporting the Implementation of the London Protocol through Education and Collaborative Research), funded by the Republic of Korea, aims to build capacity to implement the London Protocol in Mongolia, the Caribbean region and other Contracting and non-Contracting Parties to the LP, from 2024 to 2029.

The SMART-C LC/LP Project will facilitate scientific, technical and administrative-focused training opportunities for developing countries, especially Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), to strengthen their ability to apply the provisions of the LP treaty, enhance the protection of the marine environment, and thereby help contributing to the access to clean and safe water for all.

In defining the themes for the upcoming UN 2026 Water Conference, IMO would like to propose strengthening discussions in the following areas:

- Water for Climate, Resilience, and Environment: reinforcing the protection of marine ecosystems as part of broader water-related environmental strategies.
 - Water for Cooperation: enhancing discussions on Transboundary and International Water Cooperation, Cross Sectoral Cooperation, including Scientific Cooperation, and Water Across the 2030 Agenda to advance effective water governance.
 - Water Action Decade: prioritizing the acceleration of efforts to implement the Objectives of the Decade, recognizing their critical role in achieving sustainable water management globally.
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