

UK written inputs

2026 UN Water Conference: Interactive Dialogues Themes

Introduction

The United Kingdom welcomes the opportunity to provide additional input on the themes for the six Interactive Dialogues of the 2026 United Nations Water Conference. We appreciate the efforts of the co-hosts, Senegal and the United Arab Emirates, and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in organising this important event.

Our contribution aligns with the five themes of the 2023 Conference and suggests an additional theme on water finance.

Theme 1: Water for Health

The UK supports the theme of Water for Health, emphasising access to climate resilient Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), with a focus on systems transformation. Ensuring universal access to clean water and sanitation is fundamental to public health and well-being, as well as vital for preventing avoidable infection and reducing the threat of antimicrobial resistance and future pandemics.

Theme 2: Water for Sustainable Development

We endorse the theme of Water for Sustainable Development. We will fail to deliver on all the SDGs if we fail on water. Having a strong focus on the Water-Energy-Food Nexus will be key. The UK highlights the importance of integrated water resource management (IWRM) to balance competing demands and ensure sustainable use of water resources. We also stress the need for innovative solutions to enhance water efficiency and reduce water scarcity. Technological innovations and digital solutions, as well as access to reliable data remain key to improve water management and service delivery.

Theme 3: Water for Climate, Resilience, and Environment

The UK strongly supports the theme of Water for Climate, Resilience, and Environment. The climate crisis is a water crisis. We encourage a greater emphasis on green water (water stored in soil and vegetation), as well as blue water (visible water in rivers, lakes, and groundwater). We need a greater focus on the conservation and restoration of freshwater ecosystems and natural habitats critical to protect green water. We emphasise the critical role of water in climate adaptation, mitigation and nature strategies. The UK calls for strengthened international cooperation to protect water ecosystems, enhance resilience to climate impacts, and reduce disaster risks.

Theme 4: Water for Cooperation

We endorse the theme of Water for Cooperation, which includes transboundary and international water cooperation, cross-sectoral cooperation, and water across the 2030 Agenda. We encourage this theme to advocate for the governing of water as a global common good, recognising, first, our interdependence through both blue and green water flows; second, the interdependencies between the water crisis, climate change, and the loss of the planet's natural capital; and third, how water flows through all 17 SDGs. The UK underscores the importance of collaborative efforts to manage shared water resources and resolve water-related conflicts. We advocate for inclusive and participatory approaches that involve all stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities and civil society.

Theme 5: Water Action Decade

The UK supports the theme of Water Action Decade, aimed at accelerating the implementation of the objectives of the Decade, including through the UN Secretary-General's Action Plan. This theme needs to address how to integrate water across all relevant sectors, as well as

how to establish a circular economy for water that drives tangible progress towards SDG6, and all relevant climate, nature and development goals.

Proposed Theme 6: Water Finance

The UK proposes an additional theme on Water Finance. We recognise the need for financing the global water agenda and for innovative financing mechanisms (including public-private partnerships, blended finance, bonds, etc.) to mobilise much needed resources from all sources for water-related projects.

We also highlight the importance of integrating water risk management into the financial markets and across businesses (including supply chains), recognising this will require driving water stewardship as the global norm, ensuring water footprints are just and equitable, and working through central banks, regulators, and governments to shape market reforms that drive water security.

Conclusion

The UK remains committed to supporting the 2026 United Nations Water Conference and contributing to the development of effective and inclusive dialogue themes. We look forward to engaging with all stakeholders to ensure the success of the Conference and advance the global water agenda.