



---

## Submission on Interactive Dialogue Themes for the 2026 United Nations Water Conference

### United Nations Industrial Development Organization

8 April 2025

UNIDO extends its sincere appreciation to H.E. Mr. Coly Seck, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Senegal, and H.E. Mr. Mohamed Abushahab, Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates, for their leadership during the Organizational Session held on 3 March 2025. We also commend the compelling remarks of H.E. Dr. Cheikh Tidiane Dieye, Minister of Hydraulics and Sanitation of the Republic of Senegal, and H.E. Mr. Abdulla Balalaa, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs for Energy and Sustainability of the United Arab Emirates.

UNIDO further acknowledges the thoughtful reflections of Mr. Li Junhua, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and Secretary-General of the 2026 UN Water Conference, who reaffirmed the importance of multilateral cooperation, inclusive dialogue, and accelerating progress on SDG 6. His emphasis on delivering a Conference that is practical, people-centered, and rooted in implementation reinforces the direction we must collectively take.

Finally, we recognize the inspiring guidance of the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Water, Ms. Retno L.P. Marsudi. Her call to advocate, align, and accelerate global water action strongly resonates with UNIDO's mission.

We welcome the inclusive and participatory spirit of the preparatory process and the opportunity to contribute to shaping a conference that is solution-oriented, forward-looking, and transformative.

#### Endorsement of the 2023 Themes

UNIDO fully supports the retention of the five Interactive Dialogue themes from the 2023 UN Water Conference. These themes remain relevant and provide a comprehensive foundation for accelerating SDG 6 implementation. They are also highly consistent with UNIDO's work on inclusive and sustainable industrial development and circular economy approaches. In particular, we underscore the continued importance of the five original themes:

1. **Water for Health**, ensuring access to safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene;
2. **Water for Sustainable Development**, promoting access to water, and efficient use across productive sectors;
3. **Water for Climate, Resilience, and Environment**, addressing the nexus between industry, ecosystems, and disaster risk prevention, by promoting the use Nature Based Infrastructure Solutions where feasible;
4. **Water for Cooperation**, facilitating partnerships across borders and sectors through our work on water stewardship;
5. **Water Action Decade**, advancing implementation and accountability for SDG 6.

#### Support for additional and emerging Interactive Dialogue Themes

In addition to reaffirming support for the 2023 themes, UNIDO endorses several additional or refined themes proposed by Member States and stakeholders. These reflect the evolving nature of global water challenges and align closely with UNIDO's mandate:

- **Water Pollution in a Water-Scarce World.** As water stress and industrial activity grow, addressing pollution becomes critical. A focused dialogue on pollution prevention and water quality protection, particularly in urban and industrial settings, is urgently needed.
- **Wastewater as a solution.** UNIDO promotes wastewater as a resource, not waste—supporting its reuse in productive activities. This approach is central to circular economy transitions and environmental sustainability.
- **Technology and Innovation.** We echo the Special Envoy's emphasis on innovation as a game-changer. Digital technologies, AI, and real-time water monitoring are increasingly necessary for efficient and adaptive water management, especially in industrial systems.
- **Innovative Finance.** Closing the global water investment gap requires specific instruments such as blended finance, de-risking tools, and public-private partnerships. UNIDO works with governments and industry to unlock capital for water-efficient production and infrastructure modernization.

### **Suggested Theme for Interactive Dialogue 6 - Water and Finance**

UNIDO encourages consideration of a cross-cutting dialogue on **Water and Finance**, which explores the increasing role of financial instruments and markets in shaping water access, quality, and allocation. As water becomes more constrained, market mechanisms—if well governed—have the potential to incentivize sustainable use and reduce pollution, while mobilizing the capital required for infrastructure, innovation, and service delivery.

This theme would explore responsible financialization, innovative investment models, and the governance structures needed to ensure that water remains a public good, even as it becomes more integrated into financial systems. It would address both opportunities and risks, with particular attention to equity, transparency, and the needs of developing countries facing high water-related vulnerabilities.

While this trend could unlock much-needed capital for sustainability, it also presents real governance risks for industry, public service providers, and national policymakers. These include challenges around pricing, exclusion, and decision-making, particularly where water access is determined by market logic rather than human need or ecological limits. It further raises important questions about national sovereignty, as water-linked financial instruments could shift control over strategic water resources away from governments and communities—potentially impacting public access, affordability, and even transboundary cooperation.

UNIDO sees this as an opportunity to build on the outcomes of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (Seville, Spain; 30 June-3 July 2025) and bridge the conversation between resource efficiency, climate resilience, and investment mobilization, ensuring that financial flows contribute to just and sustainable water systems globally.

### **UNIDO's commitment and offer to co-organize**

UNIDO is committed to supporting the success of the 2026 UN Water Conference and to contributing substantively to its objectives. We are ready to play an active role as a co-organizer of one or more of the Interactive Dialogues, particularly those related to water quality, circular economy solutions, innovation, and financing for water infrastructure and pollution reduction.

UNIDO's global work on resource-efficient and cleaner production (RECP), eco-industrial parks, water stewardship, and sustainable manufacturing, positions it as a valuable contributor to integrated water solutions that benefit people, planet, and prosperity.

UNIDO focal point: Ms. Natalie Degger, Industrial Development Officer, Circular Industry and Resource Efficiency Unit.

Contact Details: [n.degger@unido.org](mailto:n.degger@unido.org)