

**Children and Youth International ,
Kazakhstani Youth Parliament for water**

Kuanysh Uzbekov

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

My name is Kuanysh Uzbekov, President of the Kazakhstani Youth Parliament for Water, and I speak today not just for myself, but on behalf of millions of youth from the Global South, especially from Central Asia. This issue is deeply personal to me. Where I live, we cannot drink tap water safely. Every household must boil water or buy it in bottles. And by 2050, our region is expected to face severe water scarcity, with not enough supply to meet the basic needs of a growing population. This is not a distant threat. It is part of our daily life.

Yet youth from the Global South, who are on the frontlines of climate-induced water stress, remain underrepresented in global water policy spaces. Over 70 percent of the world's youth living in water-stressed areas are in the Global South. At the same time, most of the key institutions that shape global water policy, such as the World Bank, OECD, SIWI, GWP, and UN-Water, are based in the Global North.

This is not about placing blame. It is about recognizing that structural challenges such as visa restrictions, limited funding, and citizenship requirements create barriers for many youth in the Global South to access leadership roles and participate in global processes. When we speak about youth empowerment in decision-making, we must focus on those who are most affected. It is both fair and effective to give more space to youth from vulnerable regions so they can help shape solutions that are practical and relevant.

We call for bold structural reforms:

Decentralize global water governance

Strengthen regional hubs

Create equitable pathways for youth from the Global South to access leadership, employment, and meaningful participation in water policy

The 2026 UN Water Conference must be a turning point to the future where youth from the most impacted regions are supported, trusted, and able to lead.

Thank you.