

## Stakeholder statement – International Association for Water Law (AIDA)

Speaker: Dr. Renée Martin-Nagle

Thank you for the opportunity to address this important meeting.

In our opinion, the water crisis is fundamentally a crisis of governance. Humans have fragmented and degraded aquatic habitats, used water unsustainably and infused it with contaminants without effective restriction. Water security is essential for both adaptation and mitigation and for maintenance of healthy ecosystems, but current governance systems are not adequate to address these existential threats.

Legal mechanisms for transformative water action must be strategically harnessed to mainstream the governance and management of freshwater and biodiversity for the benefit of people and nature and for socioeconomic development. Governments may need guidance to identify governance weaknesses, strengths, gaps, and opportunities, including addressing rights of nature; conceptualizing integrated legal and regulatory frameworks for water and related resources and sectors; assessing implementation, incentives, and enforcement requirements; encouraging transboundary cooperation informed by international law, and identifying capacity-building and reform needs. Ultimately, water governance must be cross-sectoral and multilevel for mutually reinforcing and coherent interventions than can lead to concrete positive change for all.

We must thus effectively apply but also reassess national legal frameworks and, where appropriate, promote necessary reforms and/or develop further guidance, while also acknowledging and supporting local laws, practices, and institutions. In the face of uncertainty, the International Association for Water Law ([AIDA](#)) advocates for the design and effective implementation of forward-looking, flexible laws and governance models, informed by science and data, which can accelerate the implementation of the Water Action Agenda and facilitate integrated progress toward achieving the SDGs 6, 13 and 15 and other policy frameworks.

Against this backdrop AIDA, jointly with the IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law ([WCEL](#)) and the Environmental Law Institute ([ELI](#)), has developed a [\*Manifesto for the Freshwater Rule of Law\*](#) which provides a template of principles to inspire, inform, and guide nations in reassessing and reforming national legal frameworks for the management and governance of freshwater. The rule of law is a key tool to be utilized in building a better world both now and in the future, leaving no one behind and in harmony with nature.