



Draft Version - January 24, 2026

## Stakeholder Think-Piece on Interactive Dialogue (b):

### Water for Prosperity

#### 1. Introduction

We, the diverse stakeholders, rights holders, and knowledge-holders, participating in the ID2 for the One Day Multi-Stakeholder Meeting 25<sup>th</sup> January 2026, base our contribution on the background brief by the co-hosts to the PGA meeting 9<sup>th</sup> July 2025.

We appreciate the detailed overview of ID2 topics but wish to highlight to certain aspects that are either missing, need greater emphasis, or require revisiting to address invisible barriers and inequalities.

The common thread for ID 2 is the “HOW” of water management. How to prioritize among competing priorities or identify critical water trade-offs critical for decision-making. While the background note gives a comprehensive overview of different types of tools and approaches, we would like to emphasize other dimensions of the “how” from diverse perspectives.

Water management decisions are shaped by the values of decision-makers and the perceived value of the activity. Water governance- and management must therefore prioritize principled decisions that balance human water demands with planetary health to ensure sustainable prosperity for all.

#### 2. Challenges

**Human rights** are often violated when decisions about water prioritize the prosperity of a few while negatively impacting the well-being of communities and ecosystems. Human rights principles, principles on good water governance, IWRM, and integrated and circular approaches aim to ensure prosperity for people and planet, but they are not implemented fully.

A narrow focus on return on investment keeps water **undervalued and overused** - disregarding its centrality for prosperity. Water’s value is multi-dimensional, spanning economic, social, cultural and religious dimensions, with mismanagement deeply impacting people’s live.

Fewer than 30% of countries report having over 75% of the needed water **workforce** capacity, revealing critical gaps to deliver. Women comprise only about 20% of the global water workforce and rarely hold decision-making roles, while indigenous women’s representation remains critically low.

**Pollution** threatens people and planet, yet its immense mitigation potential via integrated and circular solutions remains largely untapped. Limited ambition and efforts toward integrated, circular, and nature-based solutions remains a key barrier to reducing water pollution effectively.

#### 3. Opportunities & Proposed Solutions

Water, in all its various dimensions, forms the core of interconnected relations among lands, coasts, waters, ice, and sky.



A **human rights-based approach** will accelerate development for prosperity for people and the planet. IWRM framework and good water governance principles offer guidance, while integrated and circular approaches offer practical solutions for all. The triple nexus approach (humanitarian, development, peace) offers guidance in crisis and fragility.

Give rise to **different indicators of prosperity**: Indigenous knowledge systems offer holistic prosperity indicators, encompassing worldviews, values, spirituality, and reciprocal relationships with the environment. A robust, inclusive prosperity definition bolsters the long-term vision to shape a post-2030 Framework centering around peace, prosperity and planetary well-being.

Elevating **youth**, women, and Indigenous **women** as leaders in **water governance**, decision-making, and the formal water and sanitation **workforce** offers tremendous opportunities to close capacity gaps and drive implementation and innovation. Investing in training and education as well as addressing barriers is key for a diverse workforce ready to protect water for present and future generations.

Shifting the narrative to recognize **wastewater** as a valuable resource is key to transforming the challenge of pollution into value-centered solutions, supporting various sectors and improving human and planetary health.

## 4. Key Recommendations for Member States

### **Adopt a Human Rights- based Approach and fully implement existing tools**

**What:** Actions/commitments under ID2 need to be based on human rights principles of non-discrimination & equality, participation, accountability, transparency and sustainability. Existing approaches of good water governance and IWRM to guide further action.

**Why:** Water for the prosperity of people and planet can be achieved based on strong principles to avoid marginalization and negative impacts.

**How:** Thoroughly apply existing principles, tools and mechanisms for human rights-based action, good water governance, and IWRM.

### **Expand “Water for prosperity” to a more comprehensive set of indicators of prosperity**

**What:** Co-create a more comprehensive set of indicators of prosperity to capture diverse values of water, also towards a post203 Framework.

**Why:** A more comprehensive definition of prosperity can shift action towards action that adds value not only to a few people but humans and nature alike.

**How:** Mandate and facilitate a working group to co-create a more comprehensive set of indicators of prosperity for ID 2, informing and shaping the process.

### **Address the capacity and the gender gap in water and wastewater**

**What:** Elevate youth, women, and Indigenous women to be changemakers in water governance, water management, and water and wastewater service delivery.

**Why:** With the triple planetary crisis, we cannot afford to neglect the workforce and ignore existing barriers for youth, women and Indigenous women.

**How:** Invest in a diverse workforce, thoroughly apply existing tools and mechanisms, elevate existing initiatives.



### **Shift the wastewater narratives and adopt nature-based solutions**

**What:** Adopt regulation and policies recognizing wastewater as a valuable resource to enable circular re-use and recovery, shift investment towards Nature based Solutions.

**Why:** Environmental protection, economic value and climate resilience.

**How:** Build technical and institutional capacity through existing platforms and initiatives. Integrate into national development plans, climate strategies (NDCs), and water policies. Ensure inclusive approaches based on human rights principles.

### **Recognize and advance Indigenous, knowledge, science and earth observations**

**What:** Indigenous Peoples hold precise knowledge of water, based on empirically grounded, sophisticated observations, lived experiences, practices and ancestral wisdom.

**Why:** Indigenous knowledge offers precise, accurate and proven solutions for water.

**How:** Early, full, and effective participation in governance, environmental management, decision-making making, cultural protection, and climate action.

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*This Think Piece was developed in a participatory multi-stakeholder process leading up to the “Enhancing Action through Collaboration: One Day Stakeholder Meeting”, in connection with the Dakar High-level Preparatory Meeting for the 2026 UN Water Conference.*

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