



INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE WATER IN MULTILATERAL PROCESSES

Sustainable Development Goal 6, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and beyond, and global water initiatives

An extract of the Global Online Stakeholder Consultation: Inputs to Interactive Dialogues Concept Papers

About this Paper

This paper is an extract from the report of the Second Global Online Stakeholder Consultation: Inputs to Interactive Dialogues Concept Papers, which summarizes inputs received from stakeholders to a global online stakeholder consultation organized by UN DESA in connection with the 2026 United Nations Water Conference, which will be held from 2 December to 4 December 2026, in the United Arab Emirates.

The main Report can be found [here](#), including links to all responses and all inputs to the six Interactive Dialogues, as well as detailed background information and a summary.

This paper presents summaries of key messages for Interactive Dialogue: Water in Multilateral Processes, Sustainable Development Goal 6, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and beyond, and global water initiatives.

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143 responses were received for the Interactive Dialogue theme pertaining to Water in Multilateral Processes.

Challenges

While integrating water into prominent multilateral processes is essential, it is not always easy. **High fragmentation** amongst global water efforts is one of the greatest challenges according to participants. They specified that this **siloed governance, fragmented mandates, and overlapping workstreams** across multilateral initiatives, UN entities, and national governments results in a lack of accountability, duplication, and delayed implementation.

"Knowledge-to-Action" Bottleneck: Multilateral resolutions and scientific data (outputs) rarely translate into verifiable, sustained local action (outcomes). This is due to a disconnect between high-level policy mandates and grassroots capacity for implementation, monitoring, and maintenance." ICARUS AI Inc., USA

Similarly, stakeholders expressed concern over the ongoing treatment of water as a sectoral issue rather than one that cuts across biodiversity, climate adaptation, food security, and disaster risk reduction (DRR).

"Water still isn't placed at the heart of other sectors' plans – energy, food, health, cities, industry treat it as an input, not a backbone." African Civil Society Network on Water and Sanitation (ANEW), Kenya

Policy alignment between national action plans (NAPs) and global goals reportedly remains slow, due in part to insufficient and misaligned funding. Stakeholders reported that **traditional, large-scale, risk-averse financial models often exclude small and medium-sized water enterprises**. These enterprises cannot meet the stringent collateral and documentation requirements of commercial funders and are considered too advanced for smaller opportunities such as microfinancing according to consultation participants. Many participants cited political instability and polarization as forces that inhibit momentum and weaken international collaboration on shared water goals.

Solutions

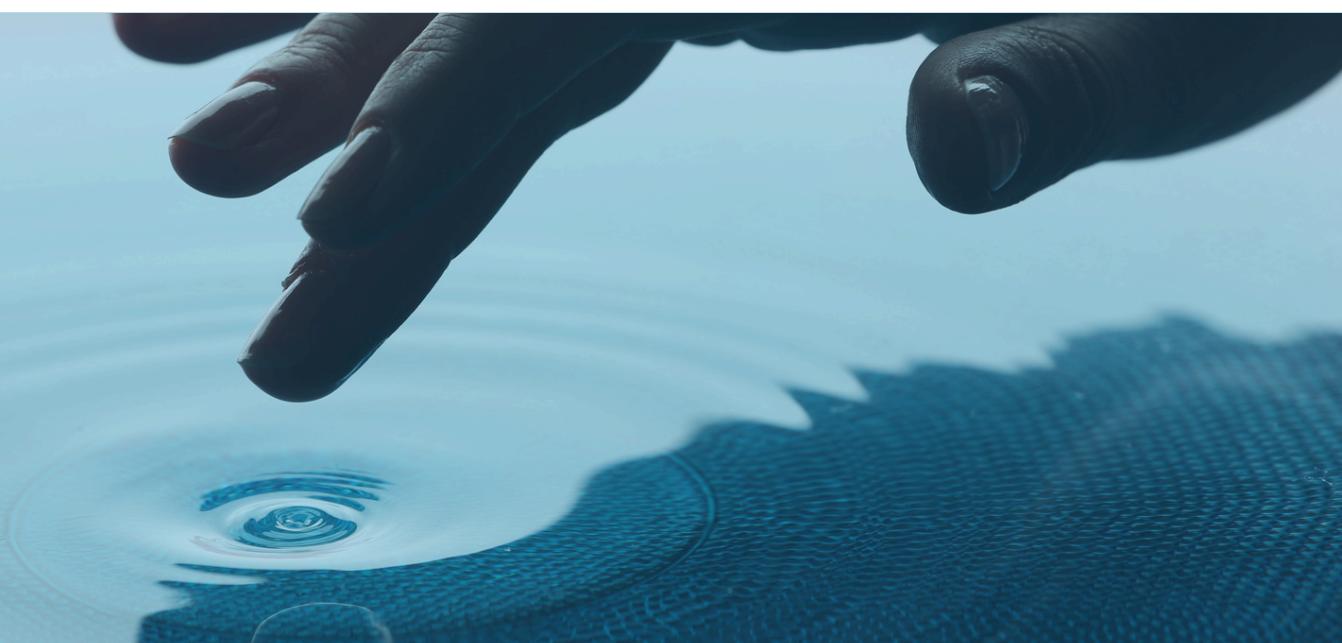
Joint data-sharing and open information platforms were frequently cited as solutions to bolster collaborative transboundary and scientific maintenance of water resources. Basin dashboards, digital observatories, and citizen-science hubs were provided as examples of ways to improve evidence-based decision-making, transparency, and trust.

"Promote cross-border community-based water observatories, integrating local data, indigenous knowledge, and digital tools. These platforms facilitate scientific cooperation, inclusive governance, and participatory monitoring of water-related SDGs." [Translated from French] Ong Adoka, Ivory Coast

For long-term cooperation, **inclusive and participatory governance frameworks** were deemed essential by stakeholders.

"Consolidate and support the adoption of the UN's Draft Articles on the Law of Transboundary Aquifers, by promoting and supporting ad-hoc local- to intermediate-scale memoranda of understanding for cooperation, including protocols and informal arrangements." International Association of Hydrogeologists, Hungary

Stakeholders emphasized that **youth leadership training, gender mainstreaming, Indigenous-led initiatives, and participatory basin charters** are important methods for ensuring that decisions on water leave no one behind and are sustainable. To foster meaningful engagement from these local stakeholders, respondents noted that **capacity-building and institutional strengthening efforts** such as peer-to-peer exchanges, technical co-training, and leadership mentoring are essential. In addition, there was ample support among stakeholders for benefit-based negotiations and cooperative legal frameworks that are focused on equitable, rather than volume-based allocation of water.



Solutions

Strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships was the most commonly proposed method for unifying global water efforts. Including governments, UN entities, civil society, Indigenous groups, academia, youth and the private sector in regional water coalitions, public-private partnerships (PPPs), and cross-sectoral water forums can facilitate greater alignment of national water strategies with global commitments according to survey responses.

“Through dialogues, we advocate nexus-based policy frameworks, foster South-South cooperation, and document best practices to strengthen global coordination and monitoring.”
India Water Foundation, India

Stakeholders further emphasized the importance of **utilizing data-sharing platforms and digital tools** like community monitoring, real-time water data systems, satellite-based water tracking, and AI-enabled dashboards to harmonize global water reporting and strengthen accountability for SDG 6 progress.

“A shared monitoring and reporting system would ensure coherence, transparency, and equitable progress across all contexts.” Acción contra el Hambre, Spain

To bridge the gap between commitments and capital flows, respondents promoted **climate-linked funds, standardized SDG 6 metrics, green bonds, and blended finance**.

PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

In their responses, stakeholders shared examples of partnerships that have proven helpful in promoting Water in Multilateral Processes. A few of these are highlighted below.¹

The Water Resilience Tracker for National Climate Planning is a diagnostic tool and guidance framework that helps countries assess and strengthen the role of water in national climate plans. Through a structured questionnaire and accompanying Guidance Document, it enables planners and policymakers to evaluate how water is integrated into planning processes, including key synergies and trade-offs across sectors. The Guidance Document provides practical approaches to improve water resilience and ensure climate plans are water-sensitive and resilient to future impacts. Developed by AGWA with IWMI, Deltas, and Arup, and supported by partners including SWA, GWP, and UNICEF, the Tracker is being implemented across Latin America, Asia, and Africa with funding from UK aid, the Netherlands, the Inter-American Development Bank, GIZ, and UNDP.

Highlighted by: Alliance for Global Water Adaptation (AGWA), United States of America

Highlighted by: Stronger Together Coalition! (ST!), Non-Governmental Organization, Germany

The Stronger Together! Coalition (ST!) is a global platform established in 2022 to unite women's networks and organizations working to empower professional women in the water resources and WASH sector. It brings together women-led and women-focused networks with allies from civil society, government, multilateral organizations, and professional associations to advance collaboration and gender equality. The Coalition's mission is to empower women professionals as leaders and change-makers at global, regional, and local levels, guided by the principles "Nothing about us without us" and "Strengthening women globally." Through partnerships with local organizations, UN-Habitat, and agencies such as GIZ, and through mentoring, peer learning, and advocacy, ST! strengthens networks, amplifies impact, and helps remove barriers to gender equality across the sector.

¹These examples reflect inputs shared by stakeholders and are presented for illustrative purposes only; they do not imply endorsement by the United Nations. 5

TRANSFORMATIVE ACTIONS

As part of the consultative process, stakeholders were asked to identify one transformative action needed to accelerate progress towards the Water in Multilateral Processes objectives. A few examples can be found below.

“Promote stronger integration between global water agendas and local implementation through structured participation of utilities in multilateral platforms.” Asociación Nacional de Entidades de Agua y Saneamiento de México (ANEAS), Mexico

“States and international organizations must ensure civil society participation with financial, logistical, administrative support before, during, and after international events.” Coalition EAU, France

“Governments and UN agencies must establish a global framework for groundwater protection, integrating rights-based access with climate resilience.” Association for Farmers Rights Defense, AFRD, Georgia

“Recognising and relying on the stability and foresight of Indigenous communities like Ngāi Tahu will ensure water management transcends political cycles, reflects holistic relationships with nature, and secures sustainability beyond 2030.” Te Kura Taka Pini Ltd., New Zealand



Figure 11: Visual representation of keywords stakeholders used to describe their perspectives on the theme: Water in Multilateral Processes.