

## **Summary of the 43rd UN-Water Meeting and Workshop: 24-26 March 2026**

The largest-ever group of United Nations agencies, partners, and government representatives faced a heavy agenda for advancing global water and sanitation policy as they convened for the 43rd UN-Water Meeting.

Among the agenda items, participants were briefed on the final details for the third edition of the UN SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2026. This report will reveal the impact and value of Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6, clean water and sanitation) when it is launched during the July 2026 session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).

The key focus of the meeting and one-day workshop that followed was the preparations for the December 2026 UN Water Conference, which will be co-hosted by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Senegal. Participants recognized the opportunity this event provides to build on the dialogue that began at the 2023 UN Water Conference. They also stressed that it needs to deliver concrete and actionable outcomes to demonstrate the value of multilateral cooperation in the face of a challenging financial and geopolitical environment.

In the six months since the 42nd UN-Water meeting, Co-Chairs had been named for the six interactive dialogues that will be the centerpiece of the 2026 UN Water Conference:

- Water for people: Ghana and Switzerland;
- Water for prosperity: China and Spain;
- Water for planet: Egypt and Japan;
- Water for cooperation: Zambia and Finland;
- Water in multilateral processes: Mexico and Germany; and
- Investments for water, South Africa and France.

The Co-Hosts reported on their efforts to organize the Conference. The Co-Chairs of the interactive dialogues reported on the initial discussions that took place during a January preparatory meeting in Senegal along with their initial planning for the dialogues. In each of the six presentations, the Co-Chairs emphasized that discussions should be focused while recognizing the interlinkages among the six themes.

In his remarks at the conclusion of the two-day open session, Alvaro Lario, UN-Water Chair, highlighted that participants had stressed that acting coherently across mandates is essential, fragmentation is costly, and coordination must translate into delivery. He also noted that discussions had revealed ways in which

the outcomes from the 2023 UN Water Conference are helping countries make progress.

The full-day workshop on 26 March brought together Co-Convenors from UN agencies who are drafting concept notes for each of the interactive dialogues. They participated in world café-style discussions on the outlines for each concept note and provided feedback on overlaps and gaps as well as key elements in each outline.

Throughout the meeting and workshop, participants noted the value of UN-Water as a convening space for discussions on global cooperation on water and sanitation. They also emphasized the need to ensure upcoming meetings, including the 4th High-level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, the review of SDG 6 progress at the July meeting of the HLPF, and the 2026 sessions of the Conferences of the Parties to the three Rio Conventions, are viewed as linked events. Speakers also highlighted the need to plan for the follow-up of each event, and not just the preparations, to ensure learning takes place and progress is achieved on the ground.

The 43rd UN-Water Meeting convened at the headquarters of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in Rome, Italy, from 24-25 March 2026. Approximately 120 participants registered to attend the meeting in person, while more than 80 individuals registered to participate online.

### **A Brief History of UN-Water**

While over 30 UN organizations carry out water and sanitation programmes, no single UN entity is dedicated exclusively to these issues. In 1977, the UN’s Inter-Secretariat Group for Water Resources began coordinating UN activities on water. Subsequently, in 2003, the UN Administrative Coordination Committee’s Subcommittee on Water Resources was transformed into UN-Water and endorsed by the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). UN-Water plays a coordinating role within the UN to ensure the UN family “delivers as one” in response to water-related challenges.

UN-Water Meetings bring together Members and Partners twice a year to carry out the mandate of informing policies, monitoring and reporting, and inspiring action on water and sanitation issues. Participants include representatives of the UN Secretariat and UN agencies, funds, programmes and other entities, multilateral environmental agreements, civil society organizations, and other

organizations. Representatives from UN Member States also participate as observers.

**Initiatives:** The overarching focus of UN-Water's Members and Partners is to support UN Member States to sustainably manage water and sanitation.

Efforts to inspire action include coordination of the annual observance of World Water Day on 22 March and World Toilet Day on 19 November. UN-Water releases the annual UN World Water Development Report on World Water Day.

Efforts to inform policies focus on placing water and sanitation issues on the agenda of key UN agreements, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs. SDG 6 calls for the international community to strive to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by 2030.

Monitoring and reporting efforts seek to provide coherent and reliable data and information on key water trends and management issues. The Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG 6 builds on and expands the experiences and lessons learned during implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

UN General Assembly [resolution 77/334](#), which was adopted in September 2023, called for global conferences on water and sanitation to take place in 2026 and 2028. The resolution also requested the UN Secretary-General to present a UN system-wide water and sanitation strategy before September 2024. UN-Water was charged with developing a collaborative implementation plan for the strategy.

**Governance Structure:** The 36 [Members](#) of UN-Water comprise UN agencies, programmes, and funds with a water-related mandate. The 52 Partners comprise international organizations, professional unions, associations, and other civil society groups that are actively involved in water-related issues and that have the capacity and willingness to contribute to the work of UN-Water and meet UN-Water's partnership criteria.

UN-Water Senior Programme Managers (SPMs) represent UN-Water Members. They provide the overall governance and strategic direction and constitute the highest operational decision-making body of UN-Water. UN-Water is supported in its work by its Technical Advisory Unit.

The UN-Water Chair is chosen from among the UN Executive Heads after consultations within the CEB. The current Chair is Alvaro Lario, President, IFAD. The UN-Water Vice-Chair is elected among the UN-Water SPMs. The UN-Water Secretary is a senior staff member of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

### Report of the 43rd UN-Water Meeting

Alvaro Lario, UN-Water Chair, welcomed participants and highlighted that water is an increasingly important topic on the global political agenda. He stressed the need for a concerted approach from practitioners and to ensure the momentum will be effectively translated into political will ahead of the 2026 UN Water Conference. He noted that UN80 is challenging us to do more with less and highlighted that UN-Water demonstrates how to coordinate at the multilateral level.

Lario then invited participants to consider the draft agenda, which was adopted without discussion.

This briefing note summarizes the discussions, which focused on continued implementation of UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation and preparations for the 2026 UN Water Conference.

### Implementation of Past Decisions

Madhushree Chatterjee, UN-Water Secretary, introduced a number of reports that reviewed progress on implementation of decisions taken at the 42nd UN-Water Meeting. These reports included summaries of activities undertaken by the UN-Water expert groups on groundwater, transboundary waters, water quality and wastewater, and water scarcity as well as an overview of implementation of the Water Action Decade. There were no comments on these reports.

### Activities on UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation: Lead and inspire collective action on water and sanitation

**Update and strategic discussion on advancing Priority Collaborative Action 1.1 – Unify and amplify UN voices on water and sanitation:** Bruce Gordon, UN-Water Vice-Chair, highlighted efforts to collaborate more and to support the development of consistent messaging. As examples, he noted the collaboration of communication focal points, the development of a calendar of events, and the launch of the UN Water Dispatch newsletter.

**Update and strategic discussion on advancing Priority Collaborative Action 1.2 – Water beyond 2030, including the UN SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2026:** Kelly Ann Naylor, lead author of the third edition of the SDG 6 Synthesis Report, Joakim Harlin (United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)), and Fiona Gore (World Health Organization (WHO)) presented the draft report, which will be launched at the HLPF in July 2026. They said it will consolidate learning from 10 years of SDG 6 and will reflect on what comes next. It will include information on acceleration trends, expected time to achieve the SDG targets, and areas of decline. It will have a forward-looking perspective and will address the value of SDG 6 for stakeholders, along with conclusions and recommendations.

Given the current geopolitical context, including the UN80 reforms, the authors invited suggestions for a chapter that will focus on how to move forward with SDG 6 toward 2030 as well as the post-2030 agenda. Participants suggested consulting the hosts of the 2026 and 2028 UN Water Conferences to avoid duplication and ensure efforts are aligned. Additional suggestions included integrating:

- the connection between water and land systems as well as linkages between SDG 6 and SDG 15 (life on land);
- information on water risk and the full water cycle;
- climate resilience and evidence where silos have been broken;
- groundwater and the food-climate-water nexus; and
- governance frameworks for delivering the SDG 6 mandate.

**Update on World Water Day 2026 and the UN World Water Development Report 2026:** Abou Amani, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), highlighted the activities involved with the pivot event at UN Headquarters for the celebration of World Water Day 2026, which focused on the theme "Where Water Flows, Equality Grows." He

noted that the online outreach for World Water Day had a potential reach of 26.5 billion people, with 1.7 million engagement and more than 270 UN entities contributing to the campaign to date.

Miguel de Franca Doria, UNESCO, reported that the UN World Water Development Report 2026 (WWDR) focused on connections between water and gender equality, with contributions from 43 UN-Water Members and Partners. He said the report will be available in 18 languages, including for first time in some Indigenous languages.

During the discussion, speakers highlighted links between the 2026 World Water Day and the WWDR with other international processes and days, including the post-2030 agenda, International Glaciers Day, World Wetlands Day, and World Lake Day.

**Update on World Toilet Day 2026:** Evariste Kouassi Komlan, UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), reported on planning for World Toilet Day, which will focus on gender equality to advance sanitation as a world priority.

Kate Medlicott, WHO, noted lessons from 2025 include the importance of identifying links to the theme that resonate with the target audience.

During the discussion, participants noted links between pit latrines and their impacts on groundwater and soil. They also highlighted the need to incorporate links with menstrual health and hygiene, as well as the disposal of waste.

**Creation of the Task Force for World Water Day 2027 “Water, Sanitation and Health”:** Felicia Vacarelu, UN-Water Communications Manager, noted that World Water Day 2027 will focus on “Water, Sanitation and Health” and invited Members and Partners to create a task force to plan for this event.

Participants agreed to create the Task Force on World Water Day 2027 coordinated by WHO and including UNESCO, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), UNEP, Geneva Water Hub, International Water Resources Association (IWRA), International Association of Hydrogeologists (IAH), Human Right to Water, International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID), United Nations University (UNU), International Association for Hydro-Environment Engineering and Research (IAHR), AquaFed - The International Federation of Private Water Operators, Rural Water Supply Network (RWSN), UNICEF, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), International Association of Hydrological Sciences (IAHS), and the World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO).

**Theme of World Water Day and World Toilet Day in 2028:** Abou Amani, UNESCO, introduced the proposed theme for 2028 World Water Day and World Toilet Day: “Technology and Innovation for Water.” He said the proposal responds to the need for transformation as well as rising concern on how water is impacted by new technologies and concerns about water dependency on emerging infrastructure like data centers as well as opportunities and challenges related to artificial intelligence. He noted it could provide a platform to advance responsible, people-centered approaches to: managing growing uncertainties in the water cycle; improving openness and interoperability across water data systems; strengthening early warning and adaptive management;

supporting trustworthy digital tools for transparent decision-making; and building capacity to accelerate uptake of the outcomes.

During the discussion, some speakers said the proposed theme was not strategic for the pivotal year of 2028, when the 2028 UN Water Conference will take place and the negotiations on the post-2030 development agenda will be underway. They supported a theme that connects water with the wider sustainable development agenda.

Speakers also stressed the need to: focus on those who are left behind; consider agricultural technologies; incorporate social innovation and governance; involve the private sector; consider water as natural capital and incorporate consideration of the circular water economy; and consider rights holders' perspectives.

Following a discussion on the ideas for this theme during the closed session of the UN-Water Meeting, the selected theme for the 2028 World Water Day campaign and the 2028 World Toilet Day campaign is “Water for the Future / Sanitation for the Future.” The theme of the UN World Water Development Report 2028 will be aligned accordingly.

***Activities on UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation: Engage better for countries by leveraging whole-of-UN system support and by mobilizing stakeholders and partnerships for water and sanitation***

**Update and strategic discussion on advancing Priority Collaborative Action 2 – Collaborate for joint country programming:** Mary Matthews, UN Development Programme (UNDP), reported on four regional clinics that have been organized with approximately 75 UN Resident Coordinators (RCs). She said the clinic for Western Asia/Arab States is currently on hold. Additional activities include:

- an initiative to provide seed funding for up to 10 countries;
- an assessment of country-level coordination, which will compile UN country-level approaches to water and sanitation based on semi-structured interviews with UN country teams (UNCTs) and RC offices; and
- an update to the UN-Water “offer” document for UNCTs and RCs, which will update a document created in 2019 with the objectives of offering support for UNCTs and RCs in applying a systems approach to implementing the UN System-Wide Strategy on Water and Sanitation at the country level.

During the discussion, participants highlighted the high-level of engagement from RCs and the demand for the work that UN-Water Members do.

**Update on the SDG 6 Capacity Development Initiative (CDI):** Ebru Canan Sokullu, UNITAR, highlighted that this initiative is working with nine pilot countries, and will be conducting a gap analysis, among other activities. She highlighted the need for identifying how the CDI can support integrated cross-sectoral approaches and implementation as well as for support for capacity training on data collection through satellites.

During the discussion, speakers supported the focus on making initiative more practical and linked with vocational training. The need to consider how to deliver capacity-building to countries in crisis was noted, along with the value of engaging at the regional as well as the national level.

At the conclusion of the discussion, participants acknowledged the progress update on the CDI and invited Members and Partners to contribute resources and expertise to scale up CDI activities to maximize country-level impact. They also requested the CDI to provide a progress update at the 44th UN-Water Meeting.

***Activities on UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation: Align UN system support for the integration of water and sanitation issues across sectors and mainstreaming into intergovernmental processes***

**Update and strategic discussion on advancing Priority Collaborative Action 3 – Mainstream water within UN Rio Conventions at all levels:** Sonja Koeppel, UNECE, reported on efforts focused on the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 30th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) in Belém, Brazil, including a side event that addressed economic aspects of water-related climate change adaptation and mitigation. She also noted the Group’s work to launch a report on water for mitigation that identifies links between SDG 6 and SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy). She said the group has focused on UNFCCC to date, but will consider links with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in the future.

Speakers also highlighted links between water and the UNFCCC’s: negotiations on the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA); Standing Committee on Finance and its upcoming forum on water systems and the ocean; Nairobi Work Programme; updated National Adaptation Plans guidelines; and implementation labs focused on “Climate-Resilient Water Systems and Participatory Governance” during the 2026 climate weeks.

Links to the agenda for the UNCCD’s COP 17, which is taking place in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, in August 2026, will include Water Day on 25 August, Land and People Day on 26 August, and Food Systems and Soil Health on 27 August.

TÜRKIYE reported on the preparatory process for UNFCCC COP 31, and said, with Australia, the incoming presidency aims to show that multilateral cooperation can still deliver at a time when negotiations are shifting to implementation. Preparations for the action agenda are ongoing and will consider the outcomes of previous COPs. Topics will include energy, food security, oceans and seas, and zero waste.

During the discussion, participants noted that water is appearing more frequently in nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and land degradation neutrality targets. Participants noted the importance of drought management and related discussions during UNCCD COP 17. Links between the World Urban Forum and the 2026 UN Water Conference were noted. The Rio Convention Secretariats were encouraged to invite the Special Envoy on Water to participate in their COPs. Others stressed the need for national governments to advocate to include water on the agendas for COPs.

***Activities on UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation: Accelerate progress and transformational change by unifying UN system support through the five SDG 6 global accelerators: financing, data and information, capacity development, innovation, and governance***

**Update and strategic discussion on advancing Priority Collaborative Action 4 – Improve availability and use of evidence and learning to accelerate progress:** This discussion addressed the three outputs for the Integrated Monitoring Initiative, with a focus on support to countries, preparations for the 2026 global data drive, inputs to regional and synthesis reports, and midterm review and Phase 4 planning.

Participants were also updated on the status of activities under the output to broaden the water and sanitation evidence base, improve data resolution and accessibility, and strengthen multi-stakeholder engagement for enhanced decision-making and action on water and sanitation. Activities under this output include:

- improving the standardization, generation, and uptake of citizen science data on water and sanitation;
- advancing sustainability metrics and monitoring for water quantity, quality and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH);
- advancing monitoring of groundwater resources;
- enhancing monitoring of drinking water, sanitation and hygiene in humanitarian crisis areas; and
- enhancing the measurement of climate resilience in water and sanitation systems.

UNESCO and UNEP reported they are leading the working group’s analysis of deliverables related to groundwater resources and will then focus on further needs. On measurement of climate resilience in water and sanitation systems, UNECE reported that water is mentioned in nine of the agreed indicators for the GGA.

During the discussion, participants addressed the value of: continuing to coordinate SDG monitoring and reporting across SDG 6 and to provide support to the monitoring process; liaising with other UN agencies on this initiative; and supporting countries with monitoring, as appropriate.

**Update on the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework innovation accelerator:** Mary Matthews, UNDP, reviewed the Task Force on Innovation’s efforts to develop an analytical brief on innovation as it applies to the other accelerators. She said it is expected to be ready before the 44th UN-Water Meeting, after which the task force will conclude its work.

Participants requested the Task Force on Innovation to finalize its analytical brief on public policy to support innovation in water and share it for approval before the 44th UN-Water Meeting. They agreed that the work of the Task Force will conclude with a final presentation of the findings of the analytical brief at the 44th UN-Water Meeting.

***Activities on UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation: Account for progress through joint review and learning***

**Update on the 2026 UN Water Conference Academic Hub:** Sogol Jafarzadeh, UNU, presented the UN Water Conference Academic Hub, which is an online platform to harness and align global academic and scientific expertise to support more ambitious, evidence-based conference. It was launched during the Dakar meeting in January and is located at [Wateracademichub.com](https://wateracademichub.com). Participants were encouraged to submit contributions to this project, which is a collaboration of UNU, UNESCO, UNITAR, and UN-Water.

Participants suggested organizing events about the Hub at World Water Week and the 2026 UN Water Conference. They also asked for information about the Hub to share with their networks.

**Contributing Actions to the UN system-wide strategy for water and sanitation:** Pedro Arrojo Agudo, Special Rapporteur on the human rights to water and sanitation, discussed recommendations to promote democratic water governance, stressing the need to work with rights holders and women. He presented five proposals on how to enhance it:

- invite Indigenous Peoples to all interactive dialogues;
- allow those who cannot attend to follow sessions online;
- create a space for participation for local authorities;
- promote a mechanism for periodic convening of water conferences under UN auspices; and
- create a civil society and Indigenous Peoples mechanism.

Basilio Ghisletta, Geneva Water Hub, emphasized the need for evidence generation and adopting a peacebuilding lens to advance water for peace, equitable sharing of water, and protection of water from armed conflicts. Examples of the Hub's work in this regard include: support to refugees in Mauritania through which communities developed their own solutions; efforts to protect water infrastructure; and developing a policy brief for the 2026 UN Water Conference that looks at the issues from the peace perspective.

Virginie Gillet, FAO, discussed the Global Dialogue on Water, which is led by FAO and focuses on understanding who uses water and who has the right to use it, including often overlooked informal and customary users. They are currently looking at local-level realities and how to link them with water accounting to analyze informal user data. They support dialogues at multiple levels. Country engagements are underway in Sri Lanka and Rwanda, alongside regional dialogues in Latin America and the Caribbean (with Colombia) and Asia (with Thailand).

Hwirin Kim, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), presented the Integrated Drought Management Programme (IDMP), which is supported by WMO and was launched in 2018 to help governments proactively manage and mitigate drought risks. A key partner is UNCCD, which provides political support, while IDMP/WMO contributes technical expertise. The programme has delivered targeted drought training and continues to respond to country demand, with a pipeline of projects including eight proposals under development with the Adaptation Fund, representing approximately USD 280 million across initial countries.

Martina Mueller, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), reported that the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction takes place every three years and is preceded by regional platforms. It promotes a whole-of-society approach, bringing together a wide range of actors to improve coherence and avoid duplication of efforts. Water is a central issue in this agenda, as both water scarcity and excess are major drivers of disasters. UNDRR highlighted strong collaboration across the sector, although challenges remain. For example, she said disaster risk reduction focal points and water governance focal points are often not the same individual or office in organizations and countries, which leads to duplication of efforts.

### **Briefing on the 2026 UN Water Conference**

Alvaro Lario, UN-Water Chair, opened the discussion of the 2026 UN Water Conference, thanking the UAE and Senegal for co-hosting. He recalled the journey that UN-Water has travelled to this point, including the launch of the Acceleration Framework in 2020, the 2023 UN Water Conference and subsequent appointment of the Special Envoy on Water, adoption of the UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation, and UN General Assembly [resolution](#) to convene the 2026 and 2028 water conferences. He noted the progressive integration of the water agenda into the global dialogue and said the process is making more of the sum of each organization's individual parts.

Retno Marsudi, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Water, delivered a video statement in which she stressed the importance of preparations to achieve the high expectations for the 2026 UN Water Conference. She reported that informal preparatory working groups are being developed to feed into the interactive dialogues. She noted the need to launch large-scale initiatives, develop partnerships, and share experiences.

**Update on the 2026 UN Water Conference preparatory process:** Madhushree Chatterjee, UN-Water Secretary, briefed participants on preparations for the conference. She said informal working groups are preparing concept papers for each of the interactive dialogues, and will support the Co-Chairs for the dialogues in setting the panels. The Co-Chairs are preparing work plans and developing flagship initiatives related to the theme for their dialogues.

During the discussion, a participant said there should be an option for online participation in the conference.

**Update from 2026 UN Water Conference Co-Hosts: Vision, outcome of Dakar High-level Meeting and other preparations:** Shaima Gargash, UAE, connected remotely due to the current regional situation and reviewed preparations to date. She highlighted that the Co-Hosts have conducted global consultations, built consensus for the selection of six themes for the interactive dialogues, and selected the Co-Chairs for the interactive dialogues. She underlined that water must be connected to the broader global agenda and that the Co-Chairs are developing a roadmap to achieve such prominence.

Mohamed Diatta, Senegal, thanked the stakeholders who participated into the High-level Preparatory Meeting for the 2026 UN Water Conference, which took place from 26–27 January 2026, in Dakar, and offered the opportunity for discussions on the interactive dialogue themes. He said the Co-Hosts aim to work closely with Member States and to organize an inclusive meeting in Abu Dhabi that will deliver action.

During the discussion, participants welcomed the Co-Hosts' efforts to foster engagement with the interactive dialogues. Many inquired how the initiatives launched in the action agenda for the 2023 Conference would be incorporated into the meeting. Speakers also noted the potential for overlaps between the interactive dialogues and called for them to be considered holistically and to ensure close cooperation between the Co-Chairs of each dialogue. One speaker also asked if the Co-Hosts have developed a vision statement highlighting what the conference should deliver.

In response to questions raised, the Co-Hosts underlined their commitment to ensure inclusivity and stakeholder engagement and to avoid fragmentation of efforts. They noted that the 2026 UN Water Conference aims to contribute to the 2027 SDG Summit and to build connections with the 2028 UN Water Conference. They also reported on efforts to ensure coordination between the Co-Chairs of the interactive dialogues through online convenings as well as in-person meetings in the lead up to December.

### ***Panel Discussion on the 2026 UN Water Conference Interactive Dialogues***

**Water for People:** The Co-Chairs, Switzerland and Ghana, said the rights to water and sanitation need to translate into opportunities for those most likely to be left behind. They indicated success will be measured by stronger prioritization of WASH in national decision making, strengthened inclusivity, equity of financing for those most likely left behind, and linkages with 2028 process as well as upcoming review processes.

The Co-Chairs reported that six working groups are being organized around the themes for this dialogue:

- Promoting human rights-based approaches to WASH;
- Strengthen climate resilience WASH systems;
- Ensure WASH continuity in humanitarian and conflict situations;
- Strengthening data;
- Improving financial targeting; and
- Promote decentralized capacity building by promoting local governments

**Water for the Planet:** The Co-Chairs, Egypt and Japan, said success for this dialogue will be the delivery of concrete and actionable outcomes, with two or three priority programmes. For planetary actions, they emphasized the need to incorporate climate change obligations, international law, and reaffirmation of international commitment to the rules-based international order grounded in respect of international law.

The Co-Chairs said the 2023 Conference identified “what” global priorities and key messages should be included in the global water agenda. The 2026 Conference will consider “how” to translate these priorities into implementation pathways. And the 2028 Conference will establish timelines for “when” the priorities must be achieved.

They said key messages from Dakar include that: water issues must be addressed holistically across social, economic, and environmental systems; water has long been exploited without regard for planetary limits; and nature-positive, water-positive investments must be scaled up.

**Water in Multilateral Processes:** The Co-Chairs, Germany and Mexico, said success for this dialogue will be the identification of how to bring coherence across international processes and to encourage greater coordination among international platforms. They stressed that they want to avoid having too many deliverables, and aim to focus on goals that can be achieved.

**Water for Prosperity:** The Co-Chairs, China and Spain, noted the need for systemic change, to break silos between water, energy, and climate, and to put water at the center of prosperity. They underlined how water needs to have a space in the global agenda and that the dialogue should align with SDG 6. They said they hope to

advance water management and cross-sector coordination. They added that the dialogue theme incorporates consideration of scaling water development resources, mobilizing finance including public and private partnerships, and strengthening global governance including data sharing.

The Co-Chairs welcomed strong participation of stakeholders through the informal preparatory working group and said they have identified a series of events leading up to the 2026 Conference, including the 13th Meeting of the Roundtable on Financing Water in May, the Dushanbe Water Conference, the HLPF, and Stockholm World Water Week.

**Water for Cooperation:** The Co-Chairs, Finland and Zambia, highlighted that success for this dialogue would include the delivery of impactful dialogues at the conference along with leadership initiatives. They said the dialogue will consider how to transform technical challenges into action, based on science cooperation. They said water needs to be positioned as a cornerstone of cross-sectoral cooperation, including as a nexus to unlock action from the private sector. They also said they aimed to develop initiatives that could improve water cooperation, strengthen the role of science for water management, and improve inclusivity in water management at all levels.

**Water for Finance:** The Co-Chairs, France and South Africa, highlighted the need to learn from past efforts and to ensure the 2026 UN Water Conference is impactful. They stressed that the issue should be elevated to the highest level and Heads of State and Government should campaign for water.

The Co-Chairs highlighted the need for the Co-Chairs of all six interactive dialogues to work closely together. They added that they will attend the World Bank and IMF’s Spring Meetings where the World Bank will launch its Water Forward initiative.

### ***High-level Water Events***

**Regional preparatory processes for the 2026 UN Water Conference:** Lorenzo Santucci, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), presented on regional preparatory processes that are supporting the preparations for the 2026 UN Water Conference. In addition to regional sustainable development forums and preparations for the HLPF in July, regional activities include the following:

- In Africa, the Africa Water Investment Summit 2025, held in August in Cape Town, considered Africa’s water and sanitation financing agenda.
- In Latin America and the Caribbean, in October 2025, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) convened the 2025 Regional Water Week as well as the Fifth Regional Water Dialogues. In 2026, the Sixth Regional Water Dialogues will aim to consolidate a common regional position for the Conference, identify voluntary commitments from governments and stakeholders; and strengthen regional cooperation and partnerships.
- In Asia and the Pacific, Tajikistan will host the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting on 25 May 2026, in conjunction with the 4th High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable

Development”, 2018–2028, which is taking place from 25–28 May 2026.

- In Western Asia, “Governance and Integrate Water Resources Management” was discussed during the sixth Arab Water Conference in November 2024, “Transboundary Cooperation” was discussed during the fifth Baghdad International Water Conference in May 2025, “Investment for Water” was discussed during the Cairo Water Week in October 2025, and “Nonconventional water resources” was discussed during the World Water Congress in December 2025. The Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting, which was scheduled to take place on 21 April 2026, has been postponed.
- In Europe, the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties to the UNECE/WHO-Europe Protocol on Water and Health in November 2025 served as a regional preparatory event for the 2026 Conference.

**Regional Ecological Summit 2026:** Yerzhan Ashikbayev, First Deputy Minister, Kazakhstan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, highlighted that water systems are under growing stress and the existing international legal system is not fit for purpose. He noted his government’s proposal to create a dedicated Water Agency to support existing initiatives. He said Kazakhstan is organizing a regional ecological summit from 20–24 April 2026, for the first international dialogue on this proposal.

**4th High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” 2018–2028:** The organizers for this conference said the Dushanbe water process aims to keep water high on the global agenda. The fourth conference will take place from 25–28 May 2026.

**Euro Mediterranean Water Forum:** This event will take place from 29 September to 2 October 2026, in Rome, Italy. The forum will address challenges such as water scarcity, access, and quality, alongside solutions including technology, policy, and finance. Partnerships with organizations such as UNESCO, FAO, and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) will be highlighted, alongside themes like the blue economy, water footprints, and water in post-conflict contexts.

**11th World Water Forum 2027:** Saudi Arabia will host this event from 21–25 March 2027, in Riyadh. Under the theme “Action for a Better Tomorrow,” the Forum will address the water-energy-food nexus and inequalities at both global and local levels. Saudi Arabia highlighted that they are positioning this Forum as a bridge between global commitments and on-the-ground implementation.

**Update on Water Futures Community:** The World Economic Forum (WEF) introduced the WEF’s Water Futures community, which brings together governments, international organizations, the private sector, and innovators across sectors such as technology, agriculture, and finance. The WEF emphasized the importance of private sector engagement in the global water dialogue, as well as the importance of water for the private sector, and said WEF is committed to supporting partnerships, offering a platform for dialogue, and contributing constructively to the 2026 UN Water Conference.

### ***Date and Venue of Next UN-Water Meeting and Closing Remarks***

Federico Properzi, UN-Water Chief Technical Advisor, announced that IFAD has offered to host the 44th meeting from 1–2 October in Rome, Italy. Participants agreed to this proposal.

UN-Water Chair Lario concluded the open session noting that participants had reaffirmed their commitment to deliver tangible results. He highlighted that acting coherently across mandates is essential, fragmentation is costly, and coordination must translate into delivery. He also noted that speakers had identified ways in which the UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation and its collaborative implementation plan is helping countries.

Chair Lario noted that Joakim Harlin, UNEP representative and former UN-Water Vice-Chair, will be retiring soon and leaving the UN-Water family, and thanked him for his many contributions.

Lario thanked all participants for their commitment at this moment and time, and concluded the open session at 3:15 pm on Wednesday, 25 March.

### ***Workshop on 2026 UN-Water Conference Interactive Dialogue Zero Draft Concept Papers***

Bruce Gordon, UN-Water Vice-Chair, opened the workshop on Thursday, 26 March 2026 and recalled that the purpose of the day was to work collectively on the zero draft concept notes for the six interactive dialogues and to ensure they are as connected and aligned as possible. He said the group should find synergies between the concept notes and identify gaps and omissions to ensure the 2026 UN Water Conference is focused on implementation.

During a discussion on the workshop’s objectives, participants highlighted that a closer connection is needed between the Conference’s Co-Hosts (UAE and Senegal), the Co-Chairs (governments) of the six interactive dialogues, and the Co-Convenors (international organizations) of the concept papers. Speakers noted that many of the details of each group’s respective responsibilities were under discussion for the first time during this meeting. Some suggested organizing periodic meetings as a way forward. Based on discussions in Rome, the Co-Convenors were encouraged to develop a relationship with their respective Co-Chairs as they aimed to complete their zero drafts.

Madhushree Chatterjee, UN-Water Secretary, encouraged participants to learn from each other about each of the six dialogues and what needs to be included in the concept papers, what has been left out, and how they connect with each other. She clarified that the deadline for submission of the zero drafts is 11 May and the deadline for submitting the final drafts is 25 August.

To set the scene for the world café-style breakout groups that would take place, the Co-Convenors for the concept notes for each interactive dialogue presented syntheses of the submissions that have been received from Member States, stakeholders, UN entities, and discussions during the Dakar meeting. The presentations identified challenges and emerging issues, solutions, and recommendations.

Following the world café-style conversations, the Co-Convenors reported back on themes that were highlighted during the conversations and areas that were missing or required greater focus. They expressed appreciation for the chance to consider how the

concept papers were progressing individually as well as collectively. They also complemented the workshop as a good example for a deliberative and consultative process.

Bruce Gordon, UN-Water Vice-Chair, thanked participants for their inputs and closed the workshop at 5:43 pm.

### Upcoming Meetings

**Water Forward: Driving Jobs and Prosperity:** Water Forward, a global initiative designed to strengthen water security and scale water partnerships that mobilize investment and unlock economic potential, will be launched during the World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings. **dates:** 15 April 2026 **location:** Washington DC, US **www:** [live.worldbank.org/en/event/2026/spring-meetings-water-forward](https://live.worldbank.org/en/event/2026/spring-meetings-water-forward)

**13th Meeting of the Roundtable on Financing Water:** The meeting will build on recommendations formulated in the OECD publication “Embedding Water-related Risks in Financial Stability Frameworks.” **dates:** 21-22 May 2026 **location:** Madrid, Spain **www:** [oecd.org/en/events/2026/05/water-and-systemic-risks-13th-meeting-of-the-roundtable-on-financing-water.html](https://oecd.org/en/events/2026/05/water-and-systemic-risks-13th-meeting-of-the-roundtable-on-financing-water.html)

**4th High-level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” 2018–2028:** This Conference will contribute to accelerating progress on SDG 6 and serve as a key preparatory stage of the 2026 UN Water Conference. **dates:** 25–28 May 2026 **location:** Dushanbe, Tajikistan **www:** [mewr.tj/?p=6679](https://mewr.tj/?p=6679)

**71st meeting of the Global Environment Facility Council:** The GEF Council, which meets twice annually, develops, adopts, and evaluates the operational policies and programs for GEF-financed activities. **dates:** 31 May - 3 June 2026 **location:** Samarkand, Uzbekistan **www:** [thegef.org/events/71st-gef-council-meeting](https://thegef.org/events/71st-gef-council-meeting)

**64th Sessions of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies:** Deliberations during these meetings will feed into UNFCCC COP 31. **dates:** 8–18 June 2026 **location:** Bonn, Germany **www:** [unfccc.int/sb64](https://unfccc.int/sb64)

**High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2026:** HLPF 2026 will convene under the theme “Transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for a sustainable future for all.” The 2026 meeting will conduct in-depth reviews of: [SDG 6](#), [SDG 7](#), [SDG 9](#), [SDG 11](#), and [SDG 17](#). **dates:** 7-15 July 2026 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** [hlpf.un.org/2026](https://hlpf.un.org/2026)

**World Water Week 2026:** World Water Week will consider the theme of “Water for People and Progress” and will focus on water security and safely managed drinking water and sanitation as foundations for human development, health and resilience, with particular attention to communities facing persistent inequality. **dates:** 23-27 August 2026 **location:** Stockholm, Sweden **www:** [worldwaterweek.org](https://worldwaterweek.org)

**UNCCD COP 17:** This event will feature a Water Day on 25 August alongside the Conference of the Parties. **dates:** 17-28 August 2026 **location:** Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia **www:** [unccd.int/cop17](https://unccd.int/cop17)

**Financing Climate Action in Water Systems and the Ocean:** The Forum provides a platform for a wide range of stakeholders from governments, climate funds, financial institutions, civil society, think tanks, and the private sector to facilitate exchange of information and promote linkages and coherence in the mobilization and delivery of climate finance. **dates:** 21–22 September 2026 **location:** TBC **www:** [unfccc.int/event/financing-climate-action-in-water-systems-and-the-ocean](https://unfccc.int/event/financing-climate-action-in-water-systems-and-the-ocean)

**44th UN-Water Meeting:** The 44th UN-Water Meeting will take place at IFAD headquarters. **dates:** 1-2 October 2026 **location:** Rome, Italy **www:** [unwater.org](https://unwater.org)

For additional upcoming meetings, see [sdg.iisd.org](https://sdg.iisd.org)

### Glossary

COP	Conference of the Parties
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GGA	Global Goal on Adaptation
HLPF	High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNU	United Nations University
WASH	Water, sanitation, and hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization