



3rd HIGH-LEVEL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR ACTION “WATER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT” 2018-2028

10-13 June 2024, Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan

INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE 3 - Water for Climate, Resilience, and Environment *Concept Paper*

Title Water for Climate, Resilience, and Environment: Source to Sea, Biodiversity, Climate, Resilience, and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR).
Co-organizers H.E. Mr. Hani Sewilam, Minister for Water Resources and Irrigation of Egypt, Mr. Joji Nakano, Assistant Vice-Minister, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism of Japan
Background information and rationale Water is vital to every aspect of human survival and well-being, and the economic development and prosperity of every nation. Climate change, unsustainable human activities and poor environmental management affect the availability, quality, and quantity of water, impeding the realization of the human right to water and sanitation, a clean and healthy environment as well as other related human rights. Water scarcity and pollution, droughts and floods contribute to reduced ecosystem functions and related ecosystem services and can increase the likelihood of pests and diseases. The predicted increase in frequency, severity and duration of droughts contributes to long-term degradation, aridification or desertification, disruption of societies and livelihood options. Food and nutrition security are seriously impacted as about 70% of all freshwater withdrawals are used for agriculture globally, the percentage can reach more than 90% in agrarian economies. The 27th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) brought water discussions to the centre of the climate discourse, including through a dedicated Water Day, a Water Pavilion and the new “Action on Water Adaptation and Resilience (AWARe)” initiative that proposes and supports mutually agreed policies for cooperative water-related adaptation and its co-benefits, while causing no harm. Member States must build upon, implement, and link water-related climate, resilience, and environmental initiatives at conferences of the parties and intergovernmental processes for sustainable development, climate change, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, the environment and desertification. An “inter-COP” process joining related parallel processes, would support implementation of interconnected water-related goals at national level and facilitate a more synergistic and focused discourse on how to achieve convergence for integrated policies and actions on water, climate change, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity conservation and resilience building.

To achieve this, and for water issues to be fully considered in climate policy processes of the UNFCCC requires that these issues are identified in agreed mandates and work programmes, and this will require consistent and concerted advocacy by parties; cooperation in this advocacy, would require an informal and practical setting to have maximum impact where Parties could collaborate.

Cross-cutting issues

- The appointment of a UN Special Envoy for Water, who would mobilize decisive actions aimed at meeting global water challenges, will be an important step towards better coherence of water efforts, and would improve coordination among various agencies and bodies currently dealing with water issues.
- The importance of Transboundary water cooperation, in accordance with the applicable principles on international law, to promote sustainable economic development, human and environmental health, biodiversity, climate action and resilience, disaster risk reduction and peace. Water has the capacity to unite and act as a driver of peace, sustainable development, climate action and regional integration. Water diplomacy is a key enabler for peace and water security. Even in times of severe water scarcity, cooperation on surface waters and groundwaters has been a game changer; and countries have demonstrated an ability to collaborate based on international water law principles in order to find and implement mutually beneficial solutions.
- Scaling up investments and finance in the water sector.
- The interconnectivity of water, climate change and food production and the need for prioritizing water when discussing climate, food systems, and energy, as well as industrial processes.
- Importance of science-based policies, innovation, and information systems for strengthening the water sector and allowing for informed decision-making.
- The importance of the UN entities to play a larger role in providing platforms for governments, NGOs, and civil societies to foster information exchange and address collective water-related disasters with environmental and economic dimensions.
- The importance of the United Nations System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation in uniting the UN system's work towards a world with access, availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all people and the planet.
- The adverse effects of climate change on water quantity and quality, pollution, and salt intrusion due to sea-level rise.
- The contribution of natural disasters to water scarcity and contamination.
- Lack of funding as one of the biggest challenges to achieving the water-related goals and targets of the Water Action Decade.

Link with the results and recommendations of the UN 2023 Water conference

The interactive dialogue will build on the messages that emerged from the interactive dialogue in the UN 2023 Water conference, including the following:

- Adopt an “Inter-COP” process to connect, integrate, and fully implement water-related decisions made at global assemblies, conventions, and within frameworks dedicated to climate, resilience, and the environment, building on COP27 and COP28 which brought water discussions to the centre of the climate discourse.
- Water is not only a problem but also part of solutions that allow marine, terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems to provide services for climate action, both for mitigation and adaptation.
- Establish a Global Water Information System, based on the “Hydrological Status and Outlook system (HydroSOS)” and state of water reporting through periodic water science reports, as a prerequisite for improved water management, climate resilience, early warning, and risk-informed decision-making for climate action and disaster risk reduction. This should be among the top priorities of water-related climate action and supported by the Water Cycle Integrator (WCI)
- Climate-resilient water management requires internal defragmentation and external integration of current water management systems. This can be achieved by

- 1) Mainstreaming integrated policy frameworks which combine integrated water resources management (IWRM) with other holistic water-related approaches that link the interconnected ecosystems of the hydrological cycle with the associated socioeconomic processes.
- 2) Developing and adopting national mechanisms for cross-sectoral coordination and mutually agreed policies for cooperative water-related adaptation. This requires the need to promote bottom-up approaches for climate change adaptation such as the Climate Risk Informed Decision Analysis (CRIDA) tool, a step-by-step framework for developing national adaptation pathways for climate change.
- Consider the creation of Contextualized Environmental Economic Accounting Systems to support investment directed to water-related climate and environmental resilience-building and providing an accurate assessment of water-related climate-induced loss and damage.
- Follow a Water Action Workflow encompassing six steps: risk awareness, risk identification, designing of counter measures, funding, multi-stakeholder participation, and on-site Implementation.
- Focus on whole-of-the-system approach. River basin is the primary solution scale, not only to resolve water demand and supply issues but also to address water quality problems.
- Resilient water infrastructure system is strengthened by enhancing multiple functions.
- Nature-based solutions and green-grey infrastructure approaches can provide important contributions and co-benefits for climate, biodiversity, and disaster risk reduction.
- Taking into account the close links between resilience, biodiversity, and the status of water-related ecosystems, holistic conservation approaches are required to implement coherent policies, linking biodiversity conservation and climate-resilient water management.
- Climate resilient water management is a fundamental part of adaptation and mitigation of climate change.

Main questions for discussion

- How can we adopt an “Inter-COP” process to connect, integrate, and fully implement water-related decisions made at global assemblies, conventions, and within frameworks dedicated to climate, resilience, and the environment, building on COP27 and COP28 which brought water discussions to the centre of the climate discourse?
- What are the barriers to establishing a Global Water Information System, based on the “Hydrological Status and Outlook system (HydroSOS)” and periodical scientific water reports, as a prerequisite for improved water management, climate resilience, early warning, and risk-informed decision-making for climate action and disaster risk reduction?
- How to scientifically assess water resources in countries and improve science research and innovation in the national assessment of water resources.
- What are the opportunities to ensure that Nature-based solutions and green-grey infrastructure approaches can provide important contributions and co-benefits for climate, biodiversity, and disaster risk reduction?
- How can we fully integrate IWRM approaches and utilise them to advance related outcomes, including climate adaptation and nature-based / ecosystem-based and hybrid approaches?
- How transboundary water cooperation in accordance with the applicable principles of international law could help in facing significant and increasing pressures as a result of population increase, growing water demands, ecosystem degradation and climate change?

Key messages

- Establishment of a group of active countries that attach high priority to water for climate issues domestically and who have leadership roles in global water and/or climate processes is an important step towards the creation of “Inter-COP” process to connect, integrate and fully implement water-related decisions made at global assemblies, conventions and frameworks dedicated to climate, resilience, and the environment.
- The need for global water information system for improved water management, climate resilience, early warning, and risk-informed decision-making.

- Transboundary water cooperation in accordance with the applicable principles of international law could help in facing significant and increasing pressures as a result of population increase, growing water demands, ecosystem degradation and climate change.
- Climate resilient water management is a fundamental part of adaptation and mitigation of climate change.

Follow-up actions and commitments

- Raise awareness on the need for national climate change adaptations plans based on climate resilient water management approaches
- Call to raise the profile of water science to accelerate Water Action agenda and promote the preparation of periodical water science reports.
- Implement climate resilient water resources management in number of countries.

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