



Geneva Water Dialogue: Concept Note

Friday, July 1, 2022, 09:30 at the WMO building, Salle Obasi

*Providing an input from Geneva to the UN 2023 Water Conference
Exploring possible commitments to be included in the Water Action Agenda*

Water is essential for human life and is linked to all SDGs. The growing water crisis, coupled with rising demand and unsustainable use of water threaten human rights, food security, livelihoods security and environmental sustainability worldwide. The UN 2023 Water Conference to be held in New York in March 2023 provides a unique opportunity for the world to come together and collectively accelerate our work to making the world a more water secure place. The two co-hosts of the Conference, the governments of Tajikistan and the Netherlands, have pledged that the Conference will be action-oriented, inclusive, and cross-sectoral. In line with this pledged inclusivity, Egypt, Tajikistan, and the Netherlands have taken the initiative to organize the “Geneva Water Dialogue” to allow Geneva to **provide written input to the UN 2023 Water Conference** whilst at the same time encouraging Geneva-based actors to identifying commitments for a key outcome document of the Water Conference, the **Water Action Agenda**. This Agenda is a document in which stakeholders can voluntarily pledge commitments to get the world back on track to reaching SDG 6 and other water-related goals and targets.

Geneva hosts eleven of UN-Water’s member organisations many of which have significant water-related mandates. Geneva and its vicinity also host many partners of UN-Water, in addition to a significant number of civil society organisations, research institutes and other stakeholders with important activities relevant to SDG 6 and other water-related goals and targets, including under the Second Water Action Decade. These Geneva actors have unique experiences and activities in promoting the achievement of these goals, targets, and indicators, mainly around the following themes: human rights, peace, and disaster risk reduction.

The first Geneva Water Dialogue is co-organized by the Permanent Missions of **Egypt**, the **Netherlands**, and **Tajikistan**, with the support of **WMO**, **UN-Water**, **UNDRR**, **OHCHR**, and the **Geneva Water Hub**.



Objectives:

The objectives of the Geneva Water Dialogue are twofold:

First, to prepare a substantive input from Geneva to the UN 2023 Water Conference, due to take place in the UN General Assembly from 22 to 24 March 2023. This written input, to be drafted by a number of rapporteurs of the panel and workshops, will be sent to the co-hosts of the UN 2023 Water Conference as well as UNDESA and UN-Water. It will aim to:

- 1) Take stock of water-related mandates and activities of Geneva-based UN agencies, NGOs, and other organizations, and identify gaps and opportunities for enhanced coordination and coherence, including to achieve water-related goals and targets, including through the five accelerators of the SDG 6 Global Accelerator Framework.
- 2) Identify and propose concrete solutions to accelerate the achievement of SDG 6 beyond 2030, enhance action by Geneva-based organisations with a view towards the comprehensive implementation of all SDG 6 targets and indicators, promote more coherent action and better integration of SDG 6 across the mandates of UN-Water members in Geneva.
- 3) Identify best practices that can be showcased in 2023 to be replicated by others and scaled up through financing to make an impact on a larger scale towards, and beyond, 2030.

Second, to create an opportunity for Missions, organizations, and other stakeholders to collectively brainstorm on which possible concrete commitments their countries or organizations may enter into the **Water Action Agenda** to get us back on track to achieving SDG 6 and other water-related goals and targets.

Program:

09:00 – 09:30 Welcome coffee

09:30 – 10:15 High-level opening segment

Moderated by a youth leader (TBC)

- Mr. Gilbert Hougbo, UN-Water Chair (by video link, TBC)
- Dr. Petteri Taalas, Secretary-General, WMO (TBC)
- Prof. Mark Zeitoun, Director General, Geneva Water Hub
- Ms. Nada Al-Nashif, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights (TBC)
- H.E. Dr. Ahmed Ihab Gamaleldin, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt
- H.E. Mr. Jamshed Khamidov, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Tajikistan
- H.E. Ms. Nathalie Olijslager, Ambassador, Program Director for the UN 2023 Water Conference, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
- Mr. Ricardo Mena Speck, Director, UNDRR

10:15 – 11:45 High-level panel: Water and Human Rights

This high-level panel, with the support of **OHCHR**, will showcase ongoing efforts to address how water affects the enjoyment of all human rights, including for persons in vulnerable situations and identify gaps in this regard. It will showcase the work of Geneva-based UN organisations in a number of areas related to human rights, including public health, promoting universal, affordable and sustainable access to WASH, promoting the sustainable use of water, linking water with rural development and decent livelihoods, preserving water-related ecosystems for human rights, cooperation for the protection of water-related human rights, and effective water governance.

The panel will present recommendations on how to use the human rights framework to promote the comprehensive achievement of all targets and indicators of SDG 6.

Names of panelists to follow.

Following the panel there will be room for interventions from the floor on the basis of the following guiding questions:

- How is the sustainable use of water and preservation of water-related ecosystems linked to human rights, and how can the human rights framework be leveraged to accelerate the achievement of all SDG 6 targets?
- What good practices exist in addressing human rights related to water and how can these be replicated and scaled up to accelerate the implementation of SDG 6?
- What role can OHCHR, the Human Rights Council, the Special Procedures and the human rights community play in contributing to the achievement of SDG 6 beyond the UN 2023 Water Conference?
- How can international cooperation be advanced in this area and what kind of voluntary commitments are envisaged both at national and international level?

12:00 – 13:00 Lunch

Lunch will be served at the WMO cafeteria located on the top floor.

13:00 – 14:30 Workshop 1: Water for Peace

Water scarcity and pollution, mismanagement of water resources as well as the lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation is weakening already fragile states, increasing the risk of violent conflicts and sparking human displacement and migration. The first workshop, with the support of the **Geneva Water Hub**, will showcase the work being done in Geneva to address the links between the humanitarian and development sector, and how water can be a catalyst for peace. It will identify the impacts of water insecurity in humanitarian settings and highlight the existing practices to use water as a tool for development, cooperation, and lasting peace. It will furthermore address the efforts of Geneva-based humanitarian organizations to achieve SDG 6 in the spirit of leaving no one behind.

The workshop has three chief objectives:

1. Showcase the complementary approach of Geneva-based organization working on the humanitarian, development, and peace aspects for the achievement of SDG 6 and other water-related Goals and Targets.

2. Address the impacts of water insecurity, including in humanitarian settings.
3. Provide a fresh approach on solutions that can be provided for ensuring water as a vector for peace while making use of the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework.

In order to stimulate a result-oriented and interactive discussion, participants will be divided into three smaller break-out sessions, on the topics of water in humanitarian settings; conflict resolution; and water cooperation.

Guiding questions for participants:

1. In your experience, what are the markers of success for ensuring that water is taken into due consideration in your context?
2. What are the accelerating measures that can be envisaged for enhancing the application of those markers of success? How can they be replicated and scaled up?
3. What possible commitments could you envisage for your country or organization to enter into the Water Action Agenda?

14:30 – 16:00 Workshop 2: Water and Disaster Risk Reduction

The last twenty years have seen a sustained rise of frequency and intensity of disasters, water-related disasters in particular. Climate change, an important disaster risk driver, affects water availability and demand, exacerbating water scarcity, as well as increasing the frequency and intensity of water-related disasters. Given the important water use of many sectors - agriculture, energy, industry etc. - addressing water-related systemic risks is critical for a resilient and sustainable society. This requires coherent and systemic risk governance across sectors at all levels, including prevention, preparedness and sustainable use of available resources as well as robust multi-hazard early warning and response systems reaching the 'last mile'. Reliable data are further crucial for risk-informed and evidence-based policies as well as for integrated water resources management. The coinciding midterm reviews of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Water Action Decade in 2023 offer a unique opportunity to identify adjustments that promote risk-informed development while sustainably managing water resources and associated ecosystems.

The second workshop, with the support of **UNDRR**, will showcase the role of Geneva-based organisations in promoting data, science, technology and capacity building for achieving SDG 6 and other related goals and targets and propose solutions to accelerate actions, including by leveraging the coinciding midterm reviews.

Objectives of this workshop:

1. Highlight the work of Geneva-based organisations in promoting data, science, technology, capacity building and other solutions for achieving SDG 6 and other related goals/targets, in particular SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities) and SDG 13 (climate action)
2. Identify gaps and opportunities to accelerate action in achieving SDG 6 and addressing water-related disaster risks towards 2030
3. Explore options to leverage the coinciding midterm reviews of the Sendai Framework and the Water Action Decade for risk-informed sustainable development.

Guiding questions for participants:

1. In your experience, what have been the major bottlenecks in advancing SDG 6 and addressing water-related disaster risks and how will your country or organization tackle these in the future?
2. Given the systemic nature of risk, what adjustments are needed to enhance water-related disaster and climate risk governance? Which role can for example increased public and private investment in disaster risk reduction play as part of the solution?
3. What type of voluntary commitments would accelerate the integration of risk-informed development considerations into the second half of the Water Action Decade as contributing to the Water Action Decade?

16:00 – 16:30 Closing session

Moderated by a Permanent Representative (TBC)

In this plenary closing session, the rapporteurs from the morning panel and two afternoon workshops will present the solutions, recommendations, and proposals gathered, as well as the possible commitments participants envisaged for inclusion in the Water Action Agenda.

Registration

Please register by **Monday 27 June COB** by sending an email with the full name and title of the participants to gev-events@minbuza.nl mentioning “Geneva Water Dialogue” in the subject heading. You will receive a confirmation of registration.

The event will take place in the English language.

