

Geneva  
15 December 2025

## **UNHCR Mauritania and the Geneva Water Hub sign a Partnership Protocol to strengthen social cohesion around water sharing in Mauritania.**

*Geneva, 15 December 2025 – The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Mauritania, and the Geneva Water Hub signed in Geneva a Partnership Protocol formalising cooperation to strengthen social cohesion around water sharing in Mauritania, in refugee-hosting contexts in the Sahel. The signature took place on the sidelines of the Global High Level Progress Review, which assesses the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees.*

This cooperation recognises that water governance is a key lever for stability, social cohesion, and the self-reliance of refugees, while also strengthening the capacity of host communities to sustainably manage limited resources. It aligns with the first two core objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees, adopted in 2018:

1. Easing pressure on host countries and communities,
2. Enhancing refugee self-reliance.

Located in south-eastern Mauritania, the arid Hodh Chargui region has hosted refugee and displaced populations for more than a decade, in a context of strong pressure on already limited natural resource and significant challenges related to improving access to water for domestic and productive uses. Pastoral wells, as well as other types of water points (boreholes, ponds, wadis), play a central role in social cohesion between communities by enabling the sustainable use of natural resources. Local knowledge and practices in the prevention and management of water-related conflicts are a key asset in fostering understanding among the various water users.

The Partnership Protocol will facilitate collaboration between UNHCR Mauritania and the Geneva Water Hub to:

- Support citizen-led reflections with refugee populations, host communities, national, local and customary authorities, and civil society, by providing water-related expertise to UNHCR in its role of promoting humanitarian and development cooperation in refugee-hosting contexts.
- Facilitate field access in Hodh Chargui for researchers and experts.
- Promote water sharing as a vector for peace and social cohesion in refugee-hosting and forced displacement contexts within international agendas.

### **UNHCR News**

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**UNHCR Mauritania  
and the Geneva  
Water Hub sign a  
Partnership Protocol  
to strengthen social  
cohesion around  
water sharing in  
Mauritania.**

*"The State of Mauritania is pleased to witness the signing of this partnership protocol, which reinforces our efforts to preserve social cohesion and improve access to water for our populations and the refugee communities we welcome"*

DR. HOUDA BABAH, Minister of Education and Reform, of the Education System, The Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

*"Water can be a source of tension, but it can also be turned into a source of social cohesion, this is why water is one of the key sectors of the 5-year compact of socio-economic development for Hodh Chargui announced by the Mauritanian president"*

Tayyar Sukru Cansizoglu, UNHCR Representative in Mauritania

*"Through this protocol, we reaffirm the Geneva Water Hub's commitment to promoting local African knowledge in the prevention and management of water-related conflicts, as called upon by the Head of state of Mauritania."*

Prof. Mark ZEITOUN, Director General, Geneva Water Hub

*"The City of Geneva supports this partnership, which focuses on water governance, one of the major challenges of the 21st century. In the Hodh Chargui region, it embodies our values: social cohesion and environmental preservation."*

Etienne LEZAT, Assistant to the Mayor, Ville de Genève

*«Switzerland welcomes this partnership in support of the Mauritanian authorities and looks forward to seeing Geneva's international humanitarian community, with its institutional and academic strengths, in action in a concrete approach to localisation aid and linking humanitarian action, development and peace. »*

Alexander WIDMER, Policy Advisor for Multilateral Humanitarian Affairs, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

The Partnership Protocol formalises a pledge to the Global Compact on Refugees made by the Geneva Water Hub and its Mauritanian partners, the Centre d'étude et de recherche sur l'Ouest Saharien (CEROS) and the Initiative pour la prospective agricole et rurale (IPAR), aimed at strengthening social cohesion through cooperation in the water sector. This consortium initiated strategic reflections in Mauritania's capital and a citizen-led action-research process in Hodh Chargui. It collaborates with Geneva-based expertise, including the Mobile Scientific Unit (USM) and the hydrogeology consultancy Dropstone.

These actions, which support Mauritanian authorities and UNHCR in Mauritania, benefit from the support of the City of Geneva and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, both of which took part in the signing session.

For more information, please contact:

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**Jean Willemin, Programme Manager - Geneva Water Hub –**  
Geneva, Switzerland**DATE**

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