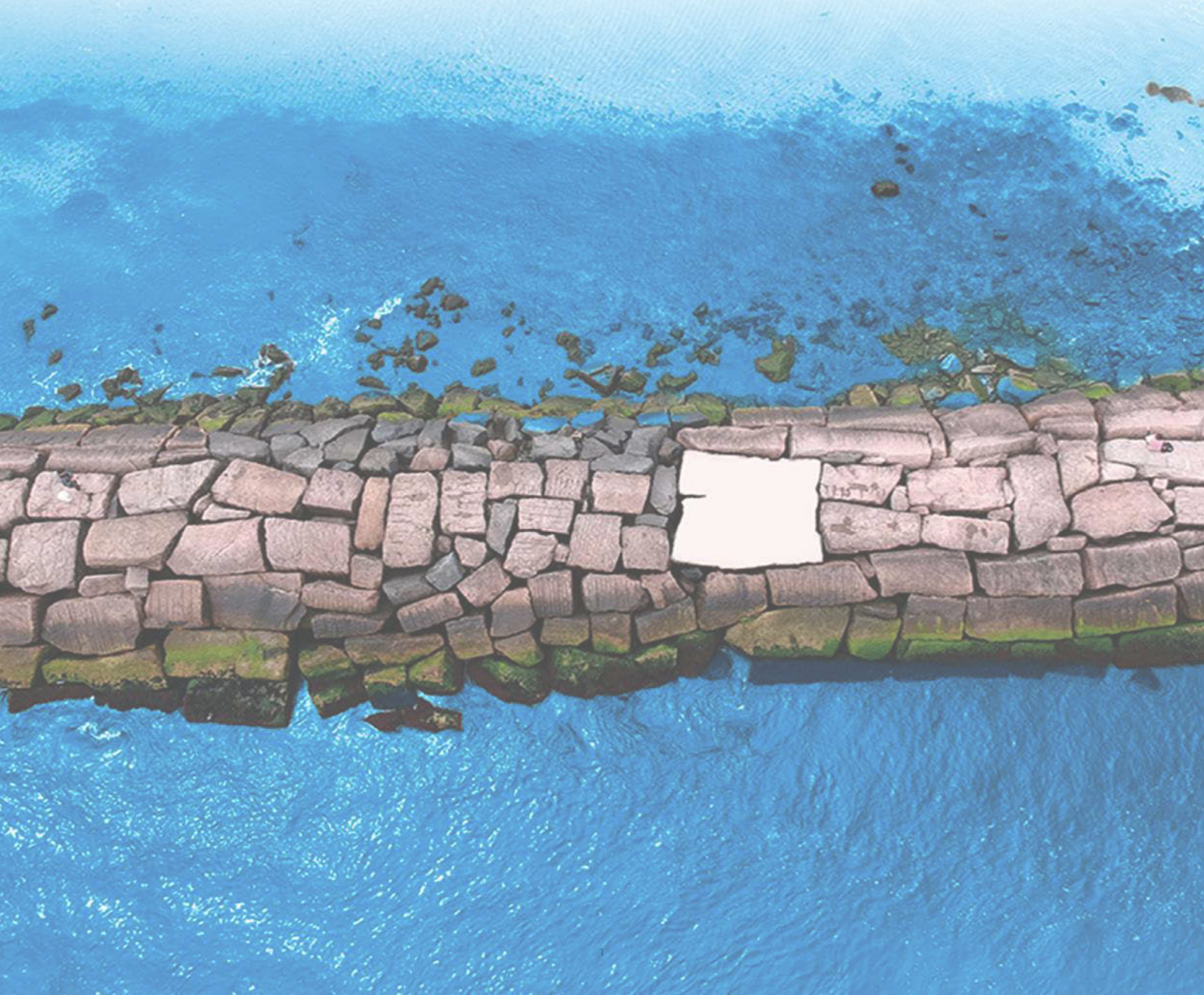




**GOWP**  
Global Observatory  
for Water and Peace

# Missing the “Peace” piece of the Water Puzzle

Global Observatory for Water and Peace Brief  
for the UN 2023 Water Conference



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# Summary

This Global Observatory for Water and Peace (GOWP) brief sets out the merits of a fundamental rethinking of the approach of the global community to water as a vehicle of peace. It entails recognizing the interconnection between water and peace as an over-arching framework<sup>1</sup> for achieving the goals of the UN 2023 Water Conference and the Agenda 2030, and to ensure social stability and the preservation of peace as a matter of well-being and prosperity.<sup>2</sup>

This brief shares reflections from the Global Observatory for Water and Peace<sup>3</sup> on how to use “water for peace”<sup>4</sup> (WfP) as an over-arching framework for the five main themes of the UN 2023 Water Conference’s interactive dialogues. This would facilitate inclusive commitments and actions at the conference’s conclusion - and beyond.

The use of Water for Peace is constantly evolving. Here, we suggest that WfP in Water for Health is captured through the Geneva List of Principles on the Protection of Water Infrastructure; in Water for Sustainable Development, through a context driven and politically sensitive Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems (WEFE) nexus approach and adoption of people’s diplomacy; in Water for Climate through the migration and security lens, and the need to revisit or update existing treaties or adopting new tools; and in Water for Cooperation through the potential role of river basin organisations including, among others, in multilateral processes.<sup>5</sup> Finally, the WfP framework can provide further opportunities to achieve the 2030 Agenda by rethinking the role of civil societies vis-à-vis governments, ensuring inclusive decision-making, and using media and policy platforms that raise awareness and operationalize the water-peace nexus.

The GOWP remains convinced that achieving peace ought to be the long-term goal and that the world must unite for “water for peace.” Peace is the core purpose of the United Nations, and should remain at the heart of the activities undertaken by the Organisation and its Members. In 2015, governments endorsing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognized that “[t]here can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.”

To solve the global and local water puzzle, the related “peace” piece is (urgently) needed. This brief provides guiding principles on how to ensure that during 2023 UN Water Conference, the “peace” piece is included.

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<sup>1</sup> The Water for Peace framework goes beyond purely technical and developmental aspects of water and complements them with water-related humanitarian and peace considerations, with the intention of addressing all conditions necessary to ensure the basis for human survival, peace and dignity. The relationship between water and peace needs to be fully explored to fine-tune the WfP framework.

<sup>2</sup> At the heart of the 2030 Agenda are five critical dimensions: people, prosperity, planet, partnership and peace, also known as the 5Ps. See: <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>.

<sup>3</sup> The Global Observatory on Water and Peace is a global network platform of 10 regional and societal/thematic partners, who enrich reflections and suggest out of the box approaches to advance the use of water as a vehicle of peace in their regions and communities of practice. See: The Global Observatory for Water and Peace: An innovative envoy for peace. In First Annual Report of the Global Observatory for Water and Peace, March 2022.

<sup>4</sup> “Water for Peace” ensures water policy and use enable the conditions for greater equity, justice, and dignity, with an understanding that ‘peace’ is defined in terms of peaceful international and local relations and social justice.

<sup>5</sup> See sketch below



# Context

The global water community is rejoicing and racing to ensure that the upcoming second 2023 UN Water Conference will meet its objectives.<sup>6</sup> While water is a human right and vital to all forms of life, water is not an end in itself; the “end” is to ensure sustainable and peaceful communities for humankind, and water has the potential to be a catalyst for positive peace, which Johan Galtung defines as: “[...] a more lasting peace that is built on sustainable investments in economic development and institutions as well as societal attitudes that foster peace”<sup>7</sup>.

Per the UNGA resolution A/RES/75/212, the conference would include six plenary meetings and five interactive dialogues. The choice of the themes of the interactive dialogues is in line with the evolution in water related challenges 46 years after Mar del Plata. However, limiting the discussions to purely Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) aspects per theme falls short of meeting the challenges of a post-pandemic, existential threat reality that humankind is experiencing today. The implementation of IWRM alone, which is characterized primarily by its technical nature, is not capable of putting humanity back on track.

The conference has chosen five interactive dialogues themes as a response. The logic can hardly be faulted – to be comprehensive, the themes must be “catch-all” type containers. Yet, water, perhaps more than other SDGs, cuts across all aspects of life, and at every possible level. The outcome of the conference will be sub-optimal if we stick to the siloed approach instead of looking at water in its full complexity and cross-cutting nature. Water is more than just a natural resource: it has a geo-strategic dimension which often makes it a security issue for state policy, in transboundary contexts. It is undeniable that many of the future conflicts will be caused by water injustice.

At the time of writing this piece, the World Economic Forum has released its yearly Global Risks Report<sup>8</sup> – in its 18th edition, the report notes that a “whole new and eerily familiar” set of risks are pronouncing a unique, uncertain and turbulent decade. Ensuring good water governance and attainment of SDG6 alone will not stand the ground against the growing risks of geo-economic confrontation, erosion of social cohesion and societal polarization, and large scale involuntary migration. The risk of a poly-crisis centred around natural resource shortages by 2030

urgently calls for the upcoming Water Conference to use a water for peace framework in its deliberations.

In 2021, more than 50 active conflicts were ongoing, with half of them resurging since 1989. According to the Principle for Peace initiative “[...] political violence and polarisation, inter- and intrastate conflict, proxy and hybrid wars, threats from climate change, and large scale violations of human rights and humanitarian law” challenge global governance and cooperation. Subsequently, a broad coalition of actors across political, diplomatic, academic, defense and security, civil society and multilateral organisations have launched a new peacemaking covenant in Geneva, which aims to provide new norms and guidance around making peace at a moment of heightened conflict.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, it is imperative for the water community to enlarge the scope of its cross-sectoral activities, and to mainstream the potential of WfP at such a critical crossroads for humankind. In 2023, any UN-led process must be embedded in the geopolitical context and political realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which is why it is risky to take a purely technical approach. WfP has become increasingly prominent over the past decade and was the framework for the 9<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum in Dakar entitled “Water Security for Peace and Development”. The Dakar Water Declaration<sup>10</sup> marked a paradigm shift towards concrete deliverables and earmarked projects, and was the starting signal for key subsequent consultations in Dushanbe, Kyoto, Lisbon and Sharm el Sheikh, and on the way to New York 2023. Consequently, water and peace are already at the center of the 2023 UN Water Conference, and adopting WfP as the overarching framework for the conference goes to the heart of the UN mandate: maintenance of international peace and security, the promotion of the well-being of the peoples of the world, and international cooperation to these ends. Finally, should the co-hosts and organizers of the upcoming UN 2023 Water Conference want to put together the “water puzzle” as a roadmap for action, through the five thematic dialogues, the WfP framework will provide the outer edges to complete it.

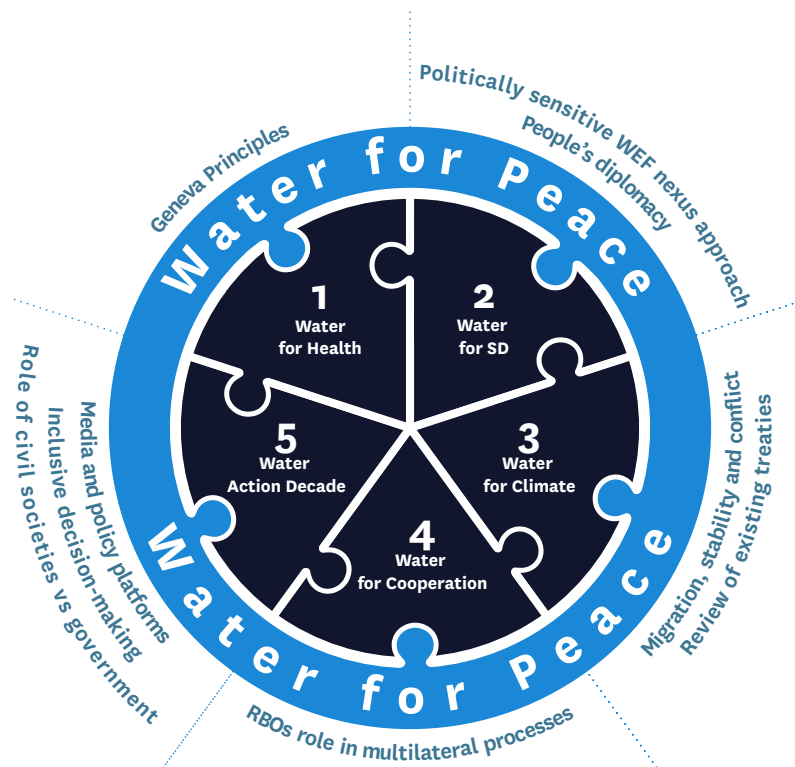
<sup>6</sup> Key objective: Support to achieve the internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Vision Statement Un 2023 Water Conference)

<sup>7</sup> [https://buildingpeaceforum.com/no/fred/Positive\\_Negative\\_peace.pdf](https://buildingpeaceforum.com/no/fred/Positive_Negative_peace.pdf), <https://positivepeace.org/what-is-positive-peace>

<sup>8</sup> [www.weforum.org/reports/global-risks-report-2023/digest](http://www.weforum.org/reports/global-risks-report-2023/digest)

<sup>9</sup> <https://principlesforpeace.org>

<sup>10</sup> <https://waterdialogues4results.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/DAKAR-DECLARATION.pdf>



## Water for Peace - a framework for the five interactive dialogue themes

“Water for Peace” as an over-arching framework provides each of the Interactive Dialogues with further opportunities and entry points to meet the three principles of the conference- Inclusive, Cross Sectoral and Action Oriented in the following ways:

### 1. Water for Health Access to WASH, including the Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation

In the words of WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros: “There cannot be health without peace, and there cannot be peace without health.” The duty to ensure access to WASH services is reflected in the Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation. The respect of this fundamental human right is imperative particularly during armed conflicts and natural disasters. Since the 1980s, humanitarian actors have become increasingly involved in water

and sanitation supply operations because of concerns about the public health of populations affected by armed conflict.<sup>11</sup> Disruption of water services, may, among others, lead to the outbreak of water-borne diseases or exacerbate the spread of epidemics, as is currently the case with the cholera outbreak in Northern Syria, and in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Such diseases could also extend to neighbouring communities and countries. According to both WHO and CDC sources, as of January 3, 2023, about 20,000 suspected cholera cases had been reported throughout Haiti - an ongoing complex humanitarian crisis that is rapidly deteriorating due to gang violence, socio-political conflicts, insecurity, fuel shortages, and economic instability. The interactive dialogue on “Water for health” cannot be credible without considering its link to the political contexts, especially that in situations of contemporary armed conflicts. According to the Geneva Academy, its Rule of Law on Armed Conflicts project is monitoring more than 80 armed conflicts involving at least 55 states, and more than 70 armed non-state actors. In time of armed conflicts, water and water-related infrastructure such as power plants continue to be targeted and weaponized. An important framework in these fragile situations is the use of the **Geneva List of Principles on the Protection of Water Infrastructure during armed conflicts**.<sup>12</sup> This

<sup>11</sup> <https://shop.icrc.org/water-and-habitat-public-health-engineering-during-armed-conflict-1983-2013-pdf-en.html>

<sup>12</sup> Tignino Mara, Irmakkesen Westendorff Oeykue, *The Geneva List of Principles on the Protection of Water Infrastructure: An Assessment and the Way Forward*, Leiden (Brill) 2020.

document systematizes the main rules applicable to the protection of water infrastructure during armed conflicts, specifically in the conduct of hostilities and post-conflict situations, and sets forth some recommendations that go beyond existing law. While all efforts to ensure good water quality for health are important, without the respect of the principles of international humanitarian law that prevent attacks on vital infrastructure, the margin for meeting SDG6 and the related SDGs is narrowed.

## 2. Water for Sustainable Development: Valuing Water, Water-Energy-Food Nexus and Sustainable Economic and Urban Development

Piecemeal responses to challenges of population and economic growth are no longer viable to bridge the gap in meeting the related SDGs by 2030. Water lies at the heart of socio-economic developments and is a major driver for peace and cooperation. Good Governance is a cornerstone in achieving sustainable development<sup>13</sup>; while poor governance leads to fragility.<sup>14</sup> While urban development is necessary, rural development is fundamental. According to the 2022 fragile states index<sup>15</sup>, the five countries with the highest increase in fragility had experienced political changes, and challenges in water governance. Water governance has a key role to play in fragile contexts such as in the Sahel region, where access to water and natural resources has exacerbated tensions between communities, in addition to an already deteriorating security situation that has been undermining the sustainable development agenda for the past decade. In the Liptako-Gourma region, located between Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali, local populations face conflicts due to both structural and economic factors. Access to natural resources made possible by water flow affects the viability of their socioeconomic activities, their resilience to climate change, and their relations. The current violent context has led to high levels of mistrust and undermined traditional mechanisms for resolving conflicts. Peacebuilding actors are calling for a new social contract to end the downward spiral. Several studies emphasise that water security, and local/regional development is dependent on resolving technical issues, but more importantly on

the development of hybrid traditional and modern conflict management mechanisms built around the political dialogue with local populations, using water as a vehicle of peace.<sup>16</sup> Part of this vision is linking water and soil expertise to spark creativity in territorial development and increase soil resilience to climate shocks. River basin organisations and other regional institutions engaged on the border zone have a strategic role to play in this regard. Thus, **using people's diplomacy, and bottom-up approaches in the Sahel, and engaging the local communities in dialogues** around basic water management is building trust and is fostering collaboration towards peaceful development.

Water is a crucial factor for food, energy and environmental security as well as social stability. Since the introduction of the water-food-energy nexus concept in 2011, it has gained traction both as a research agenda and, as an evidence-based and integrated policy framework. The operationalisation of this concept is quite challenging as it includes cross-sectoral, sometimes cross-border collaboration. There are increasing calls for a context driven and politically sensitive nexus approach, and the recognition of its potential role in sustainable development in conflict and fragile zones.<sup>17</sup>

In the Aral Sea basin and in the context of the broader Eurasian integration processes, the development of a joint vision and strategic planning among the countries of the basin to strengthen cooperation in the context of the water-energy-food nexus can help smoothly manage geopolitical and geoeconomic changes. **When the WEF nexus is implemented in line with international law principles, it ensures justice and contributes to peace and prosperity.**<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Water governance for sustainable development: International practices and implications for the Mekong Delta region, <http://dx.doi.org/10.24311/jed/2017.24.4.6>

<sup>14</sup> <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/30307>

<sup>15</sup> <https://fragilestatesindex.org/2022/07/13/fragile-states-index-2022-annual-report>

<sup>16</sup> "Local conflicts in the Sahel: a call for the development of resolution mechanisms based on water cooperation" in First Annual Report of the Global Observatory for Water and Peace, March 2022

<sup>17</sup> <https://ecdpm.org/application/files/5216/5546/8566/Adaptive-Context-Driven-Approach-Water-Energy-Food-Nexus-ECDPM-Briefing-Note-135-2021.pdf>, [https://uploads.water-energy-food.org/resources/NRD\\_factsheet\\_FREXUS\\_EN.pdf](https://uploads.water-energy-food.org/resources/NRD_factsheet_FREXUS_EN.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> "Central Asia: Translating newly emerging political will into concrete steps to address new regional challenges", in First Annual Report of the Global Observatory for Water and Peace, March 2022

### 3. Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment: Source to Sea, Biodiversity, Climate, Resilience and DRR

The UN posits that “climate change is primarily a water crisis” and that “water and climate change are inextricably linked”.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, the impacts of climate change are widely recognized as a serious threat to international peace and security. Over the last decade, the UN Security Council, whose main responsibility is the maintenance of international peace and security, has discussed climate risks with increasing frequency, despite skepticism from some member states. Prolonged droughts, hurricanes and floodings can lead to competition over limited resources, tensions among host communities, violence, crime<sup>20</sup> and migration. In 2021 Guatemalan migrants have been apprehended at the U.S.-Mexico border more than 153,000 times, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection figures—driven by climate change, malnutrition, poverty, and violence.<sup>21</sup> **Climate change, resilience and impacts on the environment, and migration need to be understood in terms of their impact on stability and peace;** many recent examples from Central America provide evidence<sup>22</sup> The SIPRI report Environment of Peace<sup>23</sup> sets out recommendations to face the darkening security horizon and the alarmingly environmental degradation. It emphasizes the link between environmental integrity, peace and human well-being.

Any discussion on climate, and resilience will need to include the impacts on water governance and the potential of water as a vehicle for peaceful settlements; water scarcity and lack of access, driven by climate change among other factors, is closely linked to social instability. Countries with poor infrastructure especially in rural areas are less resilient to disasters and the impacts of climate change, and are often fertile ground for the rise of non-state armed groups. In this context water stress can act as a threat multiplier.

Another important impact of climate change is the need to renegotiate existing water treaties and agreements, while making efforts to ensure climate change adaptation and mitigation; a key example is the current Colorado River disputes and the issue of water allocation in related legal agreements and its implications on relations among the river basin partners. To create further opportunities for success, youth should be part of the process of reviewing agreements; an example is the role of youth in the

climate cooperation and the negotiations to revisit the Argentina-Brazil-Paraguay agreements.<sup>24</sup>

In relation, there is a need to better understand the hydrological cycle, including the critical role of forests and ecosystems in absorbing greenhouse gases and their key role in maintaining climate resilience. Years of research in St. Petersburg (Russia) have produced indisputable scientific evidence of the **role of pristine natural forests** in the stability of the environment and climate, particularly rivers and atmospheric precipitation. Deforestation contributes to further fragile conditions; yet the role of reforestation in both climate change and social stability requires serious study.<sup>25</sup>

The relationship between climate change, water, and conflict (or peace for that matter) remains complex, and oversimplification can lead to inappropriate or ineffective action. However, it is clear that human-induced climate change is contributing to changes in the water cycle and that this can have far-reaching consequences for people’s livelihoods and security.

Sadly and at the time of final editing of this brief, the devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Syria have killed over 40,000 people, and the numbers are expected to double as rescue efforts continue. The earthquakes’ impacts are more devastating given the already existing vulnerabilities and fragilities due to the protracted conflicts; rescue operations have proved more challenging and hence all future DDR plans would need to be developed to respond to pre-existing conflict situations.

In the future, consequences of extreme weather patterns caused by climate change may create tensions and new challenges even in river basins where riparian states have cooperated in a rational and efficient manner for decades, including in Europe. Prevention and management of conflicts over water needs new approaches and tools. The successes and failures to prevent and manage political and military conflicts in recent decades should be carefully analysed, so the increasingly politicized conflicts over water can be more effectively addressed.

Hence, approaching the “Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment” theme through a WfP framework is necessary to capture these nuances, which are needed if we want to make meaningful efforts to transform water conflicts for the benefit of those who suffer most under them.

<sup>19</sup> [www.unwater.org/water-facts/water-and-climate-change](http://www.unwater.org/water-facts/water-and-climate-change)

<sup>20</sup> <https://blog.bham.ac.uk/business-school/2021/11/22/climate-change-and-criminality-whats-the-link/>

<sup>21</sup> [www.politico.com/news/magazine/2021/07/19/guatemala-immigration-climate-change-499281](http://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2021/07/19/guatemala-immigration-climate-change-499281)

<sup>22</sup> “Latin American Experiences in Transboundary Surface Water and Aquifer Cooperation”, in First Annual Report of the Global Observatory for Water and Peace, March 2022

<sup>23</sup> [www.sipri.org/publications/2022/other-publications/environment-peace-security-new-era-risk](http://www.sipri.org/publications/2022/other-publications/environment-peace-security-new-era-risk)

<sup>24</sup> “Youth Commitments for Water and Peace” in First Annual Report of the Global Observatory for Water and Peace, March 2022

<sup>25</sup> “The role of natural forests in overcoming the global water crisis” in The Drama of Water in a time of Global Transformation, Geneva-Moscow 2021



#### 4. Water for Cooperation: Transboundary and International Water Cooperation, Cross Sectoral Cooperation, including Scientific Cooperation, and Water Across the 2030 Agenda

While transboundary water cooperation is important, water for peace as a framework aims to foster cooperation beyond water to ultimately achieve regional peace and stability. The WfP framework adds value to the theme “Water for Cooperation” by providing a comprehensive approach to addressing the multiple dimensions of water-related issues and by emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach to water management. This includes considering not only the technical and management aspects of water, but also the social, economic, and political dimensions of water cooperation. The Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace highlighted that the actual level of international water cooperation leaves much to be desired. Its study of the nexus between water and peace led to a set of recommendations including the centrality of water in modern armed conflicts. In addition, the Panel concluded that the role of transboundary water cooperation as a significant instrument of international peace and stability is not fully used in the basins that need it.<sup>26</sup>

Technical cooperation on shared resources does not guarantee the absence of tensions, competition, or social stability, as evidenced by a large body of literature. “[j]ust as there can be constructive conflict [...] there can be destructive cooperation” and that “It cannot be assumed that all cooperation is positive; at least some outcomes of cooperation can be ruinous”.<sup>27</sup> If conducted correctly, technical cooperation over shared water resources can assist in tackling part of the global/local water and peace challenges effectively. Nonetheless, even among basin countries that are cooperating over water, coordinated management of water systems and distribution of water for multiple purposes remain great challenges to overcome.

With more than eight hundred and fifty-one watercourses crossing international borders<sup>28</sup>, water has a clear geostrategic and geopolitical dimension that should not be ignored. In fact, ignoring the peace “piece” of the water puzzle will

leave the puzzle unresolved. Rather than avoiding the “elephant in the room,” an understanding of the need for sustainable, peaceful communities, with water as one of the vehicles, will open up opportunities to reduce the backlog in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

The GOWP asserts the **role of River Basin Organisations (RBOs) in promoting stability of fragile communities and conflict prone areas**; this is facilitated by supporting integrated socio-economic development mandates, which allow them to act in a transboundary, territorial and intersectoral manner to catalyse sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development, to adapt to the effects of climate change, to prevent water-related conflicts, pollution and disasters, and to foster convergence between peace, humanitarian and sustainable development agendas. This is a role that is played in part and that is further developing with well-established RBOs, in areas of rising conflicts. The principle of shared-benefits offered often ignored contribution to both act on water conflict prevention and filling the gap in key productive water infrastructures. This also necessitates an increase in investment in transboundary water infrastructure, promoting when relevant joint ownership for the purposes of peace.<sup>29</sup>

In addition, there is **also a role for river basin organizations in the promotion of multilateral processes**.<sup>30</sup> The future of RBOs, in situations and contexts where they are useful, should include three priorities: digitalisation, interconnectivity between surface and groundwater, and bridging and supporting participatory bottom-up approaches.

In conclusion, strengthening cooperative management of transboundary waters is an essential part of climate change adaptation. Integration of water governance and water diplomacy, treating them as integrated fields of activities with shared analytical backup and decision support mechanisms, complementary institutional setups and coordinated decision making would contribute to new forms of cooperation on transboundary waters.

<sup>26</sup> Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace (2017) *A Matter of Survival*, Geneva: Geneva Water Hub

<sup>27</sup> Mark Zeitoun, Naho Mirumachi, Jeroen Warner - *Water Conflicts*, 2019. P. 50.

<sup>28</sup> SDG6\_Indicator\_Report\_652\_Progress-on-Transboundary-Water-Cooperation\_2021\_EN\_UNECE.pdf (unwater.org)

<sup>29</sup> “River Basin Organisations as an Asset for Water and Peace” in *First Annual Report of the Global Observatory for Water and Peace*, March 2022

<sup>30</sup> “Taking stock of 2021 and looking forward: Opportunities for the GOWP”, in *First Annual Report of the Global Observatory for Water and Peace*, March 2022



## 5. Water Action Decade: Accelerating the implementation of the objectives of the Decade, including through the UN Secretary-General's Action Plan.

In moving towards the implementation of the objectives of the “International Decade (2018–2028) for Action – Water for Sustainable Development”, the WfP framework can enhance further opportunities to achieve the 2030 Agenda, through a transformative and inclusive lens; one that can ensure peaceful communities.

At the technical level, the changes in the global hydrologic cycle need to be better understood, as government commitments and pledges focused primarily on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) are not sufficient and also often (intentionally) depoliticised. Concepts like benefit sharing, payment for environmental services and regional and basin-wide IWRM should be supported by international water law, so a more solid legal basis is available for modern forms of water cooperation. The question remains how Big Data, recursive learning, machine learning, and all kinds of technological advances can be mobilized to make a breakthrough towards peace.

At the national level, it is expected that intra-national social struggles will continue to be duelled by water inequality and injustice. In the absence of inclusive planning and development, one can expect to see protests and demonstrations in relation to national water projects. Governments have the opportunity to build trust with citizens and civil society, and hence ensure legitimacy and social stability.<sup>31</sup> In addition, and in particular in fragile zones such as the Sahel, there is a need to adopt innovative approaches that recognize the role of local actors, strengthens endogenous institutions and ensures more coordination and funding mechanisms among development and humanitarian actors.<sup>32</sup>

At the regional and global levels, **platforms** such as the Global Observatory for Water and Peace are key to exchange on good practises, improve knowledge generation, promote out-of-the box thinking, and showcase the capacity of water for peacebuilding. Furthermore, **media platforms** such as the Water Diplomat<sup>33</sup> act as a knowledge

broker and raise awareness and understanding of the society of water and peace- it has a key role to play in covering complex mechanisms rather than reporting on “events”, bringing to light potential solutions.<sup>34</sup> In that view, one should stress the role of the media to engage on water-related challenges and improve the quality of public debate on the possible pathways to concerted solutions with constructive journalism.

In terms of capacity building, **youth and women** are key stakeholders and actors in delivering the SDG6 and the related SDGs, and in related decision making.<sup>35</sup> Further, the WfP framework can help to strengthen youth and women as key stakeholders by recognizing their unique perspectives and needs, and by ensuring that their voices and expertise are heard in water management and decision-making processes, and to become active agents of change in their communities, promoting gender equality and intergenerational dialogues, and social inclusion which are essential for sustainable peace.

Human capacity building is a sine qua non precondition of developing and implementing innovative concepts and tools that **enable government, international organizations, the civil society and other stakeholders to strengthen the link between water and peace**. Stepping up research, developing modern curricula for universities, retraining teaching staff, increasing student and staff mobility and jointly training future leaders of conflict regions are needed to make water a key instrument of peace.

Overall, the “Water for Peace” framework can help to create a more inclusive and equitable water management and governance system, which can support the achievement of the objectives of the UN Water Action Decade and the 2030 Agenda, by promoting cooperation, collaboration and peaceful resolution of water-related issues and by recognizing the role of water in promoting sustainable peace.

<sup>31</sup> “Dams, Floods and Cuts: Diverging waters between governments and civil societies-Examples from the Levant” in First Annual Report of the Global Observatory for Water and Peace, March 2022

<sup>32</sup> “Les stratégies de financements liées à l’eau dans la région du Liptako-Gourma”, Genève, mai 2022. Geneva Water Hub (2022), [www.genevawaterhub.org/LiptakoGourmaFinances](http://www.genevawaterhub.org/LiptakoGourmaFinances)

<sup>33</sup> The Water Diplomat originated from a partnership between the Geneva Water Hub and Ooskanews which produces, gathers and curates current news stories relation to the themes addressed in the report “A Matter of Survival”

<sup>34</sup> “The Water and Peace Sentinel-Seeking calmer waters”, in in First Annual Report of the Global Observatory for Water and Peace, March 2022

<sup>35</sup> “Empowering 21<sup>st</sup> Century Water Diplomacy through Active Female Leadership” in “River Basin Organisations as an Asset for Water and Peace” in First Annual Report of the Global Observatory for Water and Peace, March 2022

# Conclusion and Guiding Principles

Climate change, environmental degradation, and biodiversity loss, combined with shifts in the global security, political, and economic landscapes, have upended the relationship between water and peace. Governments, international organizations, civil society, and other stakeholders need innovative concepts and toolsets, based on solid theoretical foundations, to effectively address emerging challenges. The academic community - research institutes, think-tanks and universities - should spearhead efforts to provide decision makers and practitioners with these much needed innovative tools.

The “water for peace” framework is indispensably linked to all three dimensions of sustainable development - economic, environmental and social - and therefore requires more attention as an overarching framework in the global water agenda, and in the deliberations of the upcoming 2023 UN Water Conference. Yet, the global call made by the report “A Matter of Survival” for water to be recognized as a “fundamental condition of human survival and dignity”, and “the basis for the

resilience of society and of the natural environment” – has gone largely unheeded.”

Water for Peace has the potential to be an effective framework and approach in promoting peaceful relationships between different stakeholders. There is a growing body of evidence supporting this approach, including research conducted by the Pole Eau Dakar. Their case studies on water-related conflicts and cooperation opportunities in Africa demonstrate the risks associated with water disputes and the potential for cooperation. By prioritizing sustainable water management practices and conflict resolution mechanisms, Water for Peace can effectively mitigate the risks of conflicts and promote cooperation between stakeholders.

The partners of the GOWP propose the following guiding principles to the Chairs of the Interactive Dialogues and call on states and stakeholders involved in the 2023 UN Water Conference to adopt and use the theme of Water for Peace as an overarching framework:

1. To include “**water for peace**” language in the **mandated outcome document** of the conference by reporting on the dialogue discussions;
2. To **integrate** aspects of “water for peace” into each of the **five Interactive Dialogues** by considering the elements proposed in this brief as **potential opportunities to advance the SDGs**;
3. To encourage participants in the Interactive Dialogues to **commit to projects and activities that explore the peacebuilding** capacity of water in the **second half of the Water Action Decade and beyond until 2030**;
4. To **focus more on SDG16** in the **Interactive Dialogues**;
5. To **share examples and lessons learned** on the role of water in fostering peace, **particularly in fragile contexts**, and demonstrate how these are relevant to all the themes of the Interactive Dialogues;
6. To **prioritize financing commitments** to projects and initiatives that explore the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in relation to water.

# Contributing Partners



The Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) was inaugurated in 2006, at the American University of Beirut (AUB) as an independent, research-based, policy-oriented institute. It aims to initiate and develop policy-relevant research in and about the Arab world. The Institute aims at bridging the gap between academia and policymaking by conducting high quality research on the complex issues and challenges faced by Lebanese and Arab societies within shifting international and global contexts, by generating evidence-based policy recommendations and solutions for Lebanon and the Arab world, and by creating an intellectual space for an interdisciplinary exchange of ideas among researchers, scholars, civil society actors, media, and policy makers. Their **Climate Change and Environment Program** was launched in 2008 as part of IFI's strategy of utilizing the AUB's significant research and analytical capabilities to inform and guide public policymaking of Lebanon and the Arab world. The program's strategic objective is to generate, and influence policy related to climate change and environmental issues.



The Center for Central Asia Research of Corvinus University Budapest was established in 2016 to conduct applied research in support of the development of political and economic relations between Hungary and Central Asian countries, as well as on strategic issues of the region. CUB - CAR research programmes include studies on the adaptation of the experience of Visegrad4 (V4) cooperation to the political and economic conditions of Central Asia, market analysis for leading Hungarian companies, the development of a Central - South Asia trade and energy corridor through Afghanistan, coordination and leadership of the two year programme "Water as a driver of sustainable recovery: economic, institutional and strategic aspects of water resources management in Central Asia", as well as studies on the institutional heritage of Central Asian countries.



The Geneva Water Hub is a centre of excellence specialised in hydropolitics and hydro-diplomacy. Its objective is to better understand and contribute to the prevention of tensions related to water by taking into account conflicts of uses between public sectors and private sectors, between political entities, and between states. The Geneva Water Hub is the Secretariat of the Global High Level Panel on Water and Peace and engages in the promotion and the implementation of the Panel's recommendations published in September 2017 report "A Matter of Survival". The Geneva Water Hub aims at developing the hydropolitics agenda to help prevent water-related conflicts at an early stage at intersectoral and transboundary levels, and to promote water as an instrument of peace and cooperation with the support of the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) and the University of Geneva.



The memorandum of the Association of the Lake Regions was signed within the framework of the Baikal International Ecological Water Forum, which was held in September 2017 in Irkutsk. Representatives of several Russian regions rich in freshwater and salt lakes: the Irkutsk Region, Buryatia, the Republic of Altai, and the Trans-Baikal Territory declared their willingness to cooperate in the issues of environmental safety, tourism development and the transition to the "Green Economy". In the future, the list of signatories of the Memorandum will be expanded.



The **Organization of American States (OAS)** is the world's oldest regional organization, dating back to 1948. It was established to promote among its member states “an order of peace and justice, to promote their solidarity, to strengthen their collaboration and defend their sovereignty, territorial integrity and their independence”. Today the OAS brings together 35 independent states of the Americas and constitutes the main political, juridical and social government forum in the Western Hemisphere. The OAS, through its General Secretariat, provides technical assistance to its member states in the area of sustainable development, including water resources.”



The **International Secretariat for Water (ISW)** is a non-governmental organization based in Montreal, Canada. The ISW envisions a world in which water is equitably accessible to all, fostering the empowerment of local actors as well as cooperation between borders, generations, and institutions. ISW's mission is to initiate and facilitate actions that contribute to positive systemic changes in the framework of water governance from the local to the global level and to the empowerment of actors involved in the water sector. One of the three main pillars of the ISW strategy is to empower the #WaterGeneration. ISW's Youth Strategy's vision is inspired by the idea of the youth movement for water; a movement that involves the large-scale, dynamic and connected mobilization of young people worldwide.



The **Pôle Eau Dakar (PED)** is an initiative currently being set up within the Ministry of Water and Sanitation of Senegal. It aims to promote hydro-diplomacy and peace in the West African sub-region and beyond; and to make water resources a factor of peace and security in the sub-region. Its vision is to build a reference framework in Africa to catalyze cooperation, inclusive dialogue, governance and the development of knowledge and innovative solutions on water. With the ambition of having a regional anchorage with an international scope, the PED will thus constitute a link between the multiple actors involved in the field of water and peace; this to consolidate the efforts already recognized in terms of cooperation and governance of shared water resources. In addition to being a flagship entity for highlighting the Senegalese and sub-regional experience during the World Water Forum in Dakar 2022, the PED is emerging as an entity for the follow up of the recommendations of the World Water Forum.

## — THE WATER — DIPLOMAT

“**The Water Diplomat**” is a free monthly news and intelligence resource produced by OOSKAnews and Geneva Water Hub. The publication, distributed monthly by email, is part of a media platform developed to engage our world in understanding the intersects among water, peace, conflict and diplomacy. OOSKAnews is the world's leading publisher of current international water, and water-related news and intelligence. “The Water Diplomat” media platform builds upon the work of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace that produced in 2017 the milestone report “A Matter of Survival”. The media provides news and intelligence pertaining to various themes of the Panel's report, contributing to global awareness on hydropolitical challenges worldwide.