



ENHANCING ACTION THROUGH COLLABORATION

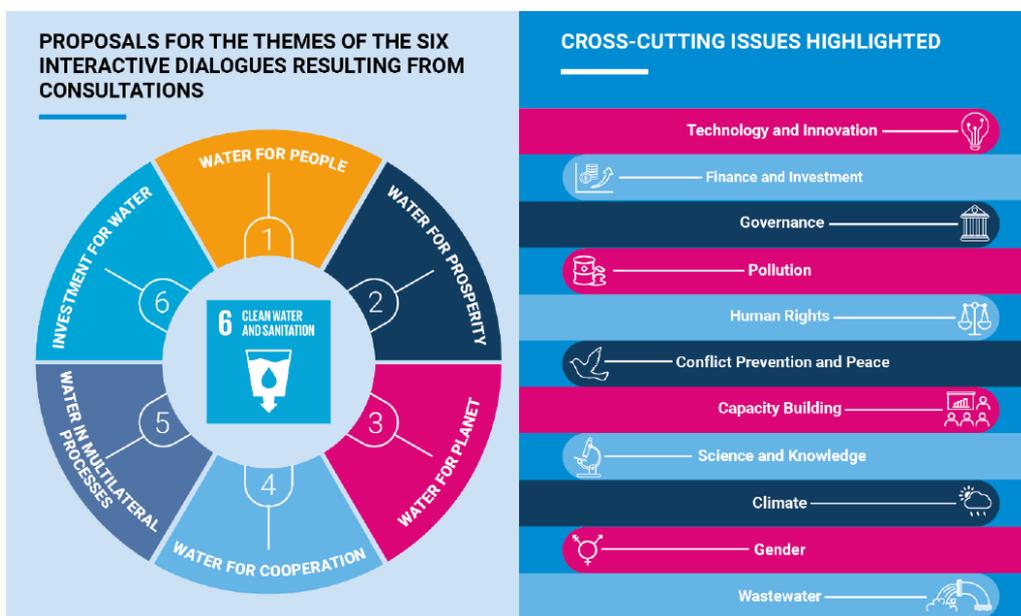
Action-Oriented Stakeholder Messages on the Six Interactive Dialogues

In preparation of the Dakar One Day Stakeholder Meeting in connection with the High-level Preparatory Meeting for the 2026 United Nations Water Conference stakeholders are asked to jointly prepare concise two page think pieces on all six interactive dialogues of the Conference. These briefs should build on the elaborations provided in the background note prepared by the co-hosts of the 2026 UN Water Conference. Key messages and recommendations for Member States should be action-oriented, reflecting the priorities and needs expressed by Member States and stakeholders:

“Member States and stakeholders expressed strong support for a Conference that builds on the outcomes of the UN 2023 Water Conference while advancing new and emerging priorities and focusing on implementation. Many emphasized the urgency of taking action, as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development enters its final five years.”

Interactive Dialogues of the 2026 UN Water Conference

- **Interactive Dialogue 1 - Water for People:** the human rights to water and sanitation, including for those in vulnerable situations, for healthy societies and economies
- **Interactive Dialogue 2 - Water for Prosperity:** valuing water, water-energy-food nexus, advancing integrated and sustainable water resource management, wastewater and water-use efficiency across sectors, and economic and social development
- **Interactive Dialogue 3 - Water for Planet:** climate, biodiversity, desertification, environment, source to sea, resilience and disaster risk reduction
- **Interactive Dialogue 4 - Water for Cooperation:** transboundary and international water cooperation, including scientific cooperation, and inclusive governance
- **Interactive Dialogue 5 - Water in Multilateral Processes:** Sustainable Development Goal 6, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and beyond, and global water initiatives
- **Interactive Dialogue 6 - Investments for Water:** financing, technology and innovation, and capacity-building





Interactive Dialogue 5: Water in Multilateral Processes

1. Introduction

As outlined in the background note prepared by the Secretary-General to the 2026 UN Water Conference, Interactive Dialogue 5: Water in multilateral processes (ID5) is intended to *“explore the platforms, frameworks, and spaces available for international dialogue on water issues, integrating insights from all dialogues of the 2026 UN Water Conference, as well as look at how water is addressed in the broader global, multilateral and intergovernmental processes.”* While the mandate of ID5 is perhaps the broadest of the six Interactive Dialogues, it is also the most aspirational, challenging us to confront our limitations and consider how to transcend them together. The conversations and commitments put forth under ID5 should reflect upon the progress and challenges faced in pursuing systemic water governance under the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, extracting lessons learned and new insights that inspire us to chart a bold, inclusive, and transformative path forward to 2050 and beyond.

The purpose of this document is to capture and communicate stakeholder perspectives on the key opportunities and solutions needed to ensure greater coherence and ambition from all the multilateral agendas related to the 2030 Agenda, with a particular focus on water, sanitation, and hygiene services as well as aquatic ecosystems. It identifies key recommendations for Member States and the international community, and serves as an entry point for further stakeholder engagement on ID5 going forward.

2. Challenges

The challenges to integrating water across multilateral policy agendas are well documented in the Conference background note and include: fragmented policies, conventions, and institutions; misaligned funding and management; ineffective accountability mechanisms; weak data sharing protocols; and a growing gap between political commitments and funded actions to overcome these persistent challenges. While knowledge and understanding of water’s essential role in enabling sustainable development is increasingly recognized at the highest political levels, efforts to overcome barriers to integrated policy, governance, management, and finance approaches have had limited impact. There is a risk that significant progress made in the last decade has not been realised during the development of national policies and may be overlooked when reestablishing global targets. The opportunities and proposed solutions outlined below address these challenges.

3. Opportunities & Proposed Solutions

As the end of the Water Action Decade approaches, we have an important opportunity to reflect upon the advantages and limitations of our current multilateral institutions in facilitating and promoting systemic water governance. To ensure that the legacy of UN 2026 does not become irrelevant after 2030, we must think beyond existing conventions and frameworks to build systemic water resilience at all levels. Specific considerations and solutions should include ways to:

1. **Celebrate our successes and learn from our failures.** While we are often quick to point out the failures of the current multilateral system for water, we should also



recognize water's increasingly prominent role in many global agendas, including on biodiversity, climate change, and desertification. Efforts to reinforce and strengthen those improvements should be prioritized in defining the next era of global water governance.

2. **Articulate a compelling political narrative for water multilateralism and identify leadership for water issues in non-water-centric spaces.** Building on the last point, this would include prioritizing the participation of the UN Special Envoy for Water and other water leaders in non-water conventions and fora, such as the UN Food Systems Summit, UN Oceans Conference, or Pact for the Future. However, a single envoy is not enough. We need greater political leadership at all levels to give water the visibility and space in the global multilateral agenda it needs. For this we must develop clear, persuasive arguments that demonstrate why multilateral cooperation on water is essential, including for peace and security, economic prosperity, ecosystem health, and climate resilience.
3. **Embed intergenerational criteria and accountability into multilateral decision-making processes, governance frameworks, and investment decisions.** This anchors policy choices in the wellbeing of future generations and strengthens systemic resilience to long-term pressures, such as climate change, pandemics, and economic shocks.
4. **Institutionalise long-term capacity building beyond the Water Action Decade.** Water sustainability must be treated as an ongoing process by committing sustained investment in education, cross-disciplinary research, and formalised partnerships with Indigenous Peoples, youth, women, and other civil society groups. These partnerships should be embedded in programme design and governance structures to ensure that gains in water safety and security as well as equality persist beyond short-term initiatives and global campaigns.

4. Key Recommendations for Member States, co-chairs, and the international community (3 recommendations)

We recommend that all Member States and non-state actors:

1. Reinforce existing commitments, roadmaps, and strategies to enhance the role of water in multilateral processes, in particular those that were agreed upon during and since the 2023 UN Water Conference. Additionally, UN-Water should utilize external partners, scientific institutions, and stakeholders to better support the timely and effective implementation of the Secretary-General's UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation.

This recommendation requires the mandate of UN-Water to be reinforced with clear authority to strengthen coordination and accountability measures across the UN system.

2. Embed water as a core cross-cutting priority across international agendas, as well as levels of governance, and prioritize existing initiatives that align multilateral



governance processes, financing decisions, and the implementation of water-related actions.

Improved coherence across existing international conventions and initiatives is necessary to reduce fragmented mandates, competing priorities, and the inefficient use of limited financial and institutional resources. Without stronger alignment, water-related actions risk being duplicated, underfunded, or deprioritised across global frameworks, undermining their effectiveness at all political levels.

We recommend building on existing international initiatives, such as the Baku Dialogue on Water for Climate and the Freshwater Challenge, that seek to align governance, financing, and the implementation of water-related actions across the Rio Conventions, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and 2030 Agenda. Member States that require a standardised and systematic approach to monitoring and reporting will ensure consistency across global efforts.

Demonstrate that multilateralism works on the ground by coordinating UN system implementation support at country level, working through Resident Coordinators to develop National Sustainable Development Frameworks that are inclusive, country-driven, and visibly deliver results. At the national level, governments should support integrated water management across sectors, development strategies, and budgets, ensuring adequate human and financial resources and robust accountability mechanisms to enable effective implementation.

3. To ensure that water is not left behind in the coming decades, at the UN 2026 Water Conference Member States must commit to establishing a new water governance framework for the post-2030 period, including deliberate, long-term milestones anchored in a clear global vision. This process should begin now to define what a water-secure future will look like by 2050 and beyond, providing direction for multilateral coherence, investment, and institutional reform across the UN system.

Without a clear, long-term vision for systemic water resilience, reform of multilateral water governance risks remaining fragmented, disconnected, and constrained by short political cycles. A forward-looking pathway will strengthen the legitimacy and effectiveness of multilateral water governance by guiding UN system reform, enhancing democratic representation, and rebuilding trust amongst Member States, stakeholders, and other actors.

Building on all of these recommendations, we urge the establishment of an intergovernmental framework for global water governance at the 2026 UN Water Conference. While we understand the challenges currently faced by Member States and international institutions, we feel our best hope for a water secure future for all requires the elevation of water-related issues to the highest political levels and urge Member States to take this under consideration. As noted by several participants in the Dakar Stakeholder Consultation, we do not need to have all the pieces in place yet, but we need to commit to this process together or we risk losing the progress we've made thus far. This framework should include regular intergovernmental meetings to



keep political momentum, track progress, and address challenges. It was suggested these take place every 3-5 years, with technical and / or regional meetings occurring at regular intervals in between.