

Official side-event for the UN 2023 Water Conference

Responding to the UN Secretary-General's Call to Action: Realizing Early Warning Systems for All in a World with Increasing Water Related Hazards

Date and Time: Thursday 23 March, 8am to 9.15am

Location: UN Headquarters

Room: CR2

Co-organized by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)

In collaboration with the Governments of Egypt, Tajikistan, Japan, United States, with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Background

The impacts of anthropogenic climate change are being seen and felt around the world, bringing new and previously unimaginable challenges to all countries and communities, but particularly those that are the most vulnerable.¹ As stated in the IFRC's World Disasters Report 2020², 83% of all disasters are caused by climate- and weather-related events, impacting over 1.7 billion people and killing over 410,000 people in the last ten years. Water-related hazards are key in that respect: floods and droughts struck approximately 75% of all people impacted by hazards in 2000-2019 and the related damage amounts to trillions USD. Climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction measures, and sustainable water management can significantly reduce disasters and their impacts and support sustainable development, including Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6), in all its dimensions.³

Multi-hazard Early Warning Systems and other disaster risk reduction activities are proven, effective, and feasible measures to reduce related impacts and save lives. However, less than half of all countries in the world have reported the existence of an operational Multihazard Early Warning Systems (MHEWS), with low coverage in climate vulnerable countries, especially in Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and in Africa.⁴ Even where warning elements exist, implementation must be scaled up to save lives and protect livelihoods.

The United Nations Secretary General announced on 23 March 2022, World Meteorological Day, a new call to action to ensure every person on Earth is protected by MHEWS within five years. The call to action, Early Warnings for All, aims to develop a global system to enhance knowledge on risks, impacts, consequences and available response options, as well as to develop capacities to anticipate and manage

¹ IPCC 2021, 2022, AR6, WG1-3

² International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), 2020: "[World Disasters Report 2020](#)"

³ Water and Climate Leaders Statement at COP27: "[The Water Imperative for Climate Action](#)".

⁴ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and World Meteorological Organization, 2022: "[Global status of multi-hazard early warning systems: Target G](#)"

disaster risks across scales. Early Warnings for All has to be a key priority, in particular for floods, droughts and other water-related hazards, including glaciers melting, in disaster risk reduction strategies and to protect the attainment for the Sustainable Development Goals.

At all levels, challenges remain. Investments need to be made to fill the capacity gap in collecting data, assessing the hydrological status and making predictions at the short-term (floods) and season to sub-seasonal (droughts) time scales. Decision makers need to have reliable information to ensure early action to protect people and economies from water-related hazards at local, national to regional levels. Coordinated local community and national anticipatory and early action plans with pre-arranged and reliable funding attached can support timely preparedness and response actions, including for those in the hardest to reach places.

As a response to the UN Secretary General's call to action on Early Warnings for All, UN Member States and entities together with intergovernmental and stakeholder organizations and the private sector will present at this event their transformative commitments and cross-sectoral partnerships that will change the game on how we prepare for and reduce the impacts of climate change and disasters and build resilience. The commitments are direct contributions to the Water Action Agenda and support implementation of the Early Warnings for All: Executive Action Plan 2023-2027⁵ and SDG 6.

Objectives:

This event will convene UN Member States and entities, intergovernmental and stakeholder organizations, civil society and the private sector from the climate and water practice, disaster risk reduction, science and humanitarian communities to:

- Announce joint commitments and implementation plans for the Water Action Agenda and in support implementation of the UN Secretary-General's call to action on Early Warning for All by 2027, the Sustainable Development Goal 6, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction;
- Showcase cross-sectoral partnerships that will change the game on how we reduce disaster risks, prepare for and mitigate the impacts of climate change and other challenges, and build resilience;
- Better understand the impacts of water-related hazards, including floods, droughts, and glacier melt, at local, national, and regional levels, with an emphasis on the most vulnerable, and how these hazards hinder the achievement of the SDGs;
- Explain how early warning systems that lead to early actions reduce the impacts of water-related disasters on communities, society and economies;
- Build momentum for the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Midterm Review for the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the 2023 UN SDG Summit;

⁵ [Early Warnings for All: Executive Action Plan 2023-2027](#)

Tentative Programme

Moderator Ms Sofia Borges, Senior Vice President and Head of the NY Office, UN Foundation – 8:05 start time, 3 min by moderator

Welcoming Remarks (4 mins) 8:08-8:12, plus transition

- Prof. Petteri Taalas, Secretary-General, World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

Opening Remarks (8 mins)

- H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, 8:13-8:17, plus transition
- Mr. Selwin Hart, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Climate Action and Just Transition, 8:18-8:22, plus transition

Setting the Scene (12 mins)

- Mr. Jagan Chapagain, Secretary General, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), 8:23-8:27, plus transition
- Ms. Rabab Fatima UN-OHRLS, High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, 8:28-8:32, plus transition
- Ms. Ursula Wynhoven, Head of the New York Office, International Communication Union (ITU) 8:33-8:37, plus transition

High-level Commitments to the Water Action Agenda and ‘Early Warning for All’ (21 mins, - 3 mins each)

- H.E. Mr. Mark Harbers, Minister of Infrastructure and Water Management, Kingdom of the Netherlands, 8:38-8:41, plus transition
- H.E. Ms. Mariam Al Mheiri, Minister of Climate Change and Environment, UAE 8:42-8:45, plus transition.
- H.E. Mr. Hani Sewilam, Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation, Egypt 8:46-8:49 plus trans
- H.E. Ms. Johanna Sumuvuori, State Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Finland, 8:50-8:53, plus transition
- H.E. Ms. Kamikawa Yoko, Special Envoy of Prime Minister of Japan, 8:54-8:57, plus transition
- Mr. Xing Qu, Deputy Director General, UNESCO, 8:58-9:01, plus transition
- Dr. Sarah Kapnick, NOAA’s Chief Scientist, USA, 9:02-9:05, plus transition

Closing remarks (4 mins) 9:06-9:10

- Ms. Mami Mizutori, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and Head of United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction