



Side-Event – United Nations 2023 Water Conference - New York

From Mar del Plata to the United Nations 2023 Water Conference: where do we go?

New York, Friday 24 March 2023, 3:30 – 4:45 pm
UN headquarter - ECOSOC room – ref HQ192

Lead Organization: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Peru (member State)

Organizing partners:

- International Secretariat for Water – Global (*civil society*)
The International Secretariat for Water is coordinating the Butterfly Effect NGO coalition of +140 members as well as the Global Youth Movement for Water (+370 youth-led networks)
- Ministry of Water and Sanitation of Senegal – Senegal (*member State*)
- Ministry of Housing, Construction of Sanitation – Peru (*member State*)
- AquaFed (*private sector*)

This side-event on water governance is an integral part of the work of the Interactive Dialogue 5 on the revision of the Water Action Decade and is a way to accelerate the implementation of the International Secretariat for Water (Butterfly Effect + Global Youth Movement for Water) commitment to the Water Action Agenda.

Description

Since the first United Nations Water Conference in Mar del Plata in 1977, although the United Nations system organized a series of global conferences at high level, for a variety of reasons, **water has almost disappeared from the international political agenda** and was not considered to be a priority issue. Nevertheless, a major output of the Conference was yet to declare the period 1980 to 1990 the International Water Supply and Sanitation Decade.

Of all the intergovernmental conferences, summits and World Water Forums that have followed, two areas have been largely excluded from the discussions: financial arrangements and the modalities for the implementation of policies. Consequently, many of the gaps have not been filled from one global event to another. Since then, outcomes of these meetings are failing to meet the targets set by the UN 2030 Agenda and to improve the situation of the millions of people without access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

Water governance is highly fragmented, with closely related roles and responsibilities, for water scattered and assigned to different entities. **At the international level, 32 United Nations agencies have a link with water** with UN-Water having a coordination role. **The lack of an intergovernmental policy space** for water means that inequalities, pollution, poor or non-existent access to safe water and sanitation around the world persist. The fragmentation of the water sector at the global level – with many non-UN institutions taking a leading role – **contributes in fine to a lack of political commitment by the States.**



We need to develop a future road map by implementing workable solutions within the short timetable available.

A common good essential to our survival, our water resources are today threatened by demographic pressure, urbanization, various forms of pollution and climate change. At a time when multilateralism is struggling, when the world is experiencing serious and diverse crises at an ever-closer pace, and when people have less and less confidence in institutions, it is our **duty to mobilize to strengthen international water governance** and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Governance is not an end, but it provides tools to achieve the goal of ensuring people's right to water. There is no single model of governance that would fit all countries or contexts. Nevertheless, the weaknesses of this international governance are explained more by the problems of implementation and action plans, in view of the political, economic, and social obstacles and the fragmentation of the sector. It is therefore essential to consider the implementation of the SDGs and the challenges to be met to achieve an efficient water governance architecture.

To that end, the 2023 Conference must be more than a review of the Water Decade and **result in strong and binding commitments**. Water must be a vector of peace in a world weakened by multiple crises.

The objective of this side event is to **find answers to face the global water crises** and to obtain institutional commitments on **international water governance from stakeholders**. We need concrete actions, as we cannot afford to wait another 46 years of inaction.

We expect this side-event to allow for rich exchange and discussion around commitments to improve water governance. These discussions will serve, among other things, to put water back at the heart of policies (local, national, supranational, global) and to emphasize the need for strengthened political dialogue and cooperation in the water sector for the maintenance of peace.

After a keynote speech about “Balance at a glance of the last 46 years (from Mar del Plata to NY)” given by François Münger (former Swiss Special Envoy for Water), the various speakers will exchange and debate around prepared questions as follows: **“What actions are needed to strengthen global water governance? What global architecture is needed to ensure the accelerated achievement of SDG 6?”** The speakers will all contribute to the discussion, and a youth representative, in pair with a member of the International Secretariat for Water team, will moderate.

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***** Draft Program *****

Preliminary Time	Activity	Speaker
15:30 PM	Opening remarks	Sarah Dousse - Executive Director of the International Secretariat for Water (5 minutes)
15:35 PM	Keynote speech: Balance <i>-at a glance-</i> and opportunities from the last 46 years (from Mar del Plata to NY)	François Münger – Former Swiss Special Envoy for Water; Geneva Water Hub (10 minutes)
15:45 PM	<p>What actions are needed to strengthen global water governance?</p> <p>What global architecture is needed to ensure the accelerated achievement of SDG 6?</p>	Panel (5 minutes each): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hania Pérez de Cuéllar Lubienska, Minister of Housing, Construction and Sanitation of Peru • Serigne Mbaye Thiam, Minister of Water and Sanitation of Senegal • Sandra Métayer, Butterfly Effect Representative • Marjeta Jager, DG INTPA, European Commission (tbc)
16:05 PM	Questions from the audience	Moderation (10 minutes): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coline Arnoux, International Secretariat for Water (ISW), Project manager

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kate Brown (World Youth Parliament for Water)
16:15 PM	Answers to questions from the audience and final comments from the panel	Panel (5 minutes each): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hania Pérez de Cuéllar Lubienska Minister of Housing, Construction and Sanitation of Peru Serigne Mbaye Thiam, Minister of Water and Sanitation of Senegal Sandra Metayer, Butterfly Effect Representative XXX, DG INTPA, European Commission (tbc)
16 :35 PM	Conclusions and Final Remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neil Dhot, Executive Director, AquaFed (8 minutes)
16.43 PM to 16 :45 PM	End of the event	Thanks, and final announcements (2 minutes)



Speakers and panel approaches

(based on latest public declarations)

Sarah **Dousse** - Executive Director of the International Secretariat for Water: She will welcome the assistants to the event, and she may point up the opportunity that lies ahead on water leaders to make significant contributions to the global water agenda and to the lives of billions of vulnerable people on the world.

François **Münger** – Former Swiss Special Envoy for Water; Geneva Water Hub: He will potentially make a review of the action plan published during the Mar del Plata UN Water Conference and the challenges that we face today.

Panel (5 minutes each):

- Hania **Pérez de Cuéllar-Lubienska**, Minister of Housing, Construction and Sanitation of Peru: Bac, Master and Doctoral studies in France and granddaughter of Javier Perez de Cuellar former UN General Secretary. She is giving support to the idea of creating a Global Water Fund and she could make a call to governments to work together on the global water agenda.
- Serigne **Mbaye Thiam**, Minister of Water and Sanitation of Senegal: He could call upon the idea to continue the implementation of the Road to Dakar and the urgency to provide sustainable responses, not forgetting financing, governance, knowledge, and innovation management.
- Sandra **Metayer**, Butterfly Effect Representative: She could underline the role of civil society and youth in complementing national and global policies and actions to accelerate the achievement of SDG6.
- **XXX**, DG INTPA, European Commission (tbc) : To be confirmed. It is expected that the EU representative may play a pivoting role in articulating European and global proposals.
- Neil **Dhot**, Executive Director, AquaFed: He might emphasize the contribution of the private sector in water management with special focus on water treatment and distribution through private operators, as well as the opportunities this approach has for the future water agenda.

Possible questions which may arise from the audience

1. Would your country/organization be willing to endorse a UN Resolution proposal to UNGA to establish regular intergovernmental meetings on water within the UN?
2. How much money will be needed to close the SDG6 gap and how long will it take? Do developing countries have the capacity to cope with this challenge?
3. Is it sustainable the way that water global decisions and governance are presently made? What do you propose to change them?
4. What is your message to the billions of people that do not have water and sanitation today?
5. What do you think of the nomination of the Special Envoy to the UN Secretary General? What should be its mandate?
6. What measures need to be taken to ensure that the commitments made in New York are followed up?
7. What commitments did you make to ensure that this conference does not remain a dead letter?
8. How to put water issues at the heart of the political debate?
9. What did you learn from this conference? From this side-event? What do you think are the prospects?