



UN
2023 WATER
CONFERENCE

NEW YORK
22-24
MARCH
2023

*Lead organizers: Namibia,
Botswana and South Africa*

SIDE EVENT

Groundwater: An Invisible Cross-Sectoral Fundament for Implementation of the Water Action Agenda



24 March, 8:00-9:15



**Trusteeship Room,
UN HQs, New York**

PROGRAMME

Master of Ceremony - Opening remarks and introduction to the programme of the event

- **Ms Alice Aureli**, Chief, Groundwater Sustainability and Water Cooperation Section, Division of Water Sciences, UNESCO

Rapporteurs: Ms Karen Villholth and Mr José Luis Martin Bordes, UNESCO invited experts

High level statements from the side event lead organisers

- **Hon. Mr Carl H.G. Schlettwein**, Minister of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform of Namibia
- **Hon. Mr Mzwinila Kefentse**, Minister of Lands and Water Affairs of Botswana
- **H.E. Mr Senzo Mchunu**, Minister of Water and Sanitation of South Africa

“UN-Water Joint Message and Call for Action” and main findings from the Groundwater Summit

- **Ms Karen Villholth**

Keynote presentation: Groundwater: An Invisible Cross-Sectoral Fundament for Implementation of the Water Action Agenda

- **Mr Neno Kukuric**, UNESCO invited expert

Panel A – Data

Strengthening Groundwater Monitoring: Data and Information in a Changing World

Introduction of the topic and facilitation of the debate

- **Ms Elisabeth Lictevout**, Director, IGRAC

Panellists

- **Mr Dominique Berod**, Head, Earth System Monitoring Division, WMO
 - **Mr Teodoro Estrela**, Director General of Water, Ministry of Ecological Transition of Spain
 - **Mr Joel Podgorski**, Senior Scientist, EAWAG and WWQA/FOG
 - **Ms Jodie Miller**, Section Head, Department of Nuclear Sciences and Applications, IAEA
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Panel B - Innovation

Innovative Practices, New Technologies, Social engagement and Transformative Policies for Integrated Solutions for Groundwater

Introduction of the topic and facilitation of the debate

- **Ms Jane Dottridge**, Secretary General, IAH

Panellists

- **Ms Myeonghwa Kang**, Deputy Director, Ministry of Environment of Republic of Korea
- **Mr Günter Liebel**, Secretary General, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management of the Republic of Austria
- **Mr Peter van der Keur**, EuroGeoSurveys

Panel C - Capacity Development

Improving Groundwater Knowledge and Capacity at Local, National and International Level for sustainable development

Introduction of the topic and facilitation of the debate

- **Elena López Gunn**, Director, ICATALIST

Panellists

- **Mr Gaetano Casale**, Manager Liaison Office, IHE Delft
- **Ms Miriam Haritz**, Deputy Director General, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection of Germany
- **Mr James Sauramba**, Executive Director, SADC-GMI

Panel D - Finance

Informed Investments for Groundwater Monitoring and Solution Implementation

Introduction of the topic and facilitation of the debate

- **Mr Neil Dhot**, Executive Director, Aquafed

Panellists

- **Mr François Bertone**, Senior Water Resources Management Specialist, World Bank
- **Ms Sasha Koo-Oshima**, Deputy Director, Land and Water Division, FAO
- **Ms Astrid Hillers**, Program Manager, International Waters, GEF

Panel E - Governance

Groundwater Governance: Fundamental for Collaboration across Sectors and Boundaries

Introduction of the topic and facilitation of the debate

- **Ms Sharon Megdal**, Director WRRC, University of Arizona

Panellists

- **Mr Kazufumi Ohnishi**, Mayor of Kumamoto City, Japan
- **H.E. Mr Fernando A. López**, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of El Salvador
- **Ms Mariet Verhoef-Cohen**, President, WfWP
- **Mr Håkan Tropp**, Programme Director Capacity Development, SIWI

Groundwater Youth Network

- **Mr Mahmoud Radwan**, Representative Groundwater Youth Network

Q&A- Interventions from the floor

Facilitator: **Ms Alice Aureli**

Closing Remarks and Commitments

- **Ms Ndiyakupi Nghituwamata**, Executive Director, Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform of Namibia
- **H.E. Mr Hani Sewilam**, President of AMCOW
- **Mr Federico Properzi**, Chief Technical Advisor, UN-Water

Organizing Partners

Lead Organizers: Namibia, Co-leads: Botswana, South Africa

Other Member States: Austria, Bahamas, El Salvador, Finland, Germany, Republic of Korea, Slovenia, Spain, St Kitts and Nevis, Switzerland, Uruguay, Uganda

Partner organizations: UN-Water, UNESCO, AMCOW, AQUAFED, BRGM, CeReGAS, Deltares, EAWAG, EuroGeoSurveys, WREG, FAO, GEF, GEUS, IAEA, IAH, ICATALIST, IGRAC, IHE Delft, IWRA, JWF, KIGAM Korea, New Mexico WRRI, ORASECOM, OSS, SADC-GMI, SIWI, The Water Institute, UNDP, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCO GWYN, UNESCWA, UN-Habitat, University of Arizona WRRC, WfWP, WMO, World Bank.

Context

Groundwater is fundamental to life on earth. Yet, we still don't know sufficient about the state of aquifers globally and we keep depleting and polluting them. Our aquifers are our freshwater "bank", and in this metaphor we're robbing the bank and polluting and abusing the leftovers – undermining the key role groundwater plays in stabilizing water availability during climatic and human-induced adversities. And we're not aware and precognizant. This asks for more than a campaign and the science coming together, this needs a whole- of-society transformative approach with political will and scaled up action. For water, food, energy, and biodiversity security. For our economies and cities. For mitigating climate change and investing in resilience and adaptation. For security, peace, and prosperity at large.

Since groundwater is everywhere, but invisible, a much stronger groundwater cooperation across sectors and administrative boundaries is an imperative; no siloed attitude can be tolerated any more. Therefore, we suggest here a groundwater coordination platform in the framework of the UN-Water community to facilitate cooperation, knowledge generation and sharing, and raising awareness globally. Since we cannot manage what we don't measure, improving availability, quality, and open access and sharing of groundwater data and information will be an underlying objective of all specific actions assisted by the platform. This will bring groundwater monitoring in focus, "a neglected area", according to the SDG 6 progress assessment update of 2021. The platform will also contribute to increasing the number of transboundary aquifers covered by cooperation frameworks. Joining forces under a UN-Water groundwater coordination platform will increase visibility, synergy, and awareness of the importance of groundwater, which is necessary for improving the biophysical state of aquifers and the societal benefits of global groundwater resources.

Useful Links

[Interactive Dialog 5: Water Action Decade – Concept Paper](#)

[SDG 6 Acceleration Framework](#)

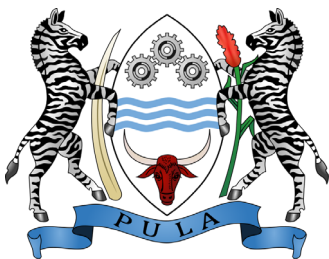
[Water Action Agenda and Registering Commitments](#)

[UN-Water Joint Message on Groundwater](#)

[UNESCO 215 Executive Board Decision on Groundwater](#)

[Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition](#)

[Open Water Data Commitment and Campaign](#)



Republic of Botswana



Republic of Namibia



Republic of South Africa