
13 November 2019, 17:00 – 18:30

Side event objective


Background

The UN General Assembly resolution on the “Midterm comprehensive review of the implementation of the International Decade for Action, ‘Water for Sustainable Development’ 2018-2028” (A/RES/73/226), adopted in December 2018, calls for a Conference on the Midterm Review of the Water Action Decade to be convened in New York from 22 to 24 March 2023. The preparatory process and the one-day high-level meeting to be convened by the President of the General Assembly in 2021 will help promote the implementation of the water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda while allowing all partners to identify practical solutions to the water and sanitation crisis through all relevant lenses such as climate change, agriculture, energy, peace, and security.

Summary notes

Opening statements

Welcoming participants, Mr Gilbert F. Houngbo, Chair of UN-Water and President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development said that UN-Water hoped to provide through this side event an early opportunity for stakeholders to reflect on how to make the most of the upcoming high-level events on water in 2021 and 2023.

Mr Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) said the UN Conference in 2023 – the first such conference on water since 1977 – represents a key opportunity to respond to urgent water and sanitation challenges, and the preparatory process will help promote the implementation of internationally agreed water-related goals and targets and identify practical solutions. He noted that DESA is tasked by the UN Secretary-General to carry out the mandates requested by the General Assembly resolution on the Water Action Decade. He further noted that DESA co-chairs together with United Nations
University the UN-Water Task Force on the Water Action Decade Implementation, which stands ready to support Member States in the preparatory process of the midterm review.

Ms Madhushree Chatterjee, UN-Water Secretary explained that the 2023 Conference will be preceded by regional and global preparatory meetings and informed by existing water-related meetings at the regional and global level with costs financed through voluntary contributions. The General Assembly has also requested a report for the seventy-seventh session, to assess progress in the implementation of the first half of the Water Action Decade. She recalled that the resolution calls to finalise the arrangements for the 2023 Conference during its seventy-fifth session. In 2021, the President of the General Assembly is requested to hold a one-day high-level meeting to help promote the implementation of the water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda. She highlighted that UN-Water stands ready to support his office with the preparations.

**Informal dialogue**

Ms Amanda Marlin, Senior Adviser, UNICEF moderated the discussion and drew attention to three guiding questions that appeared in the event concept note: What would be successful outcomes from the 2023 Conference? How can the preparatory process and meetings be designed to achieve these outcomes? How can the UN system and other stakeholders support Member States in this process? The informal dialogue yielded the following general principals and draft proposals:

**General Principles:**

- Since water is a connector, the 2023 Conference should cut across all sectors with an emphasis on interlinkages. It should also draw on relevant processes such as Sendai, the Paris Agreement and the High-Level Political Forum.
- The process between now and 2023 must be transparent and inclusive. This principle should be applied to selecting the dates and locations of the preparatory meetings.
- The meetings in 2021 and 2023 can help bring implementation of SDG 6 on track.
- An action-oriented outcome of the water and sanitation meetings is essential.
- The international community should build momentum and excitement for the 2023 Conference – it must be the next “Mar Del Plata” for water.
- Starting discussions early is important for ensuring a successful process.
- The 2021 President of the General Assembly high-level meeting on water is a critical stepping stone for the 2023 Conference. A good outcome of the 2021 high-level meeting will help make the 2023 Conference a success.
- It is important to use all platforms available – this is especially important since water and sanitation are not comprehensively addressed by the UN outside of the High-level Political Forum.

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1 The following Member States took the floor (in order of intervention): Tajikistan, Switzerland, Israel, the Netherlands, Portugal, Germany, France, Morocco, European Union, South Africa and Finland. UNDP and the UN Global Compact also spoke.
• Countries are encouraged to advance the implementation of the Water Action Decade.

Proposals:

• Two co-facilitator countries could be assigned to guide the process; it is important that these countries are selected in a transparent manner.
• The second Dushanbe conference 18 – 20 June 2020 will provide an opportunity to strengthen cooperation and partnerships for the Water Action Decade; The third Dushanbe conference in 2022 could serve as a preparatory meeting for the 2023 Conference.
• The theme of World Water Day 2023 should be relevant to the Water Action Decade and also for the 2023 Conference.
• An updated evidence base for the 2023 Conference could be coordinated by UN-Water in the form of a follow up SDG 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation.
• Portugal has expressed its availability to host a 2023 Conference preparatory meeting, possibly on the margins of the 2020 Ocean Conference in Lisbon.
• The regional preparatory process should include the regional commissions.