

Opening remarks

UNECE Pan-European Regional Preparatory Meeting for the UN 2023 Water Conference, 12-13 April, hybrid from Salle XVIII, Palais des Nations, Geneva

Mr. Gilbert F. Hounbo, UN-Water Chair

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Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

Welcome to the Pan-European Regional Preparatory Meeting for the UN 2023 Water Conference.

We have less than one year before we gather for the most important global water event in a generation.

The UN 2023 Water Conference will be a critical moment not only for the water sector but for everyone working in sustainable development.

The fact that we are off track to meet SDG 6 is a major threat to the entire 2030 Agenda.

Billions are still living without safely managed water, sanitation and hygiene services – undermining progress in health, education, gender equality and livelihoods.

There is not a single major global challenge that does not involve water. This includes migration, conflict, disease, hunger, gender equity, population growth, urbanization, and climate change.

Achieving water and sanitation for all is everyone's business – which is why I am very encouraged to see so many different sectors represented here today.

We must move towards more holistic and integrated approaches – working together to maximise synergies and support each other's progress.

The Pan-European region has a strong contribution to make in shaping the interactive Dialogues at the UN 2023 Water Conference.

In your preparations, and at the conference itself, I am confident that UNECE's members will demonstrate plans that are inclusive, action-oriented and cross-sectoral.

Dear friends, we have a lot to do.

The latest analysis shows that, globally, governments must work four times faster to get SDG 6 on track.

By working through the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework, we can get there.

Since we launched the Framework nearly two years ago, UN-Water Members and Partners in UNECE Member States have been using it to drive progress on water and sanitation issues and advance the other SDGs.

Today, let me call on all of you to accelerate this work – to build even more momentum over the coming months and years – and ensure that the UN 2030 Water Conference unleashes the action we so urgently need.

May your discussions during the next two days be inspirational – and above all fruitful.

Thank you.