

Making voluntary commitments on water, sanitation, hygiene and health for the UN 2023 Water Conference

As part of the outcomes of the UN 2023 Water Conference, the United Nations are encouraging voluntary commitments by all stakeholders, which will contribute to shaping the Water Action Agenda. With a goal to “accelerate implementation and improve impact” towards attaining Sustainable Development Goal 6 and the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, these commitments are meant to spur concrete action by governments and stakeholders.

Who can make commitments?

The United Nations invite “States and all relevant stakeholders” to announce voluntary commitments for the UN 2023 Water Conference. This includes national governments, international organizations, financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, think tanks, academia, civil society and the private sector.

Examples of commitments in the context of the Protocol on Water and Health for governments

Accession to the Protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accede to the Protocol on Water and Health
Strengthen water and health governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set targets on water, sanitation, hygiene and health under the Protocol according to article 6, ideally linked to SDG targets and indicators • Finance and implement existing targets set under the Protocol • Strengthen public awareness on water and health matters, as well as the education and training of professional and technical staff • Promote public participation in the setting/revision and implementation of targets set under the Protocol, for instance by submitting baseline analyses and/or draft targets for public consultation
Protect public health through prevention of water-quality incidents and water-related disease outbreaks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen national and local capacities for surveillance and early warning systems for water-related disease, preparedness and contingency planning, and response to outbreaks and water quality incidents • Build national capacities for risk-based surveillance of drinking-water supply and sanitation systems • Introduce environmental surveillance of wastewater as an integral part of public health surveillance, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic • Set and implement targets for preventing and reducing water-related disease and improving surveillance systems under the Protocol
Ensure universal and equitable access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene services for all and in all settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce regulatory requirements for risk-based management of water and sanitation services (e.g. water safety plans, sanitation safety plans) and strengthen national capacities to support long-term uptake of such approaches • Establish regulations and standards for sanitation and wastewater treatment and discharge and promote safe reuse of wastewater • Develop national road maps, policies, regulations and programmes to improve the situation of small-scale water supplies and sanitation systems in rural areas, by using guidance and tools developed under the Protocol

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish dedicated budget lines and develop realistic financing plans for delivery of safe and sustainable water and sanitation services • Undertake an equitable access self-assessment at national or local level to establish a baseline measure of the equity of access to water and sanitation • Develop/update national targets and action plans on equitable access to water and sanitation • Adopt policy options and uptake good practices to ensure the affordability of water and sanitation services, for example in relation to access to subsidies, tariff measures, payment facilities, social protection measures, disconnection bans • Undertake systematic baseline assessments of WASH conditions in health care facilities and schools, including the enabling environment, by using tools developed under the Protocol • Develop national targets and action plans to improve WASH services in institutional settings, particularly health care facilities and schools, and promote effective cooperation between relevant sectors • Develop and implement national road maps/strategies to scale-up action to ensure hand hygiene for all in all settings, including public places
Protect water resources and the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt legal measures for the protection of waters used as sources of drinking water and/or for recreation (e.g. water protection zones) • Set up effective systems for monitoring bathing water quality • Ensure availability and reliability of information concerning contaminated sites • Minimize/eliminate discharges of untreated or insufficiently treated wastewater into water resources and the environment
Address climate change impacts on water and increase climate-resilience of water and sanitation services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement climate change adaptation/mitigation measures that enhance resilience of water and sanitation services (e.g. tackling stormwater overflows) • Include water management and WASH-related aspects in national climate change programmes and strategies • Prioritize provision of facilities and services for safely managed sanitation, and update sanitation infrastructure in high flood risk areas • Implement water demand management policies and strategies to emphasize water conservation, efficiency and reuse • Implement climate-resilient water safety planning and sanitation safety planning • Promote synergies between targets set under the Protocol and global climate processes such as the development of NDCs and NAPs
Funding, international cooperation and capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support financially the Protocol's implementation and its work programme • Support capacity building activities in the pan-European region through international projects carried out under the Protocol

Examples of commitments in the context of the Protocol on Water and Health for other stakeholders

- Act as a communication channel between the government and the public to ensure public engagement in the development/revision/implementation of targets (e.g. take special measures to reach remote communities and vulnerable and marginalized groups) – for NGOs
- Contribute to equitable access self-assessments under the Protocol, for instance by participating in the data collection processes – for NGOs;
- Support the scaling up of action for hand hygiene for all in all settings (e.g. in workplaces and public places) – for local authorities and private sector
- Apply assessment tools and guidance to improve management and monitoring of WASH services in health care facilities and schools – for local authorities and health and education sectors
- Apply guidance tools and field guides on water safety planning and sanitation safety planning, including in rural areas – for water and wastewater operators
- Carry out strategic planning for ensuring climate resilience in the WASH sector, including through the application of risk-based approaches – for water and wastewater operators
- Promote investment into climate-resilient urban infrastructure – for cities
- Consider funding water and sanitation infrastructure measures and projects resulting from the targets set under the Protocol – for international financial institutions