

COP28 Water for peace and security Event

Water for peace and security: From risk to resilience

Event summary

Overview

The UAE has rightly highlighted the growing menace of water insecurity as a fundamental threat to human health, peace, and security. Absent decisive global action, the cascading effects of increasing water instability will affect all countries and regions. This Presidency event brings together The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the world's largest humanitarian network, leading UN agencies (UNECE, UNCCD), the Water Peace Security Partnership (WPS), and countries to showcase how cooperative, equitable, and sustainable water management practices enable peace and security in fragile and conflict-affected regions. The event highlights ways of turning water risk into resilience both domestically by ensuring good water governance involving inclusive and informed processes, as well as transboundary, building on the Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition. This new global initiative fosters shared water cooperation at all levels. A key outcome of this event will be platforming various initiatives and actions that can build resilience, design successful adaptation and expand international cooperation for shared water security.

Information

- *Date:* Dec 10th | Food, Agriculture and Water Day
- *Time:* 10:00 -11:30 AM | 90 minutes
- *Venue:* Connect Conference Multipurpose Hall | Green Zone
- *Format:* Panel with Presentation
- *Level:* Leaders, Ministers, CEOs/Directors

Organizers

COP28 Presidency, IFRC, Water, Peace, and Security (WPS) Partnership, UNCCD, UNECE, Macroscopic Strategies (M2S).

Context, objectives, and outcomes

Context & Background

Water scarcity is becoming an alarming global issue. This concern is echoed in the UNCCD Global Land Outlook (2017), which predicts that by 2025, two-thirds of the worldwide population will be in water-stressed countries. The increasing competition for these precious resources can lead to potential grievances, conflicts, and even outbreaks of violence. Building resilience and designing successful adaptation strategies to the rapidly deteriorating water scarcity at the national, provincial, and local levels in fragile countries is essential in mitigating water-related challenges. At the same time, water cooperation brings benefits beyond water access, such as peace, sustainable development, and regional integration, making adaptation more effective and efficient. However, only 24 out of the 153 countries sharing transboundary rivers, lakes, and aquifers have operational arrangements for water cooperation (SDG indicator 6.5.2).

In addressing these challenges, various global actions and achievements have been initiated. IFRC efforts include provisions to ensure both emergency and semi-permanent water supplies in fragile contexts. Every year, efforts to improve WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) access result in over 100 million people in fragile settings receiving essential services. Furthermore, over 130 countries have committed to a strategy of land restoration to achieve or even surpass Land Degradation Neutrality targets. This commitment is further solidified with 72 nations actively implementing national drought plans and a global pledge to restore one billion hectares of degraded land by 2030. In a bid to enhance cooperation, the UNECE was one of the initiators of the Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition, dedicated to fostering water cooperation, directly aligning with the broader Water Action Agenda and SDG 6 objectives. In addition, more and more countries have joined the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes: 52 countries are currently Parties, and more than 20 are in the process. In response to worsening droughts, over 30 countries and more than 20 international entities have joined the International Drought Resilience Alliance (IDRA), which seeks to shift from a reactive to a proactive approach to tackling worsening droughts.

Event

Considering these challenges, IFRC, WPS, UNECE, and the UNCCD, with the support of the COP28 Presidency, have come together to use the platform of COP28 to raise this issue at the highest political levels and showcase innovative solutions and strategies addressing water scarcity and local, national, and transboundary water

management. Moreover, this event seeks to initiate a meaningful dialogue with nations that currently lack water cooperation agreements, ushering in the inception of the Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition. By doing so, this event promotes sustainable water management practices and fosters international cooperation, aiming to mitigate potential conflicts arising from water scarcity.

Objectives

This event will build cooperation to:

- Commit to implementing all SDG 6 targets, especially nations lacking water agreements.
- Enhance policy coherence across sectors within and across borders to address risks associated with water security and emphasize the advanced approaches for conflict risk assessment and peace promotion.
- Advocate for flexible, accessible funding to sustain fragile water systems to develop policies, plans, and incentives to reduce water stress and conflicts.
- Empower local communities and organizations to strengthen climate resilient water systems at all levels.
- Promote the need for inclusive, informed, and integrated adaptation and resilience-building strategies at the local and national levels to support regions in mitigating and responding to water- and water-related security risks.

Principles for participation

High-level participants

Outcomes

Announcements:

- This event will position water insecurity as a fundamental threat to human health, peace, and security, as well as showcase tangible solutions and commitments, such as responding to humanitarian crises related to water scarcity with a robust link to development, signing transboundary water cooperation agreements to increase resilience to water-related risks.

Commitments:

- **Support:** UNECE will directly support the development of at least 7 new or updated agreements on transboundary water cooperation and at least 5 regional processes on transboundary water cooperation in the following years.
- **Build:** IFRC, WPS, UNECE, UNCCD, and its implementing partners will commit to building the capacity of government entities, local partners, investors, NGOs, and local communities to assess water-related security risks and to implement risk-mitigating measures in regions prone to water-related instability and conflict.
- **Monitor:** IFRC, WPS, UNECE, UNCCD, and its implementing partners will engage with national and local actors to facilitate the development of monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems to monitor the implementation of interventions and the status of water resource health.

Impacts & Legacy:

- This event showcases innovative solutions that promote immediate interventions, reshape global water diplomacy, and leave a legacy of enhanced cooperation for sustainable water resource management. Moreover, the event amplifies the urgency of climate-resilient WASH programs in fragile areas, champions capacity building in water-related security, and underscores the need for robust monitoring systems.

Provisional Agenda

1. Opening remarks

2. High-level panel: Sharing Water for Peace and Resilience.

3. Panel discussion: Turning water-conflict Cycles into Opportunities for Collaboration, Peace and Resilience

- Policy instruments at all levels incl. Global, regional/transboundary, national, and local interventions to mitigate impacts of water-related disasters and risks.
- Examples of cooperation in different regions

- In contexts affected by fragility or conflict, considering gender aspects in emergency and development.

4. **Closing remarks**