



Dushanbe Water Process

Second High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028

Dushanbe, Tajikistan
6-9 June 2022

CO-CHAIRS’ SUMMARY

A. Introduction

The second High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028, entitled “Catalyzing Water Action and Partnership at the Local, National, Regional and Global Levels” took place from 6 to 9 June 2022 in Dushanbe. The Conference was co-chaired by Mr. Qohir Rasulzoda, Prime Minister, Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and Mr. Liu Zhenmin, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. The conference, held in hybrid format, was attended by more than 2,500 in-person and 500 online participants and included 75 country delegations from all continents, with more than half represented at the ministerial level, and about 100 delegations of international and regional organizations including the United Nations entities and financial institutions.

The Conference was designed to ensure inclusivity and diversity throughout the preparatory process by engaging important stakeholders as members of the International Advisory Committee. Members of Steering Committee of the Group of Friends of Water made also valuable input in preparatory process. The National Organizing Committee chaired by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan led the preparatory process.

The Conference provided a unique opportunity to bring together and reemphasize the role of connecting global, regional, national and local actions and partnerships through an inclusive process and open dialogue. Progress towards gender parity and accessibility was evident throughout the Conference, with 176 (43%) of the panelists being women and 36 percent of participants were women, amplifying the voice of women leaders. The Dushanbe Conference also reaffirmed the importance of youth in shaping the water agenda with more than 500 people under 35 years old in attendance. Design of the Conference allowed to have the voices of specific groups heard both through the Conference sessions and specific Forums dedicated to their needs.

The Conference was organized within the framework of the Dushanbe Water Process, a series of biennial conferences that are intended to create an enabling environment and platform to promote dialogue, action and partnerships at all levels, to review the implementation of the Decade as well as to promote interlinkages with other relevant global and regional processes. The Dushanbe Conference reaffirmed its place among the major regular events on water at the global level. The Conference was preceded by the Bonn Water Dialogues for Results, the 9th World Water Forum in Dakar and the 4th Asia-Pacific Water Summit in Kumamoto and consolidated messages of these important platforms. The key messages and commitments at these platforms reiterated during the Dushanbe Conference enabled participants to put forward specific initiatives and proposals for the UN 2023 Water Conference.

The Second Dushanbe Conference provided a critical contribution to the 2023 midterm comprehensive review of the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028 (Water Action Decade) pursuant to the United Nations General Assembly Resolution

75/212 of 21 December 2020. The Conference called for accelerated action in achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) and other internationally-agreed water related goals including those contained in the Agenda 2030.

The Conference was organized along the high-level opening and closing sessions, a plenary session spanned across two days with the remarks delivered by the Heads of Delegations, twelve thematic and interactive panels, five forums bringing together major groups, alongside eleven side events, summary of which is detailed in the sections below. The Conference thematic and interactive panels focused on catalyzing water actions and partnerships at all levels addressed the topics of Water for Health and People (WHP), Water for Livelihoods and Inclusive Economic Growth (WEG), Water, Environment and Climate Resilience (WEC), as well as Education, Technology, Awareness and Knowledge (ETAK). All the Conference events were structured along the objectives of the Water Action Decade and the five dimensions of the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework. The Conference allowed to integrate in its program Forums designed to draw specific attention to dialogue on major groups and regions that are usually underrepresented in discussions and decision-making on water related issues. This approach was welcomed by participants and allowed to derive clear commitments on actions and partnerships required for these groups.

B. Stocktaking of the Conference

Opening Ceremony

The President of the Republic of Tajikistan, H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon provided the keynote address at the opening ceremony of the Conference, which was followed by other distinguished speakers at the level of Heads of State and Government and leaders of international organizations and international financial institutions. The ceremony was moderated by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, H.E. Mr. Sirojiddin Muhridin.

In his speech, the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon, recalled the history of 20 years of efforts and initiatives to solve water problems on the planet, stressing that the global initiatives “International Year of Freshwater, 2003”, the International Decade for Action “Water for Life, 2005-2015” and the “International Year of Water Cooperation, 2013” contributed to the active cooperation of all stakeholders in the field of the rational management of water resources and the implementation of projects in the water sector, as well as the introduction of modern technologies and innovations. H.E. President Rahmon also spoke about the role of the latest initiative of Tajikistan, i.e. the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development, 2018-2028”, for the implementation of international goals and expressed confidence that, through cooperation and expansion of partnerships within the framework of the Decade, ways and methods will be found to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals related to water resources and sanitation. His Excellency shared his views and insights on various issues at global, regional and country levels.

During his speech, H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon drew attention of the conference participants to the issues of climate change and its consequences, the melting of glaciers, environmental protection, the impact of coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) on the water sector and economies of countries, population growth, the problem of access to clean water and sanitation, ensuring the health of the world community, the sustainable use of water resources, food security and reduction of the impact of various factors on countries. H.E. President Rahmon also spoke about the consequences of the meeting of the leaders of Water and Climate Coalition in Dushanbe, the need to protect glaciers, to take measures to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the role of water in the production of “green energy”, as well as the issue of financing of universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation. In conclusion, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, H.E. Mr.

Emomali Rahmon recalled the importance of holding the Dushanbe Water Conference in the process towards the UN 2023 Water Conference.

In her message, Deputy Secretary General, H.E. Ms. Amina Mohammed, underscored how the world needs to quadruple current rates of progress if we are to attain the global target of universal access to water, sanitation and hygiene by 2030 (SDG 6). The SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework is designed to get us there. Moreover, she highlighted that we must do more to place women and girls at the center of our efforts, that we must honor our commitment to protect our planet and respect the right to a healthy environment, with water resources as a crucial component, and that we need a more inclusive multilateralism and new ways to work together for the common good to leverage water for sustainable development and peace. Finally, she reminded that Tajikistan and the Netherlands will co-host the Water Conference in New York in March 2023 with the support of the United Nations and UN-Water and that the UN stands ready to support countries and stakeholders in the implementation of the Water Action Decade and accelerate global action on water.

The Prime Minister of the Netherlands H.E. Mr. Mark Rutte delivered his remarks through a videomessage. His Excellency reiterated the urgency of the water crisis as the world is on fast track to climate disaster. He highlighted the efforts of Tajikistan in making a cause for water at the global level, and the role the Kingdom of Netherlands together with the Government of Tajikistan jointly play in co-hosting the UN 2023 Water Conference. Halfway through the decade, H.E. Mr. Mark Rutte called for action and commitment from the governments, businesses and financial sector to scale up efforts in addressing the water challenges of the world, once again reiterating the importance of water for safety, economy and human dignity and inviting participants of the Dushanbe Conference to create a “watershed moment” of the UN 2023 Water Conference.

The United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and Secretary-General of the UN 2023 Water Conference, H.E. Mr. Liu Zhenmin expressed appreciation to the President Emomali Rahmon for his strong leadership in promoting global water initiatives and convening this very important high-level Conference. He recalled the importance of the first Dushanbe Water Conference in 2018 and emphasized that the world continues to face similar water challenges, exacerbated by the lingering pandemic in the background. He also reiterated the cross-sectoral impact of climate change and urgency of taking a collective action on climate mitigation and adaptation agenda. His Excellency outlined the key expectations of the conference and stressed that the outcome of the Second Dushanbe Conference will be a valuable contribution to the UN 2023 Water Conference.

The Opening ceremony of the Conference was also addressed by the Permanent Representative of Botswana to the United Nations and President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), H.E. Mr. Collen Vixen Kelapile, the First Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, H.E. Mr. Roman Sklyar, the Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan, H.E. Mr. Mukhammadguli Mukhammadov, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan, H.E. Mr. Shukhrat Ganiev, the European Commissioner for the Environment, H.E. Mr. Sinkevicius Virginijus, the Vice President of the Asian Development Bank, Mr. Shiksin Chen, the Vice President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Mr. Mark Bowman, as well as the Director for Global Water Practice of the World Bank, Ms. Jennifer Sara. All the speeches amalgamated in emphasizing the importance of ensuring access to safely managed water supply and sanitation to the world community, calling for intersectoral solutions that would allow to place water at the core of development, outlining new emerging challenges for water sector, but also great opportunities water brings in addressing major developmental challenges. All the distinguished speakers expressed their gratitude to the Government of Tajikistan for initiating the Dushanbe process and being vocal about the global water challenges.

The Australian marathonist and eco-activist, Ms. Mina Guli delivered an impressive presentation, summarizing findings of the marathons delivered by her as part of the #RunBlue initiative through which she intends to raise awareness about the global water crisis and trigger a global shift in how common people and policy makers see the value of water, talk about water and use water. She also presented a story of Aral Sea basin captured by her during the trip along the Amu-Darya basin, as part of the commitment to run 200 marathons across the world to inspire and connect people and communities to take meaningful action on water in the lead-up to the UN 2023 Water Conference. She called for an immediate action to close the gap towards the SDG6.

Mr. Dionnon Bienvinu, Chadian national, was selected by participants of the Youth Forum to represent their views at the opening ceremony. In his speech, Mr. Bienvinu focused on access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene being a fundamental human right, but brought examples of how these services are not available in many countries with large gaps in services observed between rural and urban areas. Mr. Bienvinu shared concerns of young girls and boys over emerging water challenges and called for all the stakeholders to respect their commitments to provide universal access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene to communities, schools and healthcare facilities, finding sustainable solutions for addressing the water challenges and ensuring that young people are involved in decision-making process.

Plenary Session: Catalyzing Water Action and Partnership at the Local, National, Regional and Global Levels

This session, co-chaired by the Prime Minister of Tajikistan and Chairman of the National Organizing Committee, H.E. Mr. Qohir Rasulzoda, and the UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, H.E. Mr. Liu Zhenmin, provided an opportunity for all the heads of official delegations to deliver a statement. Around 100 delegations presented challenges their countries and organizations are trying to address through the collective action at the local and global levels.

The session was opened by reports on the outcomes of the Bonn Water Dialogues for Results, of the 9th World Water Forum in Dakar and of the 4th Asia-Pacific Water Summit in Kumamoto. The heads of delegations expressed support and keen interest in the “Dushanbe Water Process” for the Water Action Decade, as well as the importance of this Conference for the effective preparation of the UN 2023 Water Conference, co-hosted by the Governments of Tajikistan and the Netherlands to be held in New York. This session continued during both days of the conference with the heads of delegations presented their commitments for actions and partnerships to close the gap towards the SDG 6, and other water-related goals. Summary of these commitments has been consolidated in a separate outcome document of the Conference entitled “Call for actions and partnerships”.

Thematic and Interactive Panels

The Conference included nine Thematic Panels and three Interactive Panels under the overarching theme of “Catalyzing Water Action and Partnership at the Local, National, Regional and Global Levels”. The panels were co-convened by Member States, various entities of the United Nations and other international organizations and partners.

Thematic Panel on Increasing Water-Health Nexus to Respond to the Challenges of the Post-COVID World (WHP1)

Co-convened by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), this session was designed to learn from and extend successes on the water, sanitation,

hygiene and health nexus that occurred during COVID-19 and to also identify gaps in order to build back better and healthier. The speakers stressed the benefits of “no-regrets” investment and commitment on WASH as a first line of defense against COVID-19, diarrheal disease and respiratory infections, allowing children to survive and thrive. The need for government leadership and increased public spending were stressed and proved in India as evidenced by unprecedented initiatives and results on sanitation, drinking water supply and clean healthcare facilities. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services in healthcare facilities are fundamental to pandemic preparedness and response and ought to be included in all global pandemic strategic plans and monitoring mechanisms. In concert with the water sector, the health sector has a leadership role to play in monitoring, budgeting and regulating WASH and waste services in healthcare facilities. Investments in WASH must be an essential part of Universal Health Care for every country. Investing in WASH and energy services in healthcare facilities is one of the core prescriptions for a healthy, green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and is relatively inexpensive. Assistance can be effectively targeted following assessments. Establishing a culture of hand hygiene is a critical prevention measure and requires both policy and financing support in all key settings and across multiple sectors. Environmental surveillance of COVID-19 and other disease agents is an important public health, complementary control strategy. We can use regional, multilateral instruments, such as the UNECE-WHO/Europe Protocol on Water and Health, that offer a framework for multi-sectoral cooperation, setting national targets and advancing the national WASH and health agenda towards reaching SDG 6.

Thematic Panel on Accelerating access to safe WASH conditions, Leaving no-one behind (WHP2)

This panel, which was co-convened by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the University of North Carolina (UNC), concluded that we are making progress, as billions of people have been given access with many people moving up the ladder and being serviced for the first time or achieving higher levels of WASH services. However, gaps do remain. Water is still a luxury for far too many. Entire communities are left behind, including in countries where progress on enhancing access to water and sanitation has been made. These include rural and hard to reach communities and marginalized groups, particularly women, persons with disabilities, indigenous communities as well as persons living in fragile contexts. The session highlighted that, in addition to the gaps in access to water and sanitation, there is a key gap in data available. For three billion people, the quality of water used is unknown. This means we do not even know the full scale of the challenge ahead. The session highlighted the importance of political leadership as an essential element in accelerating access to WASH. While the participation of all stakeholders is important, there are a number of things that only governments can do. There is also a need for robust policy that prioritizes provision of services for schools and healthcare facilities and creates a normative framework based on a rights-based approach. From the example from El Salvador, institutions and intergovernmental coordination was highlighted in accelerating action and service provision. Investment is essential: we need to simplify the way funding is accessed and explore how tariffs can be used. Transparency and trust are also important in funding relationships. Finally, tailor-made approaches are needed, based on data and enhance sharing knowledge and experience, including through South-South and triangular cooperation.

Thematic Panel on Advancing Water Sustainability in Urban and Rural Areas (WHP3)

Co-convened by the World Bank and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the key messages from this panel included that collaboration between different stakeholders is a must if we want to assure sustainable provision of water and sanitation services and achieve SDG 6. Governments should provide an adequate enabling environment, set by a sound combination of

access to technology, policies, regulations and capacity development, for utilities and service providers to perform and provide proper water and sanitation services and ensure sustainability of services. Utilities and service providers need to have a good performance across all elements of utility management (technical, commercial, human resources, financial management and strategy), so as to guarantee adequate and sustainable service provision, as well as access to financing. No improvement on the service will be seen unless a clear focus on building capacities on the broader water sector is undertaken and young and technically qualified professionals are injected to all agencies supporting the water agenda. Finally, open knowledge, open data and open communication channels are not only mechanisms for transparency, but also a mechanism to receive and incorporate feedback as a mean to provide better and more sustainable services.

Thematic Panel on Promoting Integrated Water Resource Management, Water Efficiency and Valuing Water (WEG1)

Co-convened by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Global Water Partnership (GWP), this panel emphasized that the multiple values of water include, but are not limited to economics or financing of water. The financing is very much needed, but many water values cannot be put into economic terms. Therefore, much of the return on investment in water will be in non-financial terms. For example, indigenous peoples often value water and natural resources for their social, spiritual and cultural importance. Explicitly recognising such values is essential to respect and foster sustainable lifestyles of indigenous communities, who maintain 80% of the world's remaining biodiversity on 28% of the surface of the globe and can contribute to water security, food security and biodiversity preservation. Water crises can be an opportunity to achieve much-needed water reforms, both in the short and medium term, since communities value water more and can be more amenable to change when water is lacking. Yet such crises are a double-edged sword, since they negatively affect confidence in institutions to carry out those reforms. The valuing water approach invites society to finance landscapes, with a broad perspective, rather than any sectoral view, using funding from one part of the landscape and one sector to preserve natural functions which other parts of the landscape and/or sectors depend on. Many decisions on water are made within other sectors. Incorporating the multiple values around water into our water-related decision systems is challenging but possible with a system approach. Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) can be a tool that allows systems thinking into these multiple values, by bringing together different sectors and spatial levels, from local to global, for multilevel dialogue. Political will at the highest level will be important if water issues are to be valued appropriately.

Thematic Panel on Transboundary Water Cooperation for Economic Growth and Sustainability (WEG2)

Co-convened by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), UNESCO and the University of North Carolina in partnership with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the session concluded that transboundary water cooperation is vital and crucial to promote sustainable economic development, human and environmental health, climate action, disaster risk reduction and peace. Action must be accelerated to meet SDG target 6.5 by 2030 and to ensure that all transboundary river and lake basins and aquifers have effective arrangements and institutions. While transboundary water cooperation is a complex endeavor, solutions and tools exist. Powerful tools to promote cooperation are existing global agreements and bilateral and basin agreements and institutions. Water diplomacy is another tool to move the conversation beyond the water sector, with multiple actors engaging in decision-making about the use of shared waters. More capacity among various stakeholders is needed, including institutions at national,

transboundary and regional levels, to be able to deal with intersectoral issues and build a common understanding across borders and sectors, based on evidence and science. We need to invest in the capacity of youth. More and better information is necessary, information that is trusted, understood and shared. There is also a need for more investment and, by reducing risks, more easily accessible. All actors are to be part of the solution, including local authorities, population and civil society organizations. Inclusive participatory approaches are key for integrating voices of all stakeholders, including women and youth, in water processes. With imagination, we also need persistence and courage as building cooperation takes time. Transboundary water cooperation should be among the priorities of the UN 2023 Water Conference. We must build on the conference to accelerate progress on transboundary water cooperation.

Thematic Panel on Accelerating the Water-Energy-Food Nexus in Post-COVID Recovery (WEG3)

Co-convened by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), the session emphasized several messages. First, suitable data on the Water-Energy-Food-Environment (WEFE) nexus interactions is needed to assess and analyze its performance. Linking to existing and planned observation systems around the world and supporting the development of new systems, tools and services is essential for integrated cross-sectoral data collection, discussion and impact on policy development. Then, available data and information does not guarantee understanding of the nexus approach. The WEFE nexus is about systems thinking. Enhanced understanding requires more proactive actions, including context-based, case-to-case assessments and nexus demonstration projects, capacity development, research, education, as well as cooperation to enable a “shared” understanding of the opportunities. Also, successful nexus implementation requires cross-sectoral approaches, policies, commitments and involvement for implementation, also beyond the WEFE sectors, involving a wide range of partners. It also requires smart investment in the WEFE sectors as well as research, education and youth. Post-COVID recovery as well as combating climate change can profit from WEFE approaches leading to improved management of natural resources, while delivering human rights, economic prosperity, decent jobs and wider well-being, along with the effort to address pressing environmental challenges and improve the environmental health and resilience of societies. We need solutions that best serve societies and environment. Then, collaboration across sectors needs clear mandate holders from the different sectors in order to be able to ensure exchange and partnerships at the global, national and local levels, by using available platforms and existing legal instruments. Further, joint WEFE projects, regional cooperation and trade remain of high relevance. Financing institutions are invited to join the countries in finding investment-friendly nexus solutions. Finally, youth call for actions and want to be a part of solutions.

Thematic Panel on Promoting Nature-Based Water Solutions, Water Quality and Ecosystems (WEC1)

Co-convened by FAO and UNDP, the session stressed that nature-based solutions and green infrastructure offer multiple benefits to achieve environmental, social and economic wellbeing: carbon sequestration, human health, poverty reduction, gender equality, food security, livelihoods and economic development, the preservation of ecosystems and biodiversity, as well as peaceful collaboration between water-sharing regions. Ecosystem services for regulation of water quality and quantity must be based on a reciprocal relationship between society and nature. It is about “giving and caring.” There are many and diverse examples of successful nature-based solutions, mostly building on local governance. Nature-based solutions are knowledge-intensive and combine different knowledge systems: both scientific knowledge about ecosystem functioning, as

well as traditional and ancestral wisdom are needed. Indigenous and Traditional Ecological Knowledge systems have always understood the mutual connection between ecosystem integrity and water security. We need to invest in nature-based solutions (knowledge and green infrastructure). This means not only new investment, but also changes and modifications to ongoing investment that risks disrupting the functioning of natural systems. For nature-based solutions to work at a larger scale, regulatory frameworks and culturally appropriate incentives are needed. Working with nature is for the long-term, but nature-based solutions can also be effective as crisis responses: nature-based solutions are the obvious response to climate change for both adaptation and mitigation. The nature-based solutions knowledge base needs further strengthening, through regular monitoring and critical research for incremental learning and to build the evidence base.

Thematic Panel on Resilient Infrastructure and Disaster Risk Reduction (WEC2)

Co-convened by the High-level Experts and Leaders Panel on Water and Disasters (HELP), the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the session stressed that risk-informed decision making is vital for critical infrastructure and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). UNDRR created a set of principles for resilient infrastructures. Guidelines like these make sure that resilient infrastructure is part of decision-making process and that risk-informed decisions are made under holistic governance arrangements. For DRR governance, scenario-based approaches are a must. Here, data and indicators play a critical role. A double indicator system for long-term drought and short-term water shortage in Spain, for example, enables timely decision making and actions. The system helps government and stakeholders prepare for droughts while safely allowing for temporary deterioration of water values by a series of scenarios based on the double indicator system. Public-private financing and enhancing financial benefits of existing and planned infrastructures are the key. The Kumamoto Initiative introduced by Japan as an outcome of 4th Asia Pacific Water Summit, hints towards a new approach in this regard. The initiative suggests to drastically enhance the productivity of existing water infrastructure such as dams by significantly improving the prediction of water flows into the reservoir based on advanced information technology, which will create billions of dollars with minimal cost. Science and technology are the key for transformation. There are several scientific publications and manuals created by the UN, UNESCO and other agencies to address water, DRR and climate change. These guidelines can help governments address the impacts of water-related hazards on the most vulnerable people. Local technology also works. Sediments in reservoirs, a common challenge for water infrastructure at the global level, have been turned into raw materials, fertilizers and reclamation mass through locally developed technology. There is possibility to turn problems in water reservoirs to opportunities. The question is how the international community can help deal with the massive accumulation of global and local technology to be shared by all, particularly for the poorest communities. The session also reiterated that extreme weather events will increase the recurrence of drought. Extended seasonal drought will also impact all critical infrastructure. There is significant need to prepare for drought through investment and indicator systems, as shown in the case of Spain with the double indicator system. There is a mutual call in the discussion for resilient infrastructure, which can maintain its key functions such as water provision in the face of disaster. Resilient infrastructure should contribute to the achievement of SDGs and building back better. It is still necessary to set benchmarks about resilient infrastructure. In addition, investment is necessary to achieve desirable level of resilient infrastructure. The panel recognized that gender perspectives should be critical factors in addressing resilient infrastructure and DRR. Gender-centered approaches should be pursued for all aspects of governance, finance, and science and technology.

Thematic Panel on Water Resources and Climate: Reinforcing the interlinkages (WEC3)

Co-convened by the Kingdom of Netherlands and the Government of Spain in close cooperation with GWP, the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), UNESCO and UNDP, the session highlighted that the term “interlinkages” understates the centrality of water in the response to climate change, both inextricably tied together. No one can fix climate challenges without fixing water challenges, and vice versa. Both scientific knowledge and unconventional knowledge are important, such as the economic case for investing in resilience to solve longer term water issues resulting from climate change. Durable water solutions are political. All stakeholders need to be involved in their formulation. Resilient water management offers multiple benefits for sustainable development, climate action and disaster risk reduction. The water community can provide the climate community with solutions that are relevant and that will contribute to climate goals and improving climate resilience and vice versa. Climate resilient water management requires major policy shifts at all levels of government. Water resilience requires investing in governance and increasing finance. Societal leadership and support are key to the necessary transformation. Finally, the panel emphasized that building water resilience is crucial to climate justice.

Interactive Panel on Improving Knowledge, Education and Communication (ETAK1)

This panel, which was co-convened by Global Water Futures, the Pacific Water Research Centre and UNESCO, concluded that, first, incremental and sizable investments in capacity development need to be nested within, and form a pillar of, institutional reform and equitable job creation at all scales within countries. Such capacity, encompassing human, institutional and technological dimensions, must emphasize transferable skills that can be used for sustainable development across all areas and goals. Further, these investments must be undertaken through a gender responsive and inclusive lens to ensure that all equity deserving groups are able to effectively engage in water governance, management and sustainable solutions. Second, we must make a greater effort to equitably engage all stakeholders and rights holders in co-generation and dissemination of targeted knowledge, with a particular emphasis on indigenous people, youth groups and women. The best knowledge is achieved by braiding modern science together with all of humanity’s ways of living, knowing and caring to ensure sustainable water resources. Third, worldwide efforts for enhanced data gathering should lead to knowledge hubs that contain disaggregated and openly accessible data that is made available free of charge and free of political interference, while protecting traditional rights to ownership and privacy rights. Fourth, a major collective effort is needed for communicating the urgency associated with water and water-related climate knowledge to different audiences. The world community is responsible for countering post-factual narratives of disinformation and misinformation. Fifth, investments in education must be maintained and expanded such that water-focused education is integrated with various formal and informal learning streams to become a critical catalyst for the rapid societal transitions required to achieve a just and sustainable society.

Interactive Panel on Moving Out of the Water Box and Promoting Cooperation at All Levels (ETAK2)

The Government of Switzerland, Women for Water Partnership (WfWP), SIWI and Arizona State University co-convened this panel in partnership with the UNESCO World Water Assessment Programme. It called to urgently establish, through decisive government action and corporate stewardship, structures promoting cross-sectoral governance and coordination to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda and other global processes. At the same time, strengthen water policy and investment plans across sectors to improve institutional coordination and policy integration.

This must be prioritized above all. The panel also asked to actively engage participation of those in sectors outside of the water domain, including governments, NGOs and resource users in the private sector by drawing from a variety of social groups and diverse geographies, the youth, most particularly including a full and meaningful inclusion of women in all contexts and in all decision-making forums. For water policy to be effective, it must address issues in real life, benefitting real people. The engagement of women is crucial toward establishing a more conducive and practical environment to make policy that matters. It also called to work towards the explicit incorporation of water in all criteria for climate funding and green bonds, including the involvement of Member States as well as public and financial institutions, to take steps to incentivise credible, verified corporate action on water. This will ensure that good water stewardship is acknowledged, and green washing is exposed. It is also necessary to work directly with sector representatives outside of the water community to develop policy and practice that enhances mutual understanding by merging perspectives, terminology and conceptual approaches toward the creation of clear communication of plans and procedures. To achieve this, building understanding and trust between and among all parties is necessary. Furthermore, we need to enhance and support efforts in the development of National Water Roadmaps that incorporate strategies involving other issues, most notably food security and energy. The panel also called to organize coordinated water policy and planning institutions and structures across sectors and governance levels in every community, nation and region. This incorporates water into such topics as risk mitigation, climate change and food security. These efforts should begin immediately, directed toward potentially providing input to the UN 2023 Water Conference.

Interactive Panel on Promoting Science-Based Water Solutions, Tools and Technology (ETAK3)

Co-organized by the Government of Australia, UNESCO and IWMI, the session concluded that solutions underpinned by science and technology innovations, such as smart water technologies, digital innovations, artificial intelligence, big data analytics, machine learning, Internet of Things, citizen science and open science, can reduce the cost and complexity of future water monitoring, characterization, assessments, planning, management and policy development to achieve a more water secure world in a changing climate. Science and technology innovations must respond to the water security challenges faced by all members of society and be trusted, delivered on time and communicated in a way that is understood by experts and non-experts for addressing the complex issues that humanity faces. Open Science and Open Data provide an opportunity for scientific information, data and outputs to be more inclusive, more widely accessible and more reliably harnessed with the active engagement of all the stakeholders (scientists, policymakers and citizens). These solutions must consider the perspectives of women, indigenous peoples and disadvantaged groups as key actors for the provision, management and safeguarding of water, as well as protection of the rights of the holders and providers of data, information and knowledge. Locally sourced, indigenous knowledge, citizen science and remotely sourced data needs to be combined to support decision making at all levels and enhance integration of cultural and societal values in evidence-based water management. Innovations in integrating indigenous with other knowledge systems (biophysical, social and economic) and protecting the rights of the holders and providers of data, information and knowledge are also needed. There is a need to improve communication between policy makers and the scientific community to better understand the needs of each other. Multilateral efforts can produce harmonized standards, sharing of scientific experiences and guidance on the application of new science and technology. The panel therefore proposed to convene multi-stakeholder dialogues on “science for a water secure world” to create mission-driven alliances among the water community to deliver high ambition, future-ready innovation and science-based solutions for water security with speed and at a scale.

Conference Forums

Five forums were convened during the first day of the conference, right before the opening. Major groups exchanged views, made suggestions, identified challenges and possible solutions on various water-related issues and topics at global, country and local levels.

Regional Forum on Water Cooperation in Central Asia

The forum was co-organized by the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) and by the Central Asia Water and Energy Program (CAWEP) administered by the World Bank in cooperation with many organizations. The forum highlighted that, compared to recent years, Central Asian countries are now articulating stronger commitment to advancing regional cooperation in the Aral Sea Basin. They are encouraged to consider preparing a joint statement to take to the UN 2023 Water Decade Conference in New York. Development partners are committed to support cooperation between Central Asian countries through financing, convening dialogues, creating and sharing new knowledge, as well as supporting institutional strengthening and reform. Central Asia is lagging behind on the SDG 6 agenda for water and sanitation, especially in rural areas, leading to serious health and environmental quality risks. Progress requires resolving overlapping and fragmented sector responsibilities, separating and strengthening policy, regulatory and service delivery functions and reforming tariff regimes and service quality regulations. There is an enormous drinking water supply and sanitation financing gap, especially given old and dilapidated infrastructure, but the economic costs of inaction outweigh the required investment. Utility credit worthiness must be improved to attract the private sector financing and close the financing gap. The professional capacity of water utilities must be strengthened to improve technical, financial and environmental performance of the sector. Water issues in Central Asia need to be tackled in an integrated manner in a river basin context. In Central Asia, this requires transboundary cooperation, including on data sharing. As water systems are intrinsically linked to energy systems, food systems and environmental systems, water issues cannot be tackled in isolation but require a nexus approach. Water cooperation in Central Asia must be based on dialogue and the sharing of data, information and experience. Without this, tailor-made solutions are not possible. Policy decisions must be supported by robust data and scientific analysis. New and alternative data sources need to be explored. Moreover, tackling climate change needs to jointly consider mitigation and adaptation. Thus, the water-energy nexus is central. Last but not least, further improvement to development partner coordination and collaboration will enhance the efficiency of efforts and increase the likelihood of positive change.

Youth and Children's Water Forum

The forum was organized by UNICEF in collaboration with several partners and attended by more than 230 participants from 33 countries. A new “30/30/30” target was articulated: for youth under 30s to have 30% representation and participation at all levels of water and climate by 2030. Youth change makers discussed challenges and solutions related to representation in decision-making, how to create change through working within international organizations and the role of youth in transboundary water management. The panelists also discussed the importance of coordination between youth actors in the water arena to increase the impact of youth activities. Regarding improved access to WASH, panelists spoke about the importance of youth in driving behavioral change at the household and community level to improve the adoption of existing solutions. Panelists also highlighted the importance of intersectionality when thinking about WASH and youth, highlighting the essential role that young women play in creating more inclusive solutions. The forum heard from two entrepreneurial innovators in menstrual hygiene, who discussed the im-

portance of reducing stigma surrounding conversations about menstrual hygiene as key for progress. They shared lessons learned from their experiences as entrepreneurs. The UNIFY group presented the outcomes of its work and shared the intentions to include the Youth Development Plan and Agenda as a coordinated plan of action for youth organizations in water and climate. The group expressed its intention to include the 30/30/30 target in the Water and Climate Youth Development Plan and Agenda (YDPA) and to have the YDPA included in the Water Action Agenda of the 2023 Conference. The World Youth Parliament for Water (WYPW) noted that youth want to be optimistic and excited for the future. Youth wants opportunities not just to have a seat at the table, but for young voices to carry the same weight as more senior members in the water arena. Youth is not only bringing problems to the table, but also solutions. The WYPW called on attendees to work towards committing to the 30/30/30 target and to review the WYPW Vision for more details. Continuous stakeholder collaboration is necessary to achieve these goals.

Women Water Forum

The Committee for Women and Family Affairs under the Government of Tajikistan hosted this Forum co-organized by UN Women and the Royal Academy of Science International Trust (RASIT) in collaboration with OSCE and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) and in partnership with the European Union. The forum concluded that water for sustainable development solutions are complex and need a coupled systems approach that is holistic, integrated and inclusive, as well as sufficiently flexible to adjust to evolving circumstances. Involving both women and men in water governance improves management of water resources at all levels. Gender mainstreaming in water governance contributes to stability and security as it can lead to more effective policies and increase resilience of local communities. There is need for capacity building and knowledge development on gender mainstreaming to ensure that adequate skills and expertise are available to integrate the needs of women and men in management of water resources. Coordination and validation of the use of existing data and data from research is necessary to inform the population qualitatively. It often happens that the data presented in one project is very different from the data given in other sources. Finally, the forum concluded that there is unbalanced participation in decision-making in environmental planning and management at all levels. Empowering of women and girls will unlock leadership potential. For instance, it was proposed to create an award aimed at unlocking women's and girls' leadership capacities, to share best practices and foster cooperation, drawing attention to the disproportionate impact of climate change on women and men.

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Forum

Co-organized by UNDP and UNESCO, this forum concluded that, acknowledging that water supports all life on earth and plays an imperative if not unique role in energy, food security, human health and ecosystems, indigenous peoples' perspective on water issues is systemic. Due to the inherent complex characteristics of water issues, the application of specific methods for investigation is required. This entails integrating different knowledge systems, including indigenous peoples' knowledge while recognizing the value of water beyond a natural resource. Promoting inclusive, meaningful, and culturally appropriate participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in the design of water programs and policies to influence global agendas. Increasing capacity building for indigenous peoples and local communities and supporting the collation of indigenous and local knowledge to inform national and international water governance and policy to benefit other societies. However, intellectual property should be guaranteed, emphasizing data custody, use of data, genetic resources information, privacy, data and research sovereignty and accountability. Bringing attention to indigenous people's rights who are at the forefront of water conservation, especially in the context of multinational corporations, extractive industries and

water grabbing. Notably, the issue of violence against indigenous women and girls in the context of water resources should be prioritized. Supporting intergenerational knowledge transfer by restoring, revitalizing and reclaiming indigenous peoples' knowledge systems and languages must also be prioritized.

Forum on Water and Mountains

Co-organized by UNESCO and the United Nations Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) this Forum recognized the important role that mountains play in water supply and regulation in Central Asia, sustaining the livelihoods of people both in the mountains and downstream with resources for water supply, agriculture, industry and hydropower, while being at the same time among the most sensitive ecosystems to climate change, putting their integrity and the services they provide at risk. Participants underlined the glacier retreat as one of the most significant environmental changes observed in mountainous regions all over the world and in Central Asia in particular, which influences river flows and their variability, having implications on water supply and other mountain ecosystem goods and services. Participants also emphasized the need for better science and research communication to all stakeholders, including decision makers and local communities, to avoid policies and decisions that are not based on science. Furthermore, the forum stressed the importance of investing into capacity development, research, technologies and innovations to address novel and urgent challenges and priorities for societal needs, notably in areas of cryosphere (glaciers, snow and permafrost), water and climate change. Participants also underlined the importance to enhance science communication for the most vulnerable by involving them and tapping on citizen science approach, as well as "translating" best available science to local audiences, including with the participation of youth. Finally, forum participants emphasized the need to increase regional cooperation and coherence in strengthening linkages between SDG 6, 11.5, 13 and 17 with concrete actions in mountain communities on the ground, including with participation of women, youth, following a multistakeholder and partnership approach.

Side Events

Eleven Side Events were organized by global, regional and national actors. These activities created an additional platform for wider discussion on various water-related issues and priority themes of the conference:

Side Event 1: Building evidence for water-related policy making: the SDG 6 policy support system (SDG-PSS) (co-organized by United Nations Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD) and UNESCO International Centre for Water Security and Sustainable Management (UNESCO i-WSSM) in partnership with Hub-countries (Tunisia, Pakistan, Brazil and Republic of Korea)

Side Event 2: Consequences of climate change effects on water sources in mountainous Central Asia (organized by Aga Khan Development Network)

Side Event 3: The contribution of women to the study of glaciers in Tajikistan (organized by State Scientific Institution "Center for the Study of Glaciers NAST")

Side Event 4: Glaciers and climate change: regional cooperation for sustainable development (co-organized by the Committee for Environmental Protection under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, UNDP, European Union Delegation to Tajikistan)

Side Event 5: To achieve SDGs with water: supporting developing countries' water action through a global educational platform (co-organized by Korea Water Resources Corporation - K-water)

Side Event 6: Water Action Agenda: from Dushanbe 2022 to New York 2023 (co-organized by Republic of Tajikistan, the Kingdom of Netherlands, UN DESA and UN-Water)

Side Event 7: Science and evidence-based solutions to improve transboundary water cooperation in small transboundary tributaries of Central Asia (organized by International Water Management Institute)

Side Event 8: Digital tools and e-learning in transboundary water management (co-organized by Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Geneva Water Hub (GWH))

Side Event 9: Groundwater: making the invisible visible (co-organized by UN-WATER, IAEA, UNESCO-IHP, IGRAC, UNESCO-WWAP, University College London, IAH)

Side Event 10: The role of youth in the study of glaciers in Tajikistan (co-organized by State Scientific Institution "Center for the Study of Glaciers NAST")

Side Event 11: Climate change, water security and migration in Central Asia: a dialogue with stakeholders and partners (organized by International Organization for Migration)

Exhibition

An important highlight of the conference was the International Exhibition “Water for Sustainable Development”, where organizations at the international, regional and national level showcased their experience. This event demonstrated activities carried out and the results achieved, advanced knowledge, best practices and scientific achievements in the field of water resources. The exhibition also further strengthened and developed cooperation among stakeholders. It also introduced innovative methods, practices, techniques and technologies for sustainable water resources management. Furthermore, the exhibition established close professional and business relationships among various stakeholders.

Excursions

The National Organizing Committee organized excursions to the City of Dushanbe, the Hissor Fortress, the Varzob Gorge, Nurek Hydropower Plan, the Rogun Hydropower Plant and the Sarez Lake, on the last day of the conference for participants to explore potential solutions to water-related issues, as well as to learn more about the history and experience the friendliness of the Host Country.

The Conference participants were provided with opportunities to observe the current challenges Tajikistan is facing from the source of water in the upper catchments in mountainous parts of the country to the level of multiple water users in the lowlands where water contributes to food production, is used for drinking and local development, and is a powerful engine for generation of clean energy.

Cultural Program

The 2nd Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference also featured a rich cultural program, including a Dushanbe Water Festival. The Water festival was organized by the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan with the aim to raise public awareness of the value of water as a vital resource, focusing attention on valuing and preserving it for future generations. At the same time, the Festival reemphasized in a visual form the key challenges that need to be addressed through a collective action and mobilization of efforts. The Festival reemphasized the role of water in ensuring

economic development, food security, human health and dignity and cultural and leisure activities. The Festival was also aimed at demonstrating the policy and practice of Tajikistan as a global advocate on water issues on the global agenda and showcasing the roadmap towards the UN 2023 Water Conference. The Festival showed the depth of the Tajik hospitality and provided participants with a venue to get acquainted with the rich history, cuisine, culture, art, and traditions of the Tajik people.

The Dushanbe Conference allowed to integrate into a myriad of water-dedicated events a global Run Blue marathon originated in Australia by the prominent eco-activist, and a well-known water and climate advocate – Mina Guli. The Run Blue Global Water Marathon started on the 22 of March on the World Water Day in Australia with the intention to include 200 marathons worldwide involving over 200 million people and will end on the 22 of March 2023 on the eve of the UN 2023 Water Conference in New York. Prior to the Dushanbe Conference, Mina ran 40 marathons to draw attention of the world community to emerging and existential water challenges, motivate and call for action, mobilize efforts to achieve real change on the ground, as well as promote the Water Decade and the UN 2023 Water Conference. The Central Asian part of Run Blue started on 10 May 2022 in Muynak city of the Republic of Uzbekistan and ended on the 10 of June in Dushanbe with 11 marathons ran by Mina on the territory of Tajikistan for a total distance of 458 km, along the Amu Darya River and its tributaries in places with difficult geographical conditions, including Lake Sarez and the Fedchenko Glacier. The marathons on June 4 and June 9 generated great public interest with many sportsmen, government officials, representatives of international organizations and other interested people joining the symbolic 6 km stretch of the run with slogans and hashtags promoting the Water Action Decade, the UN 2023 Water Conference and action towards SDG6.

Media Coverage

The conference was widely covered by domestic and international media, including through online streaming and social media. Millions of people in Tajikistan and beyond were able to follow this important international event, obtain the necessary information, keep abreast of the global water agenda and, to some extent, be part of it. The official hashtags of the conference in social media were #DushanbeWaterConf, #DWaterProcess and #WaterActionDecade.

C. Outcomes of the Conference

Outcome Documents

The second High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028, produced three outcome documents: this Co-Chairs’ Summary; a Final Declaration “From Dushanbe 2022 to New York 2023”, which was adopted by acclamation at the end of the conference by the representatives of the participating states and organizations; and a Call for Action and Partnership, which was prepared by the Conference Secretariat on the basis of the proceedings of the conference. The Final Declaration and the Call for Action and Partnership are both annexed to this document.

The Final Declaration reflects the key messages that emerged from the preparatory process, the forums, panels, as well as several important conclusions and recommendations. In particular, this document stresses the main challenges ahead and recalls the key instruments available to address them. The Final Declaration selected some of these instruments as key messages to the UN 2023 Water Conference.

The Call for Action and Partnership contains the initiatives that were proposed during this conference as a contribution to the implementation of the Water Action Decade at all levels. This

document aims at taking stock of the actions and partnerships in the framework of the Decade and at contributing to their follow-up. It is recommended registering the actions and partnerships proposed during the Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conferences, as well as during all other relevant conferences and events, as voluntary commitments on the UN Partnership Platform, and providing updates on their progress, starting from those included in the Call for Action and Partnership.

Conclusions

- The Conference planned and held as a hybrid event was a major success as it allowed to bring together participants across the world and created a platform for discussion of water issues with stakeholders outside the water domain;
- The Conference was recognized as a concerted effort to consolidate findings and key messages of other major water-related events, particularly the Bonn Water Dialogues for Results, the 9th World Water Forum in Dakar, the 4th Asia-Pacific Water Summit in Kumamoto;
- The Conference managed to identify ways and mechanisms to implement the goals and objectives of the Water Decade in the context of achieving water-related Sustainable Development Goals by bringing together a range of stakeholders at different level, including Member States, international and regional organizations, academic institutions and non-governmental organizations;
- The Conference generated a great interest of the global community and raised awareness around the process planned towards the mid-term comprehensive review of the Water Action Decade at the UN 2023 Water Conference pursuant to United Nations General Assembly Resolution 75/212 of 21 December 2020;
- The Conference was preceded by a carefully planned and substantially inclusive and transparent process, which was channeled through different platforms, including the technical International Advisory Committee co-chaired by the Government of Tajikistan and the World Bank. The process was also coordinated with the Steering Committee of the Group of Friends of Water;
- The Final declaration of the Conference was shared among Member States, other stakeholders and received more than 700 inputs from 50 partners, and gave equal opportunities for women, youth and other major groups to contribute to the process;
- The Conference used a range of different tools and instruments to raise visibility of water agenda through reiterating the technical, economic and cultural value of water and creating a unique spirit of unity around water issues and their resolution;
- The Conference was designed to derive solutions for addressing existential water challenges by promoting innovations, tools and tapping on the knowledge possessed in research and academic institutions, private sector and communities and supplying them to the policy makers, who commit to creating enabling regulatory environment and conditions for prioritizing efforts in the water sector in an integrated manner;
- The Conference reiterated the role of youth in creating the next generation of solutions reliant on open and transparent data exchange, introduction of innovations and reinvigorating growth through exploring the out-of-box solutions, and empowering existing youth networks;
- The Conference paid particular attention to the interlinkages of water and climate, covering the spectrum of water-energy-food-health-environment nexus and instilling systemic thinking around water issues. It provided a viable expert platform for exchanging experiences and best practices, presenting specific case studies from different regions;
- The Conference was instrumental in showcasing the role and impact of women in driving a fundamental change in the water sector, and promoting value of water through sharing water stories and deriving solutions at all levels;

- The Conference paid attention to revealing new challenges and opportunities within the water sector in the world threatened by potential waves of pandemics, climate change emergencies and increasing risk of disasters, paying particular attention to marginalized groups, particularly poor and disabled;
- The Conference was instrumental in presenting several important initiatives as the world progresses towards the UN 2023 Water Conference, including the development of a Water Action Agenda, establishment of a Global Water and Climate Information System, development of National Water Roadmaps towards 2030, Water and Climate Youth Development Plan Agenda, as well as the proposal to announce the International Year of Glaciers Preservation in 2025.

The Conference was a clear success, largely thanks to the joint and coordinated efforts of all parties. The Government of Tajikistan will present this Co-Chairs' Summary, the Final Declaration and the Call for Action and Partnership to the High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development, the United Nations General Assembly at its Seventy-Seventh Session, the President of the General Assembly's preparatory meeting to the UN 2023 Water Conference and other relevant events.