



THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT

OUR WAKE-UP CALL

TO STRENGTHEN INTERNATIONAL WATER GOVERNANCE

From March 22 to 24 2023, a **UN intergovernmental conference** dedicated to **addressing global water issues** will be held in New York City for the first time in 46 years. This is a **once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to rally the States and the international community** around our most precious and finite resource “water” and give us the chance to **solve the water crisis**.

WATER, THE MAJOR ISSUE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Water is essential for all aspects of development, being a major driver for an equal and peaceful world, and being the key to ensure our survival. And yet:

- 💧 2,2 billions of people worldwide do not have access to water
- 💧 Lack of access to sanitation affects 3.6 billion people globally
- 💧 Over 80% of wastewater is released in our oceans and rivers without treatment or reuse
- 💧 Widespread droughts could become the next pandemic as climate change intensifies while by business as usual 50% of the world's population will be living under water stress conditions by 2050.

STATES AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MUST FACE THE WATER CRISIS

To address pressing water challenges and make the Human rights to water & sanitation a reality as well as to ensure the implementation of SDG 6 and all water-related goals of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, an intergovernmental UN Conference dedicated to water every 46 years is not sufficient. At this rate we won't reach the objectives that the States and the international community have set.

Moreover, the world faces interconnected risks that threaten to cause a polycrisis. Climate-related risks – which are directly linked to water – are one of the greatest future threats facing the world. Food crises are multiplying, alternative energy sources in most cases are not possible without water, the security of the planet is threatened, inflation is galloping, while the pressure on resources is growing and water is becoming the object of greed and tension.

In fact, water is a major geopolitical issue including a peace issue. The management of this vital, unique and necessarily shared resource is a subject that cannot be ignored by the international community.

The most vulnerable are already paying a high price for the inability of States to translate into policies and actions the commitments made in the framework of the human rights to water and sanitation (A/RES/64/292), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Climate Agreement, biodiversity and regional conferences, as well as the UNFCCC COP. Moreover, funding is not reaching the people on the ground whose lives have begun to change drastically. States and the international community are not up to the threats to the planet and humanity.

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND WATER GOVERNANCE SHOULD ENCOURAGE STATES TO ACT

The **lack of political leadership and multilateral dialogue on water** is slowing progress towards international goals: 107 countries are not on track to achieve SDG 6 by 2030. Indeed, fragmented and inadequate global water governance prevents the existence of strong international policy and practical measures to deal with water, whether it be access to water and sanitation including the management and preservation of water resources. It is deplorable that:

✘ **There is no binding international policy on water management**, apart from the two conventions on transboundary waters ratified by approximately one third of the States.

✘ **Water and sanitation issues do not benefit from a dedicated UN agency**, unlike for example food (FAO) or health (WHO). UN-Water is a coordination mechanism for the 32 UN agencies, programs and entities that deal with water issues, but its mandate and political weight are limited.

✘ **The field of water and sanitation does not benefit from dedicated international funds** either, such as the vertical funds for health (the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis) or the Green Climate Fund.

✘ **There is no intergovernmental committee or space dedicated to water**, as there are in other areas, such as the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the World Health Assembly (WHA) or the Climate COPs, the Commission on status of women and other functional committees. We need a structural arrangement like that to ensure continued attention to water.

Strengthening policy dialogue and multilateral coordination on water at the UN level is necessary. The organization of the UN 2023 Water Conference and the review sessions of the High Level Political Forum are not enough: the UN must convene high-level intergovernmental meetings on water on a regular basis. Such a space would allow states to coordinate and accelerate efforts to achieve SDG 6, build political will through ambitious commitments, and monitor the implementation of international goals.

The United Nations is the most legitimate space for improving the global multilateral water framework: it is the only multilateral political arena focused on issues of common concern, where all states are present and can make their voices heard. **The creation of a Special Envoy for Water to the UN Secretary General** – a proposal supported by over 150 states – **is an initiative that we support.** However, we are stressing the need to **give the Special Envoy for Water a political mandate to strengthen global water governance.** This would be a significant step forward that should be accompanied by a UN General Assembly Resolution establishing regular intergovernmental meetings on water within the UN to address all targets of SDG 6 and the acceleration of implementation of the human rights to water & sanitation.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen international water governance

The civil society for water united under the “**Butterfly Effect NGO coalition**” – a global coalition bringing together +140 NGOs and CSOs – calls on States and the international community to:

- 🔥 Join forces to obtain a **UN General Assembly Resolution establishing regular intergovernmental meetings on water and sanitation** within the UN to address all targets of SDG 6 and related issues including the acceleration of implementation of the human rights to water & sanitation.
- 🔥 Ensure that the **UN Special Envoy for Water appointed by the UN Secretary General has a political mandate to strengthen international water governance** and that a representatives of all major groups be among its advisors.
- 🔥 **Declare the Global water crisis at the UN in the same way as the climate crisis.**

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

On acceleration of implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda – including the dedicated water-goal (SDG6) and all water-related targets within 7 years

- 🔥 **Consecrating the human rights to water and sanitation in legislations / constitutions and regulations** and systematically report on the commitments made.
- 🔥 **Recognizing water as a common good** that must be managed democratically and collectively
- 🔥 **Improving the allocation of funds** and methodology to local level organizations incl. to the most vulnerable areas and populations and increasing the accountability of international donors’ funding as well as increasing the ODA dedicated to water.
- 🔥 **Recognizing the right of participation of non-state actors** especially CSOs, NGOs, indigenous people, women and youth and local actors in the policy development, sectors budgets, water governance bodies, from the local to the global level.
- 🔥 **Establishing and recognizing effective, accessible, disaggregated and public data collection and monitoring systems** (including by civil society via citizen science)

The international community has a **huge responsibility** to facilitate the implementation of individual and collective decisions **to accelerate efforts by 2030**.

A **strong international political commitment** to the issue of water and the preservation of this vital resource **is essential**.

Water is our most precious resource, we have no time to lose.

THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT ADVOCACY INITIATIVE

The "**Butterfly Effect**", a coalition of **140 local and international NGOs/CSOs**, started a broad consultation of its members in 2021, in which more than 180 representatives of organizations participated. It resulted in a policy paper presented at the 9th World Water Forum (Dakar - 2022).

As events and declarations on water follow one another, it is essential to work in continuity. Civil society has a particular responsibility to ensure that the outcomes of the Dakar World Water Forum are considered at the UN 2023 Water Conference. It is in this sense that this position paper takes up most of the Dakar message.

The objective is to allow civil society to express itself with a strong voice. This position paper presents the main political demands identified by our network for the attention of the international community.

The Butterfly Effect is coordinated by the International Secretariat for Water



The Butterfly Effect steering committee members



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