

Mr António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations
United Nations Headquarters, East 42nd Street,
New York, USA

Montreal, June 13rd, 2023

Subject: “**Water needs a home**” - Follow-up to the UN 2023 Water Conference and strengthening multilateralism on water

H.E. Mr. Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations,

We, the undersigned organizations, representing thousands of citizens including groups for women, indigenous, and youth in the water field, would like to warmly thank you for your efforts and leadership in making the United Nations Water Conference held from 22 to 24 March 2023 a success.

Following up on the commitments made, we call on you to strengthen the multilateralism on water and sanitation, as formulated in Sustainable Development Goal 6 and other water-related targets.

Although the conference generated a significant number of voluntary commitments and raised global awareness on water-related issues, there is still some uncertainty as to the follow-up actions that will be carried on by the United Nations and its Member States to achieve SDG6, as sought by the Water Action Agenda, and respect the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation.

The international community must ensure the implementation of collective decisions and actions to accelerate efforts by 2030. A strong international, political commitment to achieve SDG 6, realize the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation and the preservation of this vital resource is essential and urgent, underpinning global ambition for human development, climate adaptation and security.

Therefore, we call for a strengthening of policy dialogue and multilateral coordination on water within the United Nations by:

- The prompt appointment of a UN Special Envoy for Water, with a strong political mandate to mobilize Governments and all relevant stakeholders around water issues, keep water-related domain high on the UN agenda, bring water issues to other major thematic conferences, lead the debate on strengthening global water governance, support the organization of regular UN meetings, follow-up with Member States and other stakeholders on international commitments related to water, and pursue discussions with all relevant stakeholders. We strongly advocate for adequate human and financial resources to be allocated to the special envoy for water, enabling them to effectively carry out their responsibilities.

This individual shall be a passionate advocate and champion for water, known for their commitment to its cause, capable of conferring the issues at stake in the sector and shall be advised by a regionally diverse team to support its work, including representatives of civil society organizations with a special focus on women, indigenous peoples, and youth.

- The adoption of a UN General Assembly Resolution establishing regular intergovernmental meetings on water, building on the success of the March conference. These regular meetings shall result in political agreements and be convened at least every three years with a starting date as soon as possible. Such meetings shall ensure significant inclusion of historically excluded groups such as women, indigenous peoples, and youth in participatory and collaborative decision-making processes. Establishing regular formal exchanges between Member States and those groups on water will:

- Accelerate and coordinate efforts based on realities to achieve international water objectives agreed upon the international community,
- Strengthen political will and encourage actions to reach commitments made at the conference and in SDG6,
- Facilitate the necessary individual, non-state actors, collective and national measures to tackle the water crisis,
- Monitor and ensure accountability for the implementation of international water-related targets and commitments made in Water Action Agenda

The UN is the most legitimate space to improve the global multilateral water framework: it is the only multilateral political arena, focused on issues of common concern, where States are present and have a voice. The UN 2023 Water Conference should not be a one-off opportunity to put water at the heart of the international agenda, but the first of a regular mechanism that will lead to a resilient, equitable and sustainable water management for present and future generations.

We are ready to actively contribute to the development of a UN resolution that ensures the continued progress of this process. Additionally, we are eager to provide suggestions for potential candidates to serve as the special envoy. We firmly believe that with your support, we can secure a permanent home for water within the UN agenda.

Yours faithfully,

The undersigned organizations*

Copy sent to Csaba Kőrösi, Li Junhua, Gilbert F. Houngbo, Amina J. Mohammed, Permanent Representation of the Governments of Tajikistan, the Netherlands, Finland, and Senegal to the United Nations.

**This letter has been initiated by the Butterfly Effect NGO coalition¹, coordinated by the International Secretariat for Water (ISW)*

¹ The Butterfly Effect is a network of +140 local and international NGOs and CSOs from around the world, which aims to promote effective local solutions to sustainably improve access to water and sanitation, as well as resources management.

Annex I: List of signatories

