

# High-level Preparatory Meeting for the 2026 United Nations Water Conference

Dakar, Senegal | 26-27 January 2026

## CONCEPT NOTE

### 1. Context

Recognizing that water is critical for sustainable development, the “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (2030 Agenda) adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in its resolution [70/1](#) of 25 September 2015 includes, as part of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), a dedicated water goal, *SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all*.

Ten years since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, the world is far off-track from achieving SDG 6. According to the latest United Nations [Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025](#), despite steady progress between 2015 and 2024, 2.2 billion people lacked safely managed drinking water, 3.4 billion went without safely managed sanitation and 1.7 billion lacked basic hygiene services at home. Only 56 per cent of domestic wastewater is safely treated. Many countries in Northern Africa and Western Asia, and Central and Southern Asia face critical water stress levels exceeding 75 per cent, and about 10 per cent of the global population now live under high or critical water stress. Freshwater ecosystems are declining, with 50 per cent of countries reporting that one or more water-related ecosystem types are in a state of degradation. Transboundary cooperation arrangements for shared waters remains limited. At the current rate, the world will not achieve sustainable water management until at least 2049.<sup>1</sup>

Behind these statistics are dire consequences for people, prosperity, planet and cooperation. Failing to deliver on SDG 6 undermines the entire 2030 Agenda and jeopardizes progress on pressing global priorities including climate resilience, food security, health systems, gender equality, energy resilience, biodiversity, and stability. The water and sanitation crisis demands a collective, ambitious and immediate response.

Entering the final five years of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, the world must surge investment, innovation, political will, partnerships, collective action and a spirit of solidarity. The 2026 United Nations Water Conference to Accelerate the Implementation of SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all ([2026 UN Water Conference](#)), co-hosted by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the Republic of Senegal, and convened in the UAE in December 2026, will bring this spirit of solidarity and collective action to life to deliver on the promise of SDG 6.

### 2026 United Nations Water Conference

The 2026 UN Water Conference was mandated by resolution [77/334](#), adopted in September 2023 by the UN General Assembly as a follow-up to the successful UN 2023 Water Conference co-hosted by Tajikistan and the Kingdom of the Netherlands from 22 to 24 March 2023 in New York. The modalities of the 2026 UN Water Conference were adopted by the UN General Assembly in resolution [78/327](#) on 6 September 2024.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2025). [The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025](#). New York. (revision August 2025)

The preparatory process for the 2026 UN Water Conference is well underway. An organizational session was held in New York on 3 March 2025 to discuss the themes of the six Interactive dialogues. The first online stakeholder consultation generated nearly 500 inputs from 87 countries on recommendations for the themes of the interactive dialogues.<sup>2</sup> In June, the six themes were presented in the [Background Note for the Preparatory Process](#) prepared by the Secretary-General of the Conference. The President of the General Assembly convened a one-day meeting on 9 July 2025, during which the General Assembly adopted by consensus the themes for the interactive dialogues ([79/L.101](#)).

In August 2025, the Secretary-General of the Conference invited Member States to submit an expression of interest to co-chair one of the interactive dialogues and provide contributions to the concept papers and panel compositions for each of the Conference's interactive dialogue themes. The contributions from Member States are available on the [Conference website](#). The selection process for the co-chairs of the interactive dialogues is in progress and will be completed before the end of the year. A second [online stakeholder consultation](#) on inputs for the interactive dialogue concept papers, led by the co-hosts and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), has also been completed.

Over the past year, the consultative preparatory process to shape the content of the 2026 UN Water Conference has generated substantial input, including over 1000 contributions from Members States, the UN system and stakeholders. This exemplifies the widely inclusive and collaborative spirit of the Conference.

To support the effective preparation of the 2026 UN Water Conference, the UN General Assembly welcomed the generous offer of Senegal to convene a high-level international meeting in Dakar ([78/327](#), para. 17). The High-level Preparatory Meeting for the 2026 UN Water Conference (Dakar High-Level Meeting) will be organized in Dakar on 26 and 27 January 2026 by the Government of Senegal and the UAE in collaboration with the United Nations and other supporting partners. Coming nearly one year in advance of the Conference, the Dakar High-Level Meeting is a critical step in the roadmap to the UAE in December 2026.

The Dakar High-level Meeting will be preceded by a one-day event on 25 January 2026, co-organized by UN DESA and the co-hosts, designed to strengthen multi-stakeholder participation. This event will create a dedicated platform for stakeholders, including civil society, youth, and Indigenous Peoples, to align on their contributions ahead of the Meeting. Further details on this one-day event will be provided separately by UN DESA in due course.

## 2. Objectives

As a seminal pre-Conference preparatory event, the Dakar High-level Meeting will put in place the groundwork for the 2026 UN Water Conference.

The global objectives of the meeting are consistent with those specified in the Modalities resolution ([78/327](#), para. 17):

- To support an effective preparation for the Conference.
- To review the progress and the gaps in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6.
- To explore ideas to accelerate the achievement of the internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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<sup>2</sup> UN DESA, [Summary Report: 2026 UN Water Conference Global Online Stakeholder Consultation: Themes of the Interactive Dialogues](#), May 2025.

Specifically, the Meeting will initiate discussions and facilitate the alignment of actors around the six themes of the interactive dialogues of the 2026 UN Water Conference. It will provide a foundation for actions and partnerships, as well as build high-level political commitment. The Meeting will be a key moment to co-create a shared ambition for the 2026 UN Water Conference.

The Dakar High-level Meeting is designed to be inclusive, collaborative and multi-stakeholder. Stakeholders are expected to actively contribute throughout the sessions to ensure that all perspectives are heard and taken into account over the two days of deliberations.

### 3. Expected results

Expected results for the Dakar High-level Meeting include:

- **Shared ambition for the 2026 UN Water Conference** - the launch of the vision statement, with common objectives, expected results, a roadmap, and a process to garner inputs from stakeholders.
- **Multi-stakeholder coordination** - a structure and plan for the coordination of contributions and involvement of Member States and all relevant stakeholders, in accordance with the Modalities resolution ([78/327](#), para 4g).<sup>3</sup>
- **Common objectives and a workplan for each of the six interactive dialogues** - a common agreed vision for each theme, including a refinement of objectives, and alignment on a path forward for the preparation of each of the six interactive dialogues, including concrete proposals for technical content and on how to make the dialogues truly ‘interactive.’
- **Boost to the implementation of SDG 6** - the promotion of tangible, transformative actions, initiatives and partnerships to accelerate the implementation of SDG 6, including identification of new opportunities to be further developed in advance of the Conference.

The main outcome document will be a summary of the meeting proceedings prepared by the co-hosts, Senegal and UAE, which will include a “Roadmap from Senegal to the UAE”.

The outcomes from the Dakar High-level Meeting will contribute to the upcoming in-depth review of SDG 6 during the 2026 High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF) that will take place in July at the UN Headquarters in New York, as well as other important international conferences and events taking place in 2026, including, inter alia, the meetings of the Conferences of the Parties to the three Rio Conventions: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The outcomes will also provide inputs for other high-level events that will feed into the preparation of the 2026 UN Water Conference, such as the 4<sup>th</sup> Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference, as well as other global and regional meetings, including those organised by the United Nations Regional Commissions.

Furthermore, the results of the Dakar High-level Meeting will reinforce the momentum generated by the UN 2023 Water Conference and provide a bridge to the next UN conference on water, “United Nations Conference on the Final Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028” that will be convened in Dushanbe in 2028 by the Government of Tajikistan.

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<sup>3</sup> UN General Assembly resolution 78/327, paragraph 4(g). *The General Assembly decides that the Conference shall involve all relevant stakeholders, bringing together Governments, the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations, international financial institutions, other interested international bodies, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, academic institutions, the scientific community, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, the private sector, philanthropic organizations and other actors....*

## 4. Preliminary programme

An outline of the preliminary programme structure is included in the Annex.

The official programme of the two-day meeting will consist of a high-level opening segment, round table 'kick-off' discussions for the six interactive dialogues, two interactive sessions and a high-level final segment.

**High-level Opening Segment.** This segment will include an opening ceremony with speeches from the co-hosts and UN system, a high-level panel reinforcing leaders commitment to accelerate implementation of SDG 6 and a presentation of the vision of the 2026 UN Water Conference and the objectives and agenda of the Meeting.

**Round table 'kick-off' discussions on the six themes of the Interactive Dialogues.** The aim of the round tables is to initiate discussions on the content, design and interlinkages of the six interactive dialogues that will take place during the 2026 UN Water Conference. The discussions will consider the contributions submitted by Member States, the UN system, and stakeholders for the concept papers for each of the Conference's interactive dialogue themes during the consultation process. Building on these inputs, participants will actively contribute to shaping the interactive dialogues of the 2026 UN Water Conference.

The six round table discussions will be chaired by the respective newly appointed Member State Co-Chairs at ministerial-level and organized in collaboration with UN DESA and UN-Water. The round tables will draw upon relevant discussions held during the UN 2023 Water Conference and the latest data and evidence to examine the current situation, identify major challenges and solutions, and formulate recommendations, taking into consideration the [SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework](#) and its five global accelerators: financing, data and information, capacity development, innovation and governance. The discussions will have a sharp focus on actions to accelerate progress in these respective areas. Participants will also have the opportunity to offer concrete suggestions on how to make the format of the interactive dialogues more collaborative.

The key messages, recommendations and other reflections from the six round table discussions, including ways to strengthen multi-stakeholder engagement, will be presented by the respective Co-Chairs during Interactive Session 2 and included in the Meeting summary.

The six round tables discussions are aligned with the adopted themes of the interactive dialogues ([79/L.101](#) - as adopted on 9 July 2025):

- (a) *Water for people*: the human rights to water and sanitation, including for those in vulnerable situations, for healthy societies and economies;
- (b) *Water for prosperity*: valuing water, water-energy-food nexus, advancing integrated and sustainable water resource management, wastewater and water-use efficiency across sectors, and economic and social development;
- (c) *Water for planet*: climate, biodiversity, desertification, environment, source to sea, resilience and disaster risk reduction;
- (d) *Water for cooperation*: transboundary and international water cooperation, including scientific cooperation, and inclusive governance;
- (e) *Water in multilateral processes*: Sustainable Development Goal 6, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and beyond, and global water initiatives;
- (f) *Investments for water*: financing, technology and innovation, and capacity-building.

**Interactive Session 1: Strengthening multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral and intergenerational engagement.** This Interactive session will focus on how to ensure multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral and intergenerational engagement and participation in the preparatory process for the 2026 UN Water Conference and in the Conference itself. It will explore from different perspectives how the strategic opportunity offered by the 2026 UN Water Conference can be most beneficial for all actors to boost momentum and mutually support efforts at all levels and across sectors to accelerate the implementation of SDG 6 and the broader 2030 Agenda.

**Interactive Session 2: Shaping a collective ambition for the 2026 UN Water Conference.** This second interactive session will build on the deliberations over the course of the two-day meeting to co-create a shared ambition for the 2026 UN Water Conference. The session will provide an opportunity for the Co-Chairs of the interactive dialogues to report back and reflect on the round table ‘kick-off’ discussions on the six interactive dialogue themes.

**High-level Segment “On the road from Senegal to the UAE”.** The final segment of the Dakar High-level Meeting will synthesize the main results from the Meeting, including key engagements, and look ahead to the next steps for the preparation of the 2026 UN Water Conference. It will conclude with remarks from the co-hosts, Senegal and UAE.

The Meeting will also include activities and events organized on the margins of the official programme.

- The venue will include a dedicated dialogue space where participants can exchange on initiatives, technologies and financing opportunities aimed at advancing the sustainable management of water and sanitation and accelerating progress on SDG 6. This space will also have structured opportunities to highlight contributions from civil society, the private sector, youth, and the science and knowledge community to the 2026 UN Water Conference.
- A very limited number of rooms are available for side meetings related to the preparation of the 2026 UN Water Conference that can be organized in time slots around the official programme sessions. More information about the organization of side meetings is forthcoming.
- Cultural experiences and social activities will also be organized – *more information is forthcoming*.

## 5. Participation

The Dakar High-level Meeting will be organized in a collaborative and multi-stakeholder format. It will bring together different actors that are engaged in the implementation of SDG 6 and other water-related goals and targets, including, but not limited to:

- High-level representatives of Governments, the United Nations, the African Union, and other intergovernmental, international and regional organizations;
- High-level representatives of the World Bank, International Finance Corporation, African Development Bank, International Monetary Fund, and other international financial institutions and multilateral development banks;
- Sector Ministers for water, environment, health, agriculture, energy, planning, finance, among others;
- Representatives of major groups and other stakeholders, including women, children and youth, Indigenous Peoples, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, the scientific and technological community, farmers, civil society organizations, local communities, persons with disabilities, academic institutions and other relevant stakeholders ([78/327](#), para 4(g));
- Representatives of multilateral funds, bilateral donors, climate funds, philanthropic organizations and private sector, including small enterprises and start-ups.

Official invitations for Member State delegations and other high-level officials are forthcoming through appropriate diplomatic channels. For all other participants, online registration is available through the official Meeting website.

## 6. Organizational aspects

**Dates.** The Meeting will take place over two days: Monday, 26 January 2026 and Tuesday, 27 January 2026.

**Venue and location.** The Meeting will take place at the *Centre International de Conférence Adbou Diouf* (CICAD) located in Diamniadio, Senegal. CICAD is located approximately 30 km from the Blaise Diagne International Airport and 30 km from Dakar city centre.

**Languages.** The working languages of the meeting will be English and French, and simultaneous translation will be provided in both languages. Translation into other official languages of the United Nations will be offered to the extent possible.

**Registration.** Online registration is available from the beginning of December 2025 up to 10 January 2026.

More information about the Dakar High-level Meeting including an administrative note and weblinks for online registration are available on the official website – <https://sdgs.un.org/conferences/water2026>.

## 7. Organizers

The Government of Senegal and the United Arab Emirates, in partnership with the United Nations, will provide political and technical leadership for the organization of the Dakar High-level Meeting with the support of international organisations.

A joint secretariat for the Meeting will be responsible for:

- coordinating delegations
- registration and protocol
- strategic communications
- technical and logistical management of the event.

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The Government of Senegal, in close collaboration with the UAE, looks forward to welcoming you to Dakar to continue our shared commitment to SDG 6. Senegal and the UAE remain fully mobilized to make the 2026 UN Water Conference a solid foundation for a more just, sustainable, and united future.

## PRELIMINARY PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

TIME	DAY 1 - 26 January 2026		DAY 2 - 27 January 2026	
8.00-9.00	Arrival of participants & registration		Side meetings Dialogue space [3]	
9.00-12.30	<b>High-level Opening Segment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Arrival of Dignitaries</li> <li>- Opening ceremony</li> <li>- High-level Panel discussion</li> <li>- Presentation: Conference vision, Meeting objectives &amp; agenda</li> <li>- Launch of the UN-Water GLAAS 2025 report</li> </ul>		<b>Round table 'kick-off' discussions on Interactive Dialogue themes (e) and (f) - (90 mins)</b>	
			ID (e): Water in multilateral processes	
			Coffee & networking	
			ID (f): Investments for water	
12.30-14.00	Lunch	Side meetings Dialogue space [1]	Lunch	Side meetings Dialogue space [4]
14.00-18.30	<b>Round table 'kick-off' discussions on Interactive Dialogue themes (a) to (d) - (90 mins)</b>		<b>Interactive Session 2 - (90 mins)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reporting back &amp; reflections on the round table 'kick-off' discussions on the six interactive dialogue themes</li> <li>- Shaping a shared ambition for the 2026 UN Water Conference</li> </ul>	
	ID (a): Water for people	ID (b): Water for prosperity		
	Coffee & networking break		Coffee & networking break	
	ID (c): Water for planet	ID (d): Water for cooperation	<b>High-level Segment "On the road from Senegal to the UAE"</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Synthesis of the results of the meeting</li> <li>- Overview of the roadmap ahead and concluding remarks</li> </ul>	
	<b>Interactive Session 1 - (60 mins)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strengthening multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral and intergenerational engagement</li> </ul>		Press conference	
18.30-19.30	Side meetings Dialogue space [2]		Cultural experience (TBC)	

Cultural experience (TBC)