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United Nations Water Conference
United Arab Emirates, 2026



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Bulletin

HIGH-LEVEL PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE UN WATER CONFERENCE DAKAR

Wednesday, January 28, 2026

An ambitious roadmap to accelerate access to water and sanitation

The high-level preparatory meeting for the 2026 United Nations Water Conference ended last night at the CICAD in Diamniadio with a strong commitment from the actors present to do everything in the coming months to ensure the success of the major event you from Abu Dhabi to the United Arab Emirates. Until then, the various dialogues will continue in order to produce relevant working documents fruit of inclusive and collaborative reflection.

Editorial

The urgency is now

After two days of conclave in Dakar, this open and vibrant city that provided with Diamniadio a framework conducive to reflection, the actors of water and sanitation separated last night on strong notes of hope and the lively and committed music of the artist Baba Maal. It is now time for concrete actions on the ground that must follow the major resolutions often not followed up. This new paradigm was adopted by the participants whose great diversity is certainly a major asset for achieving the objectives of the Conference in the United Arab Emirates. The results of the six interactive dialogues and other activities carried out during the meeting constitute a remarkable event with an ambitious roadmap to be carried out throughout the year 2026. As it is morally unacceptable that a very large number of people continue to wait for water and sanitation services around the world, we witnessed the birth in Dakar of a new global coalition to reverse trends and improve indicators in the perspective of SDG 6 and the 2026 agenda. The urgency is now and there is no more time to waste.



UNITED NATIONS WATER CONFERENCE IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Dakar sets the course of actions

The High-Level Preparatory Meeting for the 2026 United Nations Water Conference was closed with calls for action.



The preparatory meeting in Dakar paved the way for the UN Water Conference 2026, which will be held in the United Arab Emirates in December. This is the sentiment of personalities who spoke like the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General

of the Nations, Mrs. Retno L.P. Marsudi, Mr. Abdullah Balalaa, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in charge of Energy and Sustainability of the United Arab Emirates, Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Dièye, Minister of Hydraulics and Sanitation

of Senegal or even Mr. Álvaro Lario, President of UN Water and President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). “We leave Dakar with a lot of energy. We know the points on which we need to act and the aspects that deserve improvement,” he said.

Dakar served as a stopover for the identification of priority actions to be undertaken and especially the avenues to explore to advance indicators in terms of access to drinking water and sanitation services. “Now we know where to go and how to get there. More action is needed,” reiterated the Special Envoy of the UN Secretariat General, Mrs. Retno L.P. Marsudi.

Among the avenues for action, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in charge of Energy and Sustainability of the United Arab Emirates advocated strengthening the leadership of the public authorities and other organizations, strengthening resilience, synergy of actions. “The meeting in Dakar was an inclusive meeting. We leave Dakar with the firm conviction that we need more collective action,” declared Mr. Abdullah Balalaa, who calls for a radical change in the governance of water and sanitation policy, adding «We want

a co-construction of solutions with the agriculture, energy and biodiversity sectors.»

This holistic approach to responses to constraints was welcomed by the Minister of Hydraulics and Sanitation, Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Dièye. According to the latter, contributions from all regions of the world, governments, international organizations, financial institutions, the private sector, academia, civil society, women’s organizations, youth and indigenous peoples, allowed to enrich the debates and lay the foundations of a credible, ambitious and results-oriented roadmap for December 2026 in the United Arab Emirates.

In Dakar, experts, communities and local elected officials identified the structuring priorities for the Conference, which is resolutely focused on action and implementation. «As co-hosts, the Republic of Senegal and the United Arab Emirates call on the international community to come together around a shared ambition: to make water a lever for human dignity, sustainable development, peace and prosperity,” said Mr. Cheikh Tidiane DIEYE.

Three pillars of future collective action

The Minister of Hydraulics and Sanitation, Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Dièye has identified three strategic pillars, foundations of the future collective action. This is the gradual development of a coherent and integrated framework for water, whose six themes of interactive dialogues could help build a bridge between political commitments and their practical implementation. Added to this is the frequency of UN conferences on water, in order to sustainably

ably anchor water at the heart of the international agenda beyond 2030 and to strengthen coherence between multilateral processes. The last pillar is related to strengthening coordination, partnerships and cooperation mechanisms, in order to fully mobilize the five global accelerators of SDG6: financing, data, capacity building, science and innovation, governance, while ensuring the effective inclusion of women, young people and all stakeholders.



FUNDING, DATA SHARING, INFRASTRUCTURE SECURITY

A series of challenges for basin organizations

The basin organizations in West Africa have contributed to consolidating peace. These achievements hide major challenges. This is what emerged, on 27 January, during a panel organized as part of the High-Level Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Water Conference scheduled for early December in the United Arab Emirates.



The management of transboundary waters has been scrutinized by 6 West African basin organizations. The speakers certainly boasted opportunities, but they did not forget the challenges related to security and geopolitical changes.

The strategy for building peace around the river basin is based on the construction of electrical hydraulic structures, the supply of water for agriculture, and support for communities. To this must be added the geographical distribution of institutions in member countries.

For water management, we have a recognized charter. The States have common works that have impacts on populations. Today, we are talking about the OMVS of peoples. We associate women and young people. We organize competitions to reward their best projects. OMVS will set up a resilience fund to help communities cope with the effects of climate change,» explained Dr. Thierno Ndour, Director of Environment and Sustainable Development at the Organization for the Enhancement of the Senegal River (OMVS).



The contribution of organizations in development is recognized. However, they face a series of problems related to the mobilization of financial resources, the lack of transparency in data sharing and also security issues in some countries.

«Water management is not necessarily a technical issue. We must have basin organizations that fit the issues of the day: geopolitical and climatic changes. At the technical level, there is a weakness in data management capabilities. And data is the basis of diplomatic trust. The data on pollution, on withdrawals do not circulate,» regretted the Deputy Secretary General of the Organization for the Development of the Gambia River, Ousmane Hane. He also raised the harmonization of legal texts between member countries of basin organizations. «each country

has its water code. These codes don't talk to each other,» he says.

To this, he added security issues precisely the protection of electrical installations located in border areas. The other common point is the lack of funding for structuring projects that benefit communities. «The Achilles' heel of these organizations is finances. There are enormous difficulties in collecting member states' contributions. We have constraints in mobilizing funding to set up projects. These organizations rely heavily on external funding,» said Mr. Hane.

This deficit of financial resources was also addressed by Mr. Kouassy, Director of the ECOWAS Water Resource Centres. «One of the challenges is project funding. One can help to prevent or manage conflicts if one has funding to implement development projects,» he said.



DIBI MILLOGO, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE UPPER VOLTA BASIN AUTHORITY
«Let's move from a logic of sharing water to that of profits»

The optimization of river basin management relies on several factors. At least, this is the opinion of the Deputy Director of the Upper Volta Basin Authority which covers countries such as Benin, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Mali, Togo and Niger. He put governance back on the table, including within a country. «We think of integration but we act sector-wise. We see several departments dealing with the same thing. Everyone acts and

people do not supervise. Responsibilities are not defined,» notes Dibi Millogo. He advocates for a shift «from water diplomacy to the diplomacy of sustainable results. There is no shortage of institutions, strategies and conferences. What is missing are results.

The focus should be on sharing benefits and not sharing water. In other words, communities need to feel more the benefits of projects and infrastructure. We must move from a logic of sharing water to that of sharing benefits, providing energy to populations, contributing to their resilience. You need group insurance,» recommends the Deputy Director of the Upper Volta Basin Authority.



SHARED GOVERNANCE OF WATER RESOURCES

The experience of the OMVG presented



Secretary General of the Organization for the Development of the Gambia River OMVG, Ousmane Hane emphasized the role of the organization in the shared governance of water resources among the populations living in the basin of the river member states. It was during a meeting on Tuesday in Diamnadio, on the sidelines of the second day of the preparatory meeting for the United Nations Water Conference in Abu Dhabi.

Ousmane Hane stated that the organization's mission is to manage the river water.

'It is not appropriate that populations see water flowing into their territory and that they cannot benefit from it in terms of priority access but especially for access to drinking water', said Mr. Hane, for whom the importance of common infrastructure, such as dams, are essential to ensure continuous water transfer.

He mentioned the construction of dams, the realization of power lines among others that have started, and will continue to support the development of these communities. The OMVG is implementing these schemes to facilitate access to water for populations living in the basin territories of the Gambia River.

'There can be no question for us of acting at the scale of basins without worrying about the basic needs of populations, particularly in terms of access to water and sanitation, it is at the heart of our problems,' he hammered. In the process, he added: 'It is necessary to set up dialogue mechanisms because there is not only Senegal that is concerned by the resource.



REFORMS, BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

Parliamentarians invited to be at the forefront



A global dynamic aimed at strengthening the weight of African parliamentarians in decision-making on access to water and sanitation services. This is the ambition of a meeting held on the second day of the High-Level Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Water Conference 2026. Kenya's Water and Sanitation Minister Eric Mugaa, who chaired the meeting, acknowledged that MPs can influence change at all levels. «The deputies have the possibility to introduce reforms by voting on texts. They

have a fundamental role in the budget allocation for these issues,» argued Eric Mugaa during this session organized by African Renaissance. Senegalese deputies from different legislatures participated in the exchanges. Speaking, former parliamentarian Juliette pointed out the paradox between floods and water stress in certain regions of Africa. «We need to rethink our water policy and have a much more global vision,» she recommends.



RURAL AREAS AND URBAN CENTRES

A local elected official highlights the inequalities in access to drinking water

The secretary general of the Association of Mayors of Senegal (AMS), Mbaye Ndione, highlighted in Diamnadio the inequalities in access to water between urban and rural areas in Senegal. It was on the sidelines of the opening ceremony of the Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Water.

‘The issue of water is no longer a luxury. One cannot live without water. But one must live with water in quantity and quality. Unfortunately, this is not the case,’ noted the secretary general of the AMS, also a member of the board of directors of ONAS.

Mbaye Ndione continued that, the management of water in Senegal is a real issue, especially rural hydraulics, ‘the day when we stop distinguishing urban and rural hydraulics, we will have an equitable Senegal in terms of access to water,’ stressing that the populations of the rural world “suffer enormously from a lack and quality of water”.

For him, this kind of meeting must be moments of reflection to find solutions to our internal problems, but also to the issue of water at the global level, because, he explains, the disparities that exist from one country to another, from one region to another, from one commune to another, “are screaming”.



To combat the lack of water in rural areas, Mbaye Ndione advocates the involvement of mining companies for the construction of high-flow boreholes with a longer lifespan, but also encourage the State and all partners to invest in massive infrastructures whose cost is certainly significant, but whose profitability and sustainability have no limit.





ROUGUIYATOU BA, PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF YOUNG PROFESSIONALS IN WATER AND SANITATION IN SENEGAL (AJPEAS)

«The challenge today is clear: Transforming commitments into concrete actions in our territories»

On behalf of youth, Rouguiyatou BA, President of the Association of Young Professionals in Water and Sanitation (AJPEAS) of Senegal, addressed the high-level opening panel of the preparatory meeting for the United Nations Conference on Water.

According to the President of AJPEAS, "The legacy of the 9th World Water Forum, held here in Dakar, is the Global Youth Movement for Water which carries a regional and local Global Youth Strategy for Water, thought to last well beyond 2026, until 2028 and after 2030." In this regard, she recalled the need to officially implement

this strategy and to create 'strong synergies' with the Youth Strategy of the Conference. Rouguiyatou BA suggested in this same launch, "a sustainable partnership between governments, civil society, women, indigenous peoples and youth."

In the opinion of the spokesperson for youth, "the challenge today is clear: Transform these commitments into concrete actions in our territories." In her speech before the global actors of water and sanitation, she states: «It is no longer just about being consulted. It is about co-creating and shaping together the agenda for water and sustainable development»



MUSA SHIAKA, NGO FOCAL POINT TO THE MINISTER
OF WATER OF SIERRA LEONE

***"We lack the financial resources to develop
our water potential"***

The Performance Monitor and NGO Focal Point Coordinator at the Ministry of Water Resources and Sanitation in Sierra Leone shared his country's challenges. Like many African countries, Sierra Leone does not have the means to exploit the potential of its water resources. "We have abundant water resources. But we lack the financial means to enhance them and improve the living conditions of the population in terms of access to basic water services," says Musa Sikaka, who gave a positive note to the success of the organization of this meeting. «From the reception to the catering, we did not have a problem. We thank Senegal for this great mass of people who are in the water and sanitation sector."



PRITHVI RAM BOMMARABOYINA, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
GOVERNMENT STEERING GROUP OF INDIA

***"The saved water footprint can be converted into
carbon credits"***

The Representative of the Government Steering Group of India, Prithvi Ram Bommaraboyina works on the carbon market. But within this group, he is specifically interested in the issues of water economy in agriculture. Their mission is to encourage farmers to save water.

"The link between the carbon market and water lies in the fact that the footprint of saved water can be converted into carbon credits. Which can then be sold in the market. Thus, we encourage farmers to adopt better management of their water resources," argued

Prithvi Bam Bommaraboyina who welcomed the realistic proposals that emerged during this preparatory meeting in Dakar. "I particularly noticed the inclusive approach adopted by the organizers. Actors from different regions and varied profiles came to share their experiences in this area. Furthermore, the President of Senegal stressed the crucial importance of water and insisted on the need for everyone to participate actively in the next conference. I hope that these commitments can materialize," he concludes.



GCOM-SONES CONVENTION

Drinking water for 20,000 people in the next 3 years



The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCOM) launched on Monday, January 26 in Dakar, its program to finance 2,000 social connections to local authorities in Senegal.

As part of the high-level preparatory meeting for the United Nations Water Conference, GCOM and SONES signed a partnership agreement to provide 2,000 social connections to vulnerable households.

The project, costing 426 million FCFA, will allow SONES to extend its water supply network by 32 kilometers and reach more than 20,000 people over the next three years.

The Minister of Hydraulics and Sanitation welcomed this initiative which will allow Senegal to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 6). According to Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Dièye,

achieving the SDGs in 2030 must involve the availability of water in homes.

As part of its social connections, SONES has connected 360,000 households and reached more than 3.6 million people.

In Dakar, 74.2% of households use the household tap as their main source of drinking water compared to 25.8% for other sources. This situation shows that despite the efforts, the challenges are still enormous.

"The problem of access to water is an injustice that must be corrected through equitable access to natural resources," explained the mayor of Ngroundiane.

The co-director general of GCOM promised local authorities technical and financial support to improve access to drinking water and fight against inequalities in Senegal.



SANITATION

the MD of Onas advocates for resilient infrastructure

The Managing Director of the National Office of Sanitation in Senegal advocated, Tuesday, January 27 in Dakar, for resilient and effective infrastructure to fight against floods. He participated in a panel organized during the High-Level Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Water Conference.



"In a context where our country is facing a financial crisis, it is important to review the public infrastructure financing system to have more efficient, more effective and more resilient works", explained Seni Diène during a panel organized with the partner the Global Alliance for Water Partnerships (GWOPA) under the UN-Habitat.

In recent years, Senegal has experienced floods causing forced migrations and enormous material damage. To address the negative impacts of climate change, Mr. Diène counts on these technical and financial partners to implement an innovative strategy for the maintenance of works and capacity building programs so that his agents are in line with the level of technology development. The objective is also to strengthen the technical skills of its staff to meet the realities on the ground.

Mr. Diène invited all local actors to work with the public authorities to participate in raising awareness and ensuring the safety of public infrastructure.

The National Sanitation Office of Senegal is

responsible for ensuring the operation and development of autonomous sanitation, as well as the valorization of by-products from wastewater treatment plants.

In Senegal, the rate of urbanization is increasingly important. Young people and women leave rural areas to find refuge in large cities that offer more opportunities. Consequence: an increasingly high density and a growing demand for water and sanitation.

To provide answers to these questions, the Wash actors invited investors to invest more in wastewater valorization and transformation. The processed products can be used by farmers and industrialists in their process of producing goods and services. An initiative that aims to strengthen the circular economy creating value and resilient jobs.



NEW UN-WATER FINDINGS

Stronger WASH systems needed for safe drinking-water, sanitation and hygiene for all

Urgent action is needed to strengthen national water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) systems so countries can accelerate progress towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 and protect health, especially in the face of growing climate-related risks and recurring disease outbreaks.



New findings from State of systems for drinking-water, sanitation and hygiene: Global update 2025, the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) report developed jointly by WHO and UNICEF, provide a comprehensive picture of what is holding WASH services back. The analysis draws on data from 105 countries and territories (covering 62% of the global population) and 21 development partners, including UN agencies, multilateral financing institutions, and international non-governmental organizations.

“With less than five years until 2030, we are at a critical moment to review SDG 6 and take decisive action to accelerate implementation,” said

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With less than five years until 2030, we are at a critical moment to review SDG 6 and take decisive action to accelerate implementation

Dr Alvaro Lario, Chair of UN-Water and President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). “The choices we make now will determine whether we achieve our common goals and ensure WASH is a catalyst for better public health and its transformational benefits, particularly for vulnerable people.”



Delivery capacity holds progress back

Across countries, the pattern is clear: plans exist, but delivery capacity is thin. Many countries have policies and targets in place, but implementation is constrained by fragmentation, workforce gaps, and financing that does not reliably translate into results. For example:

- fewer than 13% of countries reported having sufficient financial and human resources to implement their WASH plans.
- sixty-four per cent of countries reported overlapping roles and responsibilities across government institutions – often leading to inefficiencies and uncoordinated efforts.
- while most countries have national targets for drinking-water and sanitation, only 49% reported a national hand hygiene target.

Despite steady global progress, unmet needs remain vast. WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) estimates show that 2.1 billion people still lack safely managed drinking-water, 3.4 billion lack safely managed sanitation, and 1.7 billion lack basic hygiene services.

“Millions of lives continue to be lost each year due to inadequate access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene,” said Dr Ruediger Krech, Director a.i., Department of Environment, Climate Change, One Health & Migration at the World Health Organization. “This demands stronger WASH systems – how water and sanitation services are planned, resourced and run – and greater investment from governments and partners to deliver safely managed services for all.”

Financing, regulation and climate resilience

The report identifies major opportunities to accelerate progress by improving how WASH resources are planned, executed and regulated. Data from 20 countries participating indicate a funding gap of 46% between identified needs and available funding to reach national targets. Efficiency losses also further undermine services, with non-revenue water averaging 39%, among reporting countries.

Less than half of countries reported that regulatory authorities publish publicly accessible reports on drinking-water quality, and only about one fifth reported drinking-water surveillance occurring at nearly all of the required frequency. While most countries include water safety planning in policies and regulations, implementation at scale remains limited.

Encouragingly, many countries are integrating climate considerations into WASH systems: 80% address climate risks in WASH policies and plans. However, targeted measures for populations disproportionately affected by climate change are much weaker – only 20% of countries reported having measures to finance actions that support these populations, and just 42% reported measures to monitor progress in this area.

“The new GLAAS findings underline how accelerating progress on SDG 6 depends on stronger WASH systems and sectors – including financing, policy, governance, capacity and data, which will promote sustainability and build upon what is already working,” said Cecilia Scharp, Director, Global Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Practice, UNICEF. “As countries prepare for the 2026 UN Water Conference later this year, this report provides ti-

mely evidence to inform shifts towards more resilient systems that ensure services reach the most vulnerable children.”

Health impacts remain severe

These gaps have severe health consequences: at least 1.4 million people died in 2019 from preventable causes linked to unsafe water and poor sanitation, and in 2024 there were over 560 000 cholera cases and 6000 reported deaths across 60 countries.

The report was released at the opening of the High-Level Preparatory Meeting for the 2026 UN Water Conference (26–27 January 2026, Dakar, Senegal), co-hosted by Senegal and the United Arab Emirates, ahead of the main conference in December 2026.

The complete GLAAS 2024/2025 dataset is available on the GLAAS data portal.





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