



4TH HIGH-LEVEL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR ACTION “WATER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”, 2018-2028

25-28 May 2026, Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan

CONCEPT NOTE

Short title: 4th Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference

Background

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the period from 2018 to 2028 as the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development” (Water Action Decade) in its resolution [71/222](#) adopted on 21 December 2016. Since its inception in 2018, the Water Action Decade has inspired global water action and provided a political platform for the discussion of water issues by United Nations (UN) Member States and stakeholders. The UN General Assembly resolutions adopted in the framework of the Water Action Decade have brought greater attention to the centrality of “water for sustainable development” and provided mandates that elevated water onto the political agenda of the United Nations.

The midterm comprehensive review of the Water Action Decade was the impetus for the organization of the second UN conference on water after nearly half a century ([73/226](#)). The historic United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” 2018-2028 (UN 2023 Water Conference) was successfully co-hosted by the Republic of Tajikistan and the Kingdom of the Netherlands in New York from 22 to 24 March 2023. The Conference was a watershed moment that demonstrated the collective ambition of the international community to enhance action and political commitment at all levels to address water-related challenges. One of the main outcomes of the Conference was the launch of the Water Action Agenda,¹ a bold initiative to accelerate action towards water and sanitation targets, most notably Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6). To date, over 840 voluntary commitments have been registered by different stakeholders.

Consequently, the Water Action Decade has prompted a series of landmark processes. The momentum generated by the UN 2023 Water Conference led to numerous positive developments over a short period of time, including the decision of the UN General Assembly to convene two UN conferences on water

¹ Available on the SDG Actions Platform section of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs website (<https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/action-networks/water>).

in 2026 and 2028 (77/334), the presentation of the UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation² and the appointment by the UN Secretary-General of a Special Envoy on Water to strengthen global advocacy and coordination. The implementation of these mandates is progressing with a clear focus on accelerating results for SDG 6 and other internationally agreed water-related goals and targets. The UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation, launched in July 2024, provides a unified framework for action. The preparatory process is advancing for the 2026 UN Water Conference to Accelerate the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, co-hosted by the Republic of Senegal and the United Arab Emirates from 2 to 4 December 2026 in the UAE (78/327). The Water Action Decade will culminate with the 2028 United Nations Conference on the Final Comprehensive Review of the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” (UN 2028 Water Conference) that will be hosted by the Government of Tajikistan in Dushanbe to promote the implementation of water-related actions and to take stock of the progress catalysed by the International Decade (77/334).

Over the course of the Water Action Decade, water issues have been increasingly incorporated into the international agendas of sustainable development, climate, biodiversity, desertification and drought, disaster risk reduction, environment and oceans, among others. The UN-declared International Year of Glaciers’ Preservation 2025 (77/158) has emphasized the interlinkages between the climate and water agendas by raising awareness about the global consequences of accelerated melting of glaciers, which was highlighted during the first High-Level International Conference on Glaciers’ Preservation that was convened by the Government of Tajikistan in Dushanbe from 29-31 May 2025. In addition, the Decade of Action for Cryospheric Sciences, 2025-2034, was officially proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly through resolution 78/321 adopted on 13 August 2024.

While there is wide recognition that water is critical for sustainable development and the eradication of poverty, water-related challenges are expanding. Despite steady progress, billions of people still lack access to safely managed sanitation and drinking water. Climate change, population growth and increasing disaster risk are putting growing pressure on water resources. About 10 per cent of the global population now live under high or critical water stress.³

To respond to these water challenges and intensify support for water action at this pivotal moment, the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, in cooperation with the United Nations and partners, will convene the 4th Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference from 25 to 28 May 2026.

Dushanbe Water Process

The Dushanbe Water Process is an initiative of the Government of Tajikistan to support the implementation of the Water Action Decade 2018-2028. It includes a series of biennial conferences hosted by the Government of Tajikistan in cooperation with the United Nations and partners that are co-chaired by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). As the initiator of the Water Action Decade and co-host of the UN 2023 Water Conference, the Government of Tajikistan offers the Dushanbe Water Process as a follow-up mechanism to the UN 2023 Water Conference, particularly in providing a platform to report on the Water Action Agenda and track progress against voluntary commitments.

Over the years, Dushanbe Water Conferences have provided a unique platform for stakeholders and policymakers to discuss practical, action-oriented solutions to water-related issues. Since the

² UN System (2024), Chief Executives Board for Coordination, Summary of deliberations CEB/2024/1/Add.2. Available at: <https://unsceb.org/united-nations-system-wide-strategy-water-and-sanitation> and UN-Water (2024), United Nations System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation, Available at: <https://www.unwater.org/publications/united-nations-systemwide-strategy-water-and-sanitation>.

³ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2025). The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025. New York.

commencement of the Water Action Decade, three Conferences have been convened in 2018, 2022 and 2024. The 2nd Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference in 2022 played a significant role in shaping the themes of interactive dialogues of the UN 2023 Water Conference and launching the Water Action Agenda. The 3rd Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference in June 2024 convened over 2500 participants from more than 70 Member States and 100 UN entities and international organisations to follow-up on the five interactive dialogues from the UN 2023 Water Conference and review progress on the implementation of Water Action Agenda commitments.

The organization of the 4th Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference will continue Tajikistan's long-standing tradition of providing a platform for policy discussions, dialogue, partnership, and global action.

Goal and objectives

The overall goal of the 4th Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference is to advance progress towards the achievement of the objectives of the Water Action Decade 2018-2028. In line with UN General Assembly resolution [71/222](#), paragraph 4, the objectives of the Decade should be a greater focus on:

- (i) the sustainable development and integrated management of water resources for the achievement social, economic and environmental objectives;
- (ii) the implementation and promotion of related programmes and projects;
- (iii) the furtherance of cooperation and partnership at all levels in order to help to achieve internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The specific objectives of the Conference are the following:

- to serve as a key preparatory meeting for the 2026 UN Water Conference co-hosted by the Republic of Senegal and the United Arab Emirates;
- to showcase scalable solutions, strengthen cooperation and forge partnerships to address priority water-related opportunities and challenges;
- to bolster implementation of the Water Action Decade, building on the four work streams⁴ of the *United Nations Secretary-General's Action Plan for the Water Action Decade 2018-2028*;
- to conduct an informal consultation with stakeholders for the UN 2028 Water Conference that will serve as the final comprehensive review of the Water Action Decade 2018-2028 and an initial discussion on the way forward, including post-2030.

The 4th Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference will build on the preparatory process for the 2026 UN Water Conference, including the high-level international meeting that will take place in Dakar from 26 to 27 January 2026. It will also build on other relevant global and regional events inter alia the Third International Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC3), Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, 2025 UN Ocean Conference, Eighth Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction, Summit of the Future 2024, recent meetings of the Conferences of the Parties to the three United Nations Rio Conventions (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)), UN Food Systems Summit Stocktake, 4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4), New Urban Agenda adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), as well as the 15th

⁴ Four workstreams of the [United Nations Secretary-General's Action Plan for the Water Action Decade 2018-2028](#): (i) facilitating access to knowledge and the exchange of good practices; (ii) improving knowledge generation and dissemination, including new information relevant to water-related SDGs; (iii) pursuing advocacy, networking and promoting partnerships and action; and (iv) strengthening communication actions for implementation of the water-related Goals.

Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, G20 Water Dialogues and the High-level International Conference on Glaciers' Preservation.

This fourth Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference will ensure continuity with previous Conferences held in 2018, 2022 and 2024 by inviting updates on the activities and actions called for in the respective outcome documents. Additionally, it will incorporate inputs related to the 2026 theme for World Water Day and World Water Development Report on water and sanitation's role in gender equality.

Outcomes

The Conference will produce three outcome documents: Final Declaration, Co-chair's Summary, and a contribution from the Dushanbe Water Process to the 2026 UN Water Conference. These outcome documents will provide key messages, forward-looking recommendations and tangible follow-up actions.

The outcomes from the 4th Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference will contribute to action on water and sanitation at all levels. Governments, the United Nations and all stakeholders are encouraged to follow-up on the actions, innovations, partnerships and other opportunities from the Conference in their respective capacities. New commitments can be registered in the Water Action Agenda.

Additionally at global level, the outcomes from the Conference will contribute to the 2026 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development that includes an in-depth review of SDG 6 (New York, July), upcoming meetings of the Conferences of the Parties to the Rio Conventions in 2026 (UNCCD, UNFCCC, and CBD), 2027 SDG Summit (New York, September), the UN 2028 Water Conference (Dushanbe, 2028). These efforts will also support the continued implementation of the Decade of Action for Cryospheric Sciences (2025-2034) and the annual international observances of World Day for Glaciers (21 March) and World Water Day (22 March). The Conference outcomes can additionally contribute to other relevant upcoming high-level water-related international events, including the 11th World Water Forum (Riyadh, 2027).

Dates and venue

Conference-related events will take place over four days from 25 to 28 May 2026.

- Conference Forums and side events will be held on 25 May 2026 in advance of the official opening of the Conference. The venues for the forums and side will be decided by the organizers and communicated in due course.
- The official high-level Conference will take place on 26 and 27 May 2026 at the Kokhi Somon complex in Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan.
- Field trips and tours will be organized on 28 May 2026 for international participants to explore the host country and learn about Tajikistan's water resources management experiences.

Additionally, the UN Economic and Social Commission of Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), in accordance with its resolution [81/3](#) adopted on 25 April 2025, will organize the Asia-Pacific regional preparatory meeting for the 2026 UN Water Conference in Dushanbe, in coordination with the 4th Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference. This meeting will take place on 25 May 2026. Participants from the Asia-Pacific region are invited to attend. More information is forthcoming.

Preliminary Programme

The Conference programme will consist of opening and closing sessions, plenary sessions, thematic sessions, special panels, conference forums, and side events. Cultural events will also be organized, including an international exhibition and field trips.

Plenary Sessions

The Plenary sessions will provide an opportunity for the Heads of Delegation to make political statements. Guidelines to make statements consistent with the Water Action Decade, SDG 6 and other internationally agreed water-related goals and targets will be provided to Heads of Delegations through diplomatic channels, as appropriate. Statements that provide progress updates on existing Water Action Agenda commitments and announcements of new commitments are highly welcome.

Thematic Sessions and Special Panels

Thematic Sessions and Special Panels will be 120 minutes in duration. Six thematic sessions and three special panels will be organized in three segments over the two Conference days:

Segment 1: Bridging actions from the UN 2023 Water Conference to the 2026 UN Water Conference. Six thematic sessions will be organized around the six themes of the interactive dialogues of the 2026 United Nations Water Conference adopted by UN Member States by consensus on 9 July 2025 (A/79/L.101). The thematic sessions will fully align with the six interactive dialogue themes:

- (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.

Within the broader themes of the six interactive dialogues, certain thematic sessions may have a “Dushanbe focus” topic in order to explore specific priority areas in greater depth. These thematic sessions will be an opportunity for different stakeholders to showcase scalable solutions, innovations, partnerships and commitments that contribute towards the respective interactive dialogue theme. The discussions will build on the deliberations and actions from the UN 2023 Water Conference, in support of the 2026 UN Water Conference preparatory process. The Water Action Agenda will serve as a cross-cutting theme across all Thematic Sessions, including progress updates on the implementation of voluntary commitments.

Segment 2. Informal consultation for the UN 2028 Water Conference. The UN General Assembly has decided to convene the UN 2028 Water Conference to undertake a final comprehensive review of the Water Action Decade (77/334). The 4th Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference will provide a timely opportunity for an informal consultation with stakeholders on their expectations and ideas for the UN 2028 Water Conference and exchange on how to prepare. This segment will include two parallel special panels. Special Panel 1 will consult stakeholders on their expectations for the UN 2028 Water Conference and start the process to assess main outcomes and key achievements from the Water Action Decade. Special Panel 2 will consult stakeholders on potential themes for the interactive dialogues of the UN 2028 Water Conference.

Segment 3. Initial brainstorming discussion on ‘Water in the post-2030 Agenda’: With the endline of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (70/1) fast approaching, the 4th Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference will provide a platform for an initial brainstorming discussion among stakeholders on the future role of water in the post-2030 United Nations sustainable development agenda. Special Panel 3 will be forward-looking and offer an opportunity for different stakeholders to exchange ideas and explore possible options for ‘Water in the post-2030 Agenda.’

The terms of reference for the Thematic Sessions and Special Panels will be prepared by the Conference Secretariat. Thematic Sessions and Special Panels will be co-organized by partners including Member States, United Nations entities, international and regional organizations, international financial institutions, bilateral development partners, and private sector, as well as academia and non-governmental organizations. As a general rule, each Thematic Session and Special Panel will be prepared by at least two co-organizers and up to five partners.

Key messages from the Thematic Sessions and Special Panels will be presented during the Closing Session. The main conclusions and recommendations will also be reflected in the outcome documents of the 4th Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference.

Conference Forums

Interested delegations will have the opportunity to organize Conference Forums on 25 May 2026 in advance of the Opening Session of the Conference. The objective of the Forums is to create an additional platform for inclusive discussions on water-related issues among different types of stakeholders or within certain geographic regions. Conference Forums offer an opportunity to involve diverse stakeholders in the implementation of the water agenda with a focus on accelerating implementation and fostering increased collaboration and partnership at the local, national, regional and global levels. The format of the Conference Forums facilitates focused engagement of the private sector, academia, the scientific community, women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, professional groups and other major groups, in a manner consistent with objectives of the Conference.

Topics for these forums should be consistent with the overall goals of the Conference and will be subject to approval by the Secretariat. Already, six preliminary topics have been proposed for the Conference Forums: Private Sector Forum, Africa Water Forum, Indigenous Peoples Forum, Women Water Forum, Youth Water Forum, and Glaciers and the broader Cryosphere Forum.

The terms of reference for the Conference Forums will be prepared by the Conference Secretariat and shared with interested parties in a timely manner. The key messages from the Conference Forums will be presented during the Closing Session. The main conclusions and recommendations will also be reflected in the outcome documents of the 4th Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference.

Side events

The 4th Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference will provide opportunities for interested delegations to organize side events on the margins of the Conference. More information about the organization of side events is forthcoming.

International Exhibition

An International Exhibition will be organized on the sidelines of the Conference. Partners interested in organizing a thematic booth can contact the Conference Secretariat for more information.

Field trips

International participants are invited by the host country to participate in a tour on 28 May 2026 to explore examples of integrated water resources management and water-related sustainable development in Tajikistan and discover the rich culture, history and generous hospitality of the Tajik people.

Participants who plan to arrive before the Conference or stay longer and wish to visit other parts of Tajikistan are invited to contact the Conference Secretariat for more information.

Format and participation modalities

The Conference is multi-stakeholder in nature and will bring together different groups and actors involved in the implementation of water-related goals and targets.

The Conference will gather high-level representatives of the United Nations Member States, UN entities, international and regional organizations, international financial institutions, the private sector, civil society, women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, local governments, academic institutions, the scientific community and other stakeholders/ major groups. To provide an opportunity for the promotion of integrated approaches and partnerships, participation of representatives from different sectors “out of water box” is strongly encouraged.

The 4th Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference will be an in-person event to ensure the highest level of interaction among participants.

Languages

The working languages of the Conference are English and Russian (simultaneous translation will be provided). Translation into other UN official languages will be provided to the possible extent during the Opening and Closing Sessions.

Conference Organizers

The 4th Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference is organized by the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan with the support of the United Nations and other partners. The ultimate responsibility for preparation of the Conference rests with the National Organizing Committee established by the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan under the leadership of the Prime Minister.

International Advisory Committee

The International Advisory Committee (IAC) of the Dushanbe Water Process, composed of the representatives of the partner governments, United Nations institutions, international and regional institutions, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders, will help the National Organizing Committee to facilitate inclusive preparations for the Conference, including the development of a comprehensive programme and outcome documents for the Conference.

International Steering Committee of the Group of Friends of Water in New York

The International Steering Committee (ISC) of the Group of Friends of Water in New York will be engaged in the preparation of the Conference and its outcome documents through its regular meetings, convened by Permanent Missions to the United Nations.

Additional information

More information on the Conference is available on the official website:

<https://conf2026.dushanbewaterprocess.org/>

PRELIMINARY PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

Day 1 – 25 May			
09:00 – 18:00	Asia-Pacific regional preparatory meeting for the 2026 UN Water Conference <i>[Organized by ESCAP]</i>	Conference Forums & side events	
19:00 – 21:00	Cultural Event		
Day 2 – 26 May			
09:00 – 10:30	Opening Session		
10:30 – 11:00	<i>Coffee & Networking Break</i>		
11:00 – 12:30	Plenary Session		
12:30 – 14:00	<i>Lunch Break</i>		
14:00 – 16:00	Segment 1. Bridging actions from the UN 2023 Water Conference to the 2026 UN Water Conference <i>‘Translating commitments into results’</i>		
	TS 1. Water for People	TS 2. Water for Prosperity	TS 3. Water for Planet
16:00 – 16:30	<i>Coffee & Networking Break</i>		
16:30 – 18:30	TS 4. Water for Cooperation	TS 5. Water in Multilateral Processes <i>(including the Dushanbe Water Process)</i>	TS 5. Investments for Water
19:00 – 21:00	<i>Reception hosted by the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan</i>		
Day 3 – 27 May			
09:00 – 10:00	Plenary Session (continuation)		
10:00 – 10:30	<i>Coffee & Networking Break</i>		
10:30 – 12:30	Segment 2. Informal consultation for the UN 2028 Water Conference		
	SP 1. Critical outcomes of the Water Action Decade – The Final Review	SP 2. Interactive Dialogues 2028: Time for a thematic overhaul?	
12:30 – 14:00	<i>Lunch Break</i>		
14:00 – 16:00	Segment 3. Initial brainstorming discussion on ‘Water in the post-2030 Agenda’		
	SP 3. Post-2030: What comes next? Shaping a future pathway for water		
16:00 – 16:30	<i>Coffee & Networking Break</i>		
16:30 – 17:30	Closing Session		
17:30 – 18:00	<i>Press Conference</i>		
Day 4 – 28 May			
09:00 – 18:00	Tours		

International Exhibition