

**Stockholm International Water Institute's
recommendations for the Interactive dialogues' themes
for the UN 2026 Water Conference**

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Within the preparatory process of the **2026 United Nations Water Conference to Accelerate the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation** that will be held in the United Arab Emirates, from 2 to 4 December 2026, there is a provision “to make updated recommendations to the General Assembly on the themes of the interactive dialogues.”

One of the organizational sessions that will address this will be convened on 3 March 2025, from 10:00-13:00 and 15:00-18:00 in the ECOSOC Chamber, UNHQ.

In the General Assembly resolution 78/327 outlining the modalities of the Conference, it was decided that the Conference will consist of plenary sessions and six interactive dialogues that “will build upon the discussions held during the interactive dialogues of the 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” which took place from 22 to 24 March 2023 in New York.

The modalities resolutions also decided that the Conference should (list not exhaustive, cf. the resolution for all the articles):

- Focus on actions to accelerate the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6, while reaffirming the internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- Identify possible challenges and obstacles related to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6), as well as opportunities and innovative ways and means to support its implementation and the acceleration of progress, in order to help to achieve the internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda;
- Exchange views and develop actions and initiatives needed for accelerating progress towards the achievement of SDG 6;
- Support further concrete action and initiatives to enhance means of implementation and partnerships, as well as cooperation at all relevant levels, including international cooperation, to accelerate the achievement of SDG 6, including the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework;
- Share ongoing efforts, best practices and experience gained in the acceleration of the implementation of SDG 6, such as the voluntary commitments of the Water Action Agenda;
- Invite Member States and relevant stakeholders to announce voluntary commitments contributing to the objectives of the Conference;
- 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 to assess challenges and opportunities relating to, as well as support further action to accelerate the implementation of SDG 6 and the water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda;

- Contribute to the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in ensuring safe drinking water and sanitation for all, including through the empowerment of women and girls, as their full, equal and meaningful participation is key to achieving SDG 6;
- Ensure that the six interactive dialogues be collaborative and multi-stakeholder in nature, with due regard for gender and geographical balance;
- Propose that the interactive dialogues, facilitated by the moderator, be followed by an interactive discussion among States and other relevant stakeholders;

With this framework SIWI recommends, for the upcoming discussions on the 3rd of March, that the Interactive dialogues reflect continuity, inclusivity, be action orientated and relevant to other ongoing global processes, facilitate partnerships and enable an integrated systems approach for policy and implementation means.

In terms of continuity SIWI recommends to build on the themes of the previous Interactive dialogues (UN 2023 Water Conference) and that the concept notes being developed include a background report that gives give an overview of the progress made within these Interactive dialogues since the UN 2023 Water Conference. This would facilitate the scoping of priorities needed in the coming 2 years, building up the acquis of the previous Conference and build out for the upcoming one. These concept notes undertaken by the Secretary General of the UN and his office (UNDESA) would benefit from getting inputs from the previous co-chairs of the Interactive dialogues, in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

SIWI´s views on the upcoming Interactive dialogue themes are :

- 1. Water for Health:** In addition to access to WASH, including the Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation, *the ID needs to address infection risks in a changing climate and how integrated water management can help prevent infections and protect human, animal, and environmental health. With water scarcity, pollution, and biodiversity loss, exacerbated by climate change, threatening disease control, this ID should explore solutions for safeguarding public health and ecosystems resilience.*
- 2. Water for Sustainable Development and Just Transitions:** Water-Energy-Food Nexus, Sustainable Economic and Urban Development *with, in addition, a focus on circular economy in cities and industries. Beyond its current focus the ID could consider water´s importance for systemic economic resilience, with focus on the importance of integrating water resilience into macroeconomic planning. This ID could also address the issues and solutions for adopting a just transitions framework.*
- 3. Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment:** Source to Sea, Biodiversity, Climate, Resilience, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR); *Droughts and land degradation*

need to be better highlighted; especially when looking at the synergies and implementation means of the 3 Rio conventions + Ramsar convention.

- 4. Water for Cooperation:** Transboundary and International Water Cooperation, Cross Sectoral Cooperation, including Scientific Cooperation, and Water Across the 2030 Agenda. *With risks and opportunities for resilience across sectors, more clarity is needed on how cooperation over shared waters enhances stability beyond water itself. This ID can provide a platform to coordinate efforts in addressing shared climate-related risks, ultimately strengthening resilience and stability. Under this ID, the UN Water Conference should emphasize water diplomacy as a strategic tool for conflict prevention and for peacebuilding.*

- 5. Water Action Decade:** Accelerating the Implementation of the Objectives of the Decade, including through the UN Secretary-General's Action Plan. *A strong focus on action and implementation is requested for the upcoming 2026 Conference and this ID would benefit by focusing on finding means to operationalize the Water Action Agenda and future commitments. With the 2026 and 2028 Conference already agreed upon, it is important to have a stronger focus on actions and means of implementation for the upcoming Conferences. A link to the implementation of the UN wide strategy for water and sanitation could also be done here; especially with the development of the collaborative implementation plans for UN members, agencies and other non-state actors.*

- 6. The additional 6th ID (tentative name: Enablers to enhance Water Actions)** *needs to focus on the enabling environments that will provide an accelerated and more robust systems change and the implementation of projects in the above ID thematic areas. With this in mind, SIWI recommends that this ID focuses on the Global Accelerating framework (GAF), as its 5 pillars (finance, governance, data and information, innovation, capacity development) can enhance each ID discussion as enablers for their implementation. With a dedicated focus for them in this 6th ID, it would enable to highlight their importance, and gaps, so they can be addressed more specifically. In addition, this 6th ID could also focus on the participation, representation of the knowledge and involvement of under-represented voices and marginalized groups; especially Youth, Women, Indigenous Peoples, First Nations and Local Communities as this could reinforce their importance and presence in all the ID. A dedicated focus on the underrepresented voices in this ID should also not take away their presence and proper integration in the aforementioned ID. This would ensure effective inclusivity and participation in the entire process.*

In addition to the recommendations made in the modalities resolution on the organisation of the ID and their proceedings at the Conference, SIWI would also like to add that:

- Non-governmental representatives need to be included in the development of the Interactive dialogues and have the opportunity to continuously deliver messages from a consultative process with other stakeholders. The process for this can be decided once the ID have been established.
- The conference co-chairs and the broader water community should actively engage stakeholders beyond the water sector in both preparatory meetings and conference sessions. Achieving meaningful outcomes requires breaking out of the ‘water bubble’ and involving key representatives from sectors such as energy, finance, and security.
- Secretariats of river basin organizations (RBOs) and other intergovernmental or hybrid entities managing shared freshwater bodies should be able to register for the conference in their own name, recognizing their vital role in water cooperation and diplomacy.
- Official conference sessions should require gender-balanced participation and representation of young professionals. [World Water Week’s Gold Standard](#) serves as a strong example. Women are disproportionately affected by water scarcity, yet they remain underrepresented in decision-making. Ensuring their inclusion strengthens both equity and the effectiveness of water governance.
- Each interactive dialogue includes key messages of marginalized voices in the final outcome document,
- Opportunities and spaces are made for real discussions to take place in the process, enabling to create new and tangible synergies and a more inclusive and representative multistakeholder process
- Means are allocated to ensure broad participation, focus on virtual formats with a few in-person/hybrid milestones along relevant regional events, the High Level PGA Meeting in NYC and the Senegal 2025 event, World Water Week in Stockholm, Water for Climate Pavilion at COPs
- Ensure that all co-hosts design and facilitate the interactive dialogues, and develop the concept notes, in a way that includes multistakeholder views with a special attention to marginalised views

[SIWI](#) can provide more information and examples on how to move forward on these recommendations. The [World Water Week](#) as the biggest annual gathering of the water community, managed by SIWI, can also facilitate and contribute to this process in terms of multistakeholder engagement and participation in the preparatory process. [The Water for Climate Pavilion](#) platform, coordinated by SIWI at each COP, can also provide this space for the dedicated themes of the Interactive dialogues.