

SIWI Insight Brief

Part of SIWI's 2026 Engagement Series

Event Name	43rd UN-Water Meeting
Location	Rome
Date	24-26 March 2026



The event

The 43rd UN-Water Meeting, followed by a workshop on zero draft concept papers for the six Interactive Dialogues of the 2026 UN Water Conference, took place in Rome from 24–26 March 2026. Convened by UN-Water, the meeting brought together UN agencies, international organizations, NGOs and partners to review progress under the UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation and advance preparations for the 2026 UN Water Conference. A significant part of the discussions focused on shaping the six Interactive Dialogues, including their concept papers and the development of implementation-focused flagship initiatives.

At a glance

This meeting marks an important step in shaping the 2026 UN Water Conference, with early alignment forming around the structure and ambition of the Interactive Dialogues. It also highlights how global water discussions are shifting from broad commitments towards implementation-focused initiatives and cross-sector engagement.

What stood out

Discussions reflected a strong intention to build on the momentum of the 2023 UN Water Conference, while moving towards more concrete, implementation-oriented outcomes. There was broad agreement on the need to engage actors beyond the water community, particularly across finance, climate and development.

Human rights-based approaches were consistently emphasized as a cross-cutting priority across all Interactive Dialogues. At the same time, finance emerged not only as a standalone theme but as a critical enabler across all areas, reinforcing the need to connect water discussions with broader economic and investment agendas.

Key signals

- Growing recognition of the need to address planetary limits and better integrate green water into global water discussions.
- Finance for water is gaining increased attention, particularly the role of private sector actors and new financial mechanisms. Engagement from financial institutions and businesses is expanding.
- Strong emphasis is being placed on developing flagship initiatives under each Interactive Dialogue. However, this process has just started and more clarity will be provided moving forward.
- World Water Week is increasingly seen as a key platform in the lead-up to the 2026 UN Water Conference, with several Interactive Dialogues identifying it as a space to advance discussions and build initiatives.

SIWI perspective

The discussions reinforce the importance of integrating green water and planetary limits into global water governance, alongside strengthening cooperation across shared waters—both core to SIWI's strategic focus. With increasing emphasis on flagship initiatives under each Interactive Dialogue, there is a clear need for platforms that can connect policy, science and implementation

This is where SIWI can play a role. World Water Week and the Water for Climate Pavilion are already being recognized as spaces to advance these discussions and can be used more deliberately to support the development of initiatives and bring together key actors. At the same time, the process for shaping these initiatives remains unclear, pointing to a gap where SIWI can help structure dialogue and move discussions towards more actionable outcomes.

Looking ahead

The next phase will focus on how flagship initiatives under each Interactive Dialogue are defined, financed and carried forward towards the 2026 UN Water Conference. How these processes are structured—and how they engage a broad range of actors—will be critical in determining whether discussions translate into implementation.

World Water Week provides a timely opportunity to advance these discussions, helping to connect ongoing processes, test ideas and build alignment across stakeholders in the lead-up to the Conference. At the same time, evolving geopolitical dynamics and conference preparations will continue to shape the context for engagement in the months ahead.