

SIWI Insight Brief

Part of SIWI's 2026 Engagement Series

Event Name	5th Istanbul International Water Forum
Location	Istanbul, Türkiye
Date	5–6 May 2026



The event

The 5th Istanbul International Water Forum, held under the theme *Strengthening Water Resilience: Innovation to Action*, brought together governments, regional organizations, multilateral institutions, and water experts from across the MENA region, Central Asia, and beyond. SIWI contributed to discussions on *Inclusive Water Dialogues and Partnerships*. The Forum also served as a preparatory moment ahead of the 2026 UN Water Conference, COP31, and the 11th World Water Forum.

At a glance

The Istanbul International Water Forum came at a time when climate pressures, geopolitical tensions, and water insecurity are increasingly intersecting across regions. Discussions reflected growing recognition that water is becoming more closely linked with resilience, regional stability, and wider development agendas.

What stood out

The Forum reflected a clear shift from discussing new commitments towards delivering implementation. Discussions focused strongly on resilience, practical cooperation, and the need to better connect water governance with wider climate and development priorities.

Discussions also reflected growing concern that existing governance and financing structures are struggling to keep pace with increasingly interconnected climate, water, and security risks. Financing challenges remained a major concern, particularly for adaptation and transboundary cooperation.

Key signals

- Growing pressure to demonstrate implementation, not only commitments
- Increasing recognition that water risks are tied to stability and security
- Early warning systems gaining traction as practical resilience tools
- Rising attention on financing cooperation and adaptation, not only infrastructure
- Cross-sector coordination becoming more central to water governance discussions

Implications

The Forum highlighted a widening gap between political ambition and implementation capacity. While commitments and cooperation agendas continue to expand, many discussions pointed to persistent challenges around financing, institutional coordination, and long-term delivery. This reinforces growing pressure on global water processes to focus less on new commitments and more on implementation mechanisms, financing structures, and operational coordination.

SIWI perspective

The Forum reinforced the importance of institutions and platforms that can connect fragmented climate, water, and development agendas. This is an area where SIWI can help strengthen coordination, support implementation-focused dialogue, and connect policy discussions with practical cooperation.

Looking ahead

In the lead-up to the 2026 UN Water Conference, growing pressure will fall on institutions and regional processes to demonstrate tangible progress. Financing constraints, geopolitical fragmentation, and competing global priorities may increasingly shape how far cooperation efforts can move from dialogue to sustained action.