

SIWI Insight Brief

Part of SIWI's 2026 Engagement Series

Event Name	High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) 2026
Location	United Nations Headquarters, New York
Date	7-15 July, 2026



The event

The High-level Political Forum (HLPF) is the United Nations' annual forum for reviewing progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2026, SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) was under in-depth review, making water a central focus of the Forum. SIWI contributed through two side events, the official SDG 6 Review and the UN-Water SDG 6 Special Event.

At a glance

HLPF 2026 highlighted a clear shift in the global water agenda. The challenge is no longer recognizing water's importance, but accelerating implementation through stronger governance and more integrated approaches across climate, biodiversity and development.

What stood out

Across SIWI's engagements at HLPF, a recurring message was that water can help connect climate, biodiversity, land restoration and sustainable development. At the same time, speakers consistently highlighted fragmented governance and financing as barriers to more integrated action. The 2026 UN Water Conference was widely seen as the next opportunity to strengthen coordination and accelerate implementation.

Key signals

- Progress on SDG 6 continues, but the pace remains insufficient to achieve the Goal by 2030.
- Countries are increasingly seeking practical solutions, peer learning and scalable approaches.
- Financing remains a major constraint, with growing emphasis on enabling public and private investment.
- Evidence-informed decision-making is increasingly recognised as essential for effective water governance.
- The 2026 UN Water Conference is widely viewed as the next opportunity to strengthen international coordination.

Implications

The discussions suggest that future progress on SDG 6 will depend less on new commitments and more on strengthening governance, institutional coordination and investment. Water needs to be embedded across climate, biodiversity, land restoration and development policies, supported by science-informed decision-making and stronger partnerships across sectors.

SIWI perspective

HLPF 2026 reinforced SIWI's role at the interface of science, policy and practice. As governments shift their focus towards implementation, SIWI will continue to support this transition by generating and translating knowledge, convening diverse stakeholders, and strengthening the science-policy interface to help turn evidence into action.

Looking ahead

- World Water Week 2026 will provide the next opportunity to strengthen dialogue and partnerships ahead of the 2026 UN Water Conference.
- The 2026 UN Water Conference will be a key moment to advance more integrated approaches across water, climate, biodiversity and land restoration.
- Maintaining political momentum will require continued collaboration between governments, the UN system, science, finance and civil society.