"BUILDING A HOUSE FOR WATER"

Defining results for Abu Dhabi and the path beyond

As Co-Chairs of the Interactive Dialogue "Water in Multilateral Processes", Mexico and Germany's consultations show broad support among UN Member States for stronger coordination and coherence on water. While the UN system - through the System-wide Strategy on Water and Sanitation (SWS) - demonstrates that it can strengthen coordination on water, **Member States still lack a regular mechanism for collective deliberation on global water priorities.** Our consultation process shows a growing recognition of water as a global challenge. Our findings do not seek to establish new binding obligations for member states or interfere with national sovereignty. The way forward should **build on existing UN mechanisms** while filling the one key gap: A regular, structured **forum for Member States to discuss all aspects of water**, define their overall priorities and give coherent political guidance to the UN-System to accelerate delivery on the ground. This would support the UN80 process, making water a blueprint for more coherent, efficient global cooperation.



Our offer is to **start building a "house for water"**. It is not a flagship for Interactive Dialogue E alone, but an open invitation to all Member States and stakeholders to build on the 2023 results. The idea is to provide a **flexible, step-by-step path towards greater coherence in global water governance** with tangible impact on the ground – from 2026 to 2028, and beyond 2030. **The "house for water" should therefore not be understood as creating a parallel architecture, but as an approach to bringing together and strengthening existing elements, while providing space to address remaining gaps.** This needs to include streamlining global high-level meetings on water, reducing duplication across existing processes, and making more effective use of available resources and institutional capacities. All this with the objective that political engagement translates into implementation. At the same time, the approaching end of the 2030 Agenda raises important questions on how progress on water-related goals and targets can be sustained and enhanced beyond 2030. The "house for water" helps Member States to come together on water, build on institutions and processes that exist and work well already.

Building on what we have: Building on existing commitments, institutions and processes should serve as the foundation of the "house for water", always with the aim of accelerating impact on the ground. This means building on the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, relevant monitoring mechanisms such as the Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG 6 (IMI-SDG6), the Rio Conventions, the UN Water Convention, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and other relevant UN conventions and frameworks. We are not starting from scratch, but seeking to better connect and leverage what already exists to accelerate progress on water and sustainable development in line with UN80.

Constructing the "roof": We recommend establishing a **lean, but systematic and regular intergovernmental process on water** to enable continuous dialogue among Member States, enhance coordination and sustain political momentum for water beyond 2030. The process would be **UN-mandated and follow a predictable timeframe**, with **UN Water Conferences every three years** providing recurring opportunities for Member States to take stock of progress, reaffirm commitments, provide political guidance on water to the UN and the multilateral system and strengthen implementation. The costs relating to the conferences and their preparation would be financed through voluntary contributions.

Construction of the corner pillars: The intergovernmental process could rest on two complementary corner pillars: 1) **Negotiated political guidance documents**, through which Member States set the overarching priorities and give guidance to the UN system for action on water, and 2) **a strengthened UN system-wide delivery**, with a continued and enhanced implementation of the UN SWS on all levels and possibly a strengthened UN-Water as the "enabler of joint delivery" across the UN system to provide coherent, effective and demand-driven support on water and sanitation. The outcomes would be **focused on the global level**. They would **not seek to establish new legally binding obligations**, norms or standards, nor would they interfere with national sovereignty or the mandates and decision-making authority of existing UN governing bodies. Their purpose would instead be to provide a **common political guidance** for voluntary cooperation and targeted commitments, for concise input on water into other multilateral processes, and for action by the UN system and other relevant actors within their respective mandates.

Building on all Interactive Dialogues: In addition, the "house" would be further supported by different **pillars**. These could be built up step by step and **stem from the other Interactive Dialogues**, including inter alia, (1) effective linkages of water to other multilateral processes, (2) improved coordination for financing, (3) well-structured, meaningful stakeholder participation and (4) improved monitoring, follow-up and review as basis for accelerated action and priority setting.

It is important to acknowledge that **not all pillars will be set up in 2026**. Building a house for water will necessarily extend beyond the 2026 and 2028 UN Water Conferences. With room for additional pillars and/or building blocks, **the house is an invitation to work together:** to the 2026 Co-Hosts and Co-Chairs, all Member States, and, notably, also to the 2028 UN Water Conference offering another milestone to convene, take decisions and ensure continuity.

Anchoring the Conference Outcomes through a Follow-up Resolution: Strong commitment from Member States will be essential to carry the outcomes of the 2026 Conference forward and sustain political momentum for water beyond 2030. Outcomes should be captured in a **timely follow-up resolution**, to be tabled by the Co-Hosts Senegal and the United Arab Emirates. The follow-up resolution will be a critical legacy not only for the Co-Hosts and Co-Chairs, but all Member States prioritizing progress on water. It should capture key points that the Co-Chairs seek to carry into 2028 and beyond.

Annex: Elements of a follow-up resolution

To jointly lay the groundwork for the “House for Water”, a follow-up resolution should include the following core elements:

- ⇨ **Mandate a high-level intergovernmental process** for policy dialogue, coordination, cooperation and advancement on water-related priorities, without prejudice to existing mandates;
- ⇨ **Recommend convening regular UN Water Conferences every three years**, starting in 2031, resulting in **negotiated political guidance documents** and funded through voluntary contributions;
- ⇨ **Mandate a sequence of UN Water Conferences for 2031, 2034, 2037 and 2040**;
- ⇨ Ensure continuity from the 2026 and 2028 UN Water Conferences by building on the six interactive dialogues as adopted in A/79/L.101 and by building on continued, meaningful stakeholder engagement.
- ⇨ **Promote the mainstreaming of water** across multilateral processes, in particular the Rio Conventions, and foster coherence and synergies across the UN system by integrating water-related goals and targets into relevant discussions and outcomes;
- ⇨ **Requesting the UN Secretary-General to review the current setup of UN-Water** in light of lessons learned from the 2026 UNWC process, with a view to presenting recommendations on strengthening its status and coordinating role, without prejudice to its existing mandate or financial requirements.
- ⇨ **Member States’ endorsement of a continued and enhanced implementation of the UN System-Wide Strategy** for Water and Sanitation by calling upon UN entities to incorporate the Strategy into their respective frameworks, strategies and work programmes, in line with their established mandates, procedures and processes.