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**NOTE**

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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Outcome of the UN 2023 Water Conference (New York, 22 – 24 March 2023) - Information from the Presidency and the Commission

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Delegations will find in the Annex an information note from the Presidency and the Commission on the above subject, to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council (Environment) meeting on 20 June 2023.

**Outcome of the UN 2023 Water Conference (New York, 22 – 24 March 2023)**

**- Information from the Presidency and the Commission**

**Overview**

1. **The UN 2023 Water Conference** – formally the ‘2023 Conference for the Midterm Comprehensive Review of Implementation of the UN Decade for Action on Water and Sanitation (2018-2028)’ – **took place at UN Headquarters in New York, 22-24 March 2023**, co-hosted by Tajikistan and the Netherlands. The Conference brought together world leaders, civil society, business leaders, young people, scientists, academics, the UN System and others from across sectors (agriculture, energy, environment and water) around a common goal **to urgently tackle the global water crisis and set the world back on track to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6 – On Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG6)**. Around 10,000 participants gathered at UN Headquarters and online.
2. The Conference included an opening and closing session, six plenary sessions, and five interactive dialogues<sup>1</sup>, each co-chaired by one developing and one developed country, as well as around 500 side events<sup>2</sup> organized by participants. The EU and its Member States engaged at high level and on the basis of agreed priorities through European Commission Vice-President Šuica<sup>3</sup> and many EU Member States’ Heads of State, Ministers and State Secretaries, as well as the EU Special Representative for Central Asia Hakala. President von der Leyen’s Video Message shared at different events underlined commitment from the top.

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<sup>1</sup> ID1 [Water for Health](#), ID2 [Water for Sustainable Development](#), ID3 [Water for Climate, Resilience, and Environment](#), ID4 [Water for Cooperation](#), and ID5 [Water Action Decade](#)

<sup>2</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/conferences/water2023/events/side>

<sup>3</sup> [EU Statement at UN Water Conference | EEAS \(europa.eu\)](#)

3. Very welcome from an EU’s perspective was **the broad global consensus on issues identified as EU and Member States priorities** such as Integrated Water Resources Management, the need for an integrated approach to the water/energy/food/ecosystems nexus, the human right to clean and safe drinking water and sanitation, and transboundary cooperation on the basis of the UNECE Water Convention.
4. Together with the Minister of Water Resources of China, the EU co-chaired **Interactive dialogue 2 on “Water for Sustainable Development”** and the EU, on behalf of both co-chairs, **delivered a joint statement on their conclusions**, highlighting the importance of integrated water resources management across sectors, circular economy and water efficiency, nature-based solution and the links with the Global Biodiversity Framework, water pricing with proper social safeguards, sustainable finance and the need for redirection of harmful subsidies.
5. **The EU also hosted various events**, including one **on the benefits of the circular economy for water resilience**, together with South Africa, Peru, Water Europe and UNEP, one on the importance of young water and sanitation professionals, together with the BMZ and UN-Habitat/GWOPA, as well as **the launch of a new Team Europe Initiative** mobilizing over € 400 million to support regional integration and cooperation through transboundary water management in Africa. Furthermore, the EU signed a € 4.4 million contract with UNICEF to support the access to water and sanitation as a human right and announced a € 5 million support to UN-Water to strengthen multilateralism and coordination on water with the UN at its core.

## **Outcome**

6. One key outcome of the Conference – **the Water Action Agenda (WAA)** – was endorsed at the closing session. The WAA aims to turn the political momentum created by the Conference into tangible and ambitious action to address global water challenges. As part of the WAA, **over 800 commitments** were tabled by the UN Member States and stakeholders, aimed at the achievement of SDG6 and driving transformation from a global water crisis to a water-secure world. **The EU has submitted 33 commitments**, based on the strong water acquis, solid water management experience, research and innovation, including the commitment to support the access of 70 million individuals to an improved drinking water source and/or sanitation. Furthermore, **the EU committed over €1 billion to water management**, working with countries in Africa and Central Asia to support livelihoods, energy, food, and peace with the Global Gateway.
7. In their closing speeches, the President of the General Assembly (PGA) and the UN Secretary-General expressed their commitment to take follow up steps including the consideration of the appointment of a Special Envoy for Water, supported by a reformed and strengthened UN Water – a long-standing EU priority backed by more than 150 countries. Further initiatives to be taken forward include **Early Warnings for All, a Global Water Education Network and a Global Water Information System**.
8. The modalities resolution for the Conference did not mandate a negotiated outcome, however, the President of the General Assembly prepared a **summary of the Conference proceedings**.

## **Follow-up**

9. **The long-term impact of the Conference will now depend on the follow up actions**. In this context, the EU is determined to ensure that the Conference is not a one-off event, and its outcomes will be implemented and carried forward. In this respect, continued EU coordination is key.

10. From the EU perspective, **a key priority is to appoint the UN Special Envoy for Water as soon as possible, and no later than the SDG Summit in September 2023**. Such an Envoy should be based in New York, and work closely with a strengthened UN-Water as well as UN-DESA, to ensure that water remains a topic high on the political agenda also beyond the Conference and in line with its cross-cutting nature.
  
  11. **The Conference outcomes will also receive concrete follow-up in four key upcoming Summits and events:** the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on sustainable development in July 2023 which reviews, among others, SDG 6 on water, the SDG Summit during the UN General Assembly in September 2023, the Summit of the Future in 2024, the World Social Summit in 2025, and through the annual Conferences of Parties on climate change and biodiversity, and other United Nations processes, as well as the Dushanbe Water Process. Discussions on a possible follow-up through UNGA and UNEA resolutions are ongoing.
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