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From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: List of voluntary commitments for the Water Action Agenda to be presented by the European Union for the UN 2023 Water Conference (New York, 22-24 March 2023)

Delegations will find in the Annex the List of voluntary commitments for the Water Action Agenda to be presented by the European Union for the UN 2023 Water Conference (New York, 22-24 March 2023), as approved by the Council “EPSCO” in its meeting of 13-14 March 2023.

List of voluntary commitments for the Water Action Agenda to be presented by the European Union for the UN 2023 Water Conference
(New York, 22-24 March 2023)

Water as a human right, water for health

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| 1. | By 2030, the EU targets to support the access of 70 million individuals to an improved drinking water source and/or sanitation facility and commits to develop its work to mobilize the private sector with innovative financing under the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD+), to further increase its reach. |
| 2. | By 2030 and based on measures to be taken at Member State level, the EU aims to improve the access of all EU residents to safe drinking water, in particular for vulnerable and marginalised groups, including by identifying people with limited access to water, taking measures to facilitate their access to the distribution network or alternative means; and enhancing the availability of safe tap water for free or at low costs in public spaces. |
| 3. | By 2030, by virtue of a risk-based approach being established across its whole drinking water supply chain and updated quality standards, the EU commits to secure safe drinking water from the tap and safe products to be used in contact with drinking water across its territory. |
| 4. | The EU aims to improve the access of all EU residents to WASH (water and sanitation) facilities, in particular in addressing the needs of those in the most vulnerable situations. |
| 5. | <p>The EU aims to support improving wastewater surveillance and monitoring systems for relevant key public health parameters and antimicrobial resistance and to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - coordinating the authorities' network (at national and international level) and the development of a dashboard for exchanging of relevant information; - supporting EU Member States with €20 million funding to accelerate the deployment of wastewater surveillance for COVID-19, including the establishment of national systems, local collection points, and digital infrastructure for monitoring of SARS-CoV-2, with additional €3 million to neighbouring countries; - providing direct grants of €15 million to EU Member States' authorities under the EU4Health Programme for 2023 to enhance, extend and consolidate wastewater surveillance for public health, supporting activities, to enhance and/or improve national public health wastewater surveillance capacities by strengthening knowledge exchange and sharing best practices, and also further facilitating the integration and complementarity of wastewater surveillance with other surveillance systems to strengthen preparedness and response to cross border health threats. |

Water for peace and security: strengthening water governance, cooperation and protection during armed conflict

6. The EU commits to improve transboundary cooperation across water basins, including aquifers, to strengthen regional integration, and make water a key driver for sustainable development, green transition, and peace through:
 - committing over €380 million under NDICI-Global Europe, contributing to Global Gateway on transboundary water management actions, working with countries, basin organisations and regional bodies. Together with its Member States and EIB, Team Europe has launched two new flagship initiatives on transboundary water management in Africa and Central Asia. Together, Team Europe is making over €1.1 billion available for transboundary water cooperation working on improved governance, knowledge, and investments with at least 47 countries, in 18 major transboundary water basins;
 - addressing the water-security link, including with regard to transboundary cooperation on water management, in the context of the ongoing EU-United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) partnership on climate and environmental security. The recently launched second phase will engage over the coming 4 years on key issues related to climate change and environmental degradation and their effects on peace and security in regions such as the Horn of Africa, the Sahel and the Middle East and North Africa;
 - active promotion of further accessions to, and compliance with, the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (the Water Convention), which is open for accession to all UN Member States;
 - advocacy on transboundary water cooperation through engagement in the Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition.
7. In the context of its support to multilateralism on water with the UN at its core, the EU will support in particular:
 - UN Water's engagement at global and country level to overcome fragmentation of the water sector;
 - the global SDG 6 monitoring framework;
 - international, regional and country level advocacy on the right to water and sanitation;
 - the work of a possible future UN Special Envoy on water;and will further politically engage in support of the development of a UN system-wide approach and the effective implementation of the Water Action Agenda as well as the organization of regular UN conferences on water, in order to ensure regular high-level multi-stakeholder and intergovernmental dialogue on water.
8. The EU commits to advocacy activities on Humanitarian WASH and International humanitarian law under the work programme of the 2023 European Humanitarian Forum.
9. The EU commits to support the link between International humanitarian law (IHL) and humanitarian WASH aid through the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) Advocacy Plans, especially in regions where civilian water infrastructure is increasingly under attack (such as Sahel region, Ukraine).

Strengthening the policy and regulatory framework and cross-sectoral coordination (pollution, climate, biodiversity, circular economy)

Zero pollution

10.	By 2030, the EU aims to improving EU water quality by 50% reduction of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- the emissions into the environment of nutrients coming from agriculture;- the use and risk of chemical pesticides;- the use of more hazardous pesticides; and- antimicrobials sales for farmed animals and in aquaculture.
11.	The EU commits to improve water quality protection by regularly reviewing current levels of protection, and proposing, where needed: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Additional substances on the list of substances to be monitored in surface and ground waters;- To reduce or phase-out emissions where such pollutants are found at levels harming human health or the environment.
12.	By 2030, the EU aims to reduce by 50% its plastic litter at sea and by 30 % its microplastics released into the environment through the implementation of measures included in the EU law on waste, plastics and chemicals.
13.	The EU aims to further reduce the risks of pollution emitted to the environment and flooding through the further removal of pollutant loads from urban sources, including from wastewater collecting systems and storm water overflows.
14.	The EU commits to support addressing land-based sources of pollution in partnership with the relevant Regional Seas Conventions including by interregional action to reduce source-to-sea pollution in the Mediterranean as a part of the Marine Litter Med II project until end of 2023 – in partnership with UNEP/Mediterranean Action Plan.
15.	The EU commits to work with UNEP until 2026 on developing a practical toolkit to set the baselines, objectives and targets for their future action to assess how much plastic waste is generated in specific river basins and how much of that enters the river/wastewater systems as a basis for the development of regulatory frameworks, deployment of appropriate technologies, waste recycle system, and institutional and human capacity.

Climate adaptation and mitigation and disaster risk reduction

16.	The EU aims to promoting cross-border cooperation between EU Member States and neighbouring countries in climate adaptation, addressing notably the increasing risk of extreme events, such as droughts and floods, and commits to continue improving the integration of water into the EU's external action and finance in the field of climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as through the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.
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17.	The EU aims to support improving drought risk management, preparedness, and response, and to support monitoring and management of global freshwater resources through an exchange of experience on drought risk management in the EU, capacity building and dialogue through the European and Global Drought Observatories of the Copernicus Emergency Management Service.
18.	The EU commits to support improving flood risk management and in particular preparedness and response at the global level and to support monitoring and management of global freshwater resources through an exchange of experience on flood risk management in the EU (e.g. Flood risk management plans (FRMPs), European Flood Awareness System (EFAS)) and through the Global Flood Awareness System (GloFAS) of the Copernicus Emergency Management Service.
19.	The EU aims to ensure climate-resilient, sustainable use and integrated management of water resources, across sectors and borders in the EU by improving coordination of thematic plans and other mechanisms, such as water resource allocation and water-permits.
20.	The EU aims at reducing energy needs of urban waste water treatment plants in the EU as a contribution to the EU overall target of 30% emissions cut in non-ETS sectors by 2030, use of wastewater (sewage) sludge, when appropriate, with recovery of nutrients, and promoting the reuse of treated wastewater.
21.	By 2030 and based on assessments to be carried out at EU Member State level, the EU commits to improving the efficiency of its whole water supply infrastructure by reducing leakages and increasing the water user awareness on the efficiency and effectiveness of their water suppliers.

Restoring biodiversity

22.	By 2030, the EU aims to significantly increase the rate of restoration of rivers in line with the objectives of the Water Framework Directive, and as a part of a comprehensive strategy for restoring ecosystems in need.
23.	The EU commits to work with UNEP until 2026 on a replicable and scalable comprehensive management approach that revalues, restores and reconnects watersheds, including rivers, lakes, wetlands and other surface and groundwater ecosystems.

Circular economy and resource efficiency

24.	The EU aims to contribute to the reduction of water use by setting water-saving requirements for products where appropriate, encouraging water efficiency and savings, and by promoting the wider use of drought management plans, as well as sustainable soil management and land-use.
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25. The EU commits to ensure that the EU Common Agriculture Policy contributes to efficient management of natural resources such as soil and water by supporting sustainable soil management, and sustainable water use in line with the objectives of the WFD of reaching good status of water bodies by 2027, subject to potential and justified exemptions:
- investments in more efficient irrigation installations or infrastructure and decision support systems;
 - investments in the use of rainwater and in the use of reclaimed water in accordance with the Water Reuse Regulation, thus contributing to address water scarcity by relieving the pressure on water resources;
 - optimisation of external inputs (pesticides and fertilisers);
 - fostering the uptake of practices to increase water retention in the soil and at landscape scale and to reduce crop water requirements.
26. As of June 2023, the EU commits to apply the standards for safe water reuse for agricultural irrigation wherever relevant across its territory and to share knowledge and experience at the global level, in particular on the sound management of possible risks to health and environment.

Mobilising and ensuring the sustainability of finance

27. The EU commits to actions contributing to leave no one behind by mobilizing water-related finance, as follows:
- Under Cohesion Policy 2021-2027: €12 billion for sustainable water management in the EU, resulting amongst others in 45,500 km of new or upgraded pipes for the distribution systems of public water supply; 37,000 km new or upgraded pipes for the public network for collection of wastewater; new or upgraded capacity for waste water treatment for a population equivalent of 13 million; 16 million additional persons connected to improved public water supply; 8 million additional persons connected to at least secondary public waste water treatment;
 - Under the Recovery and Resilience Facility: €12 billion on reforms and investments with focus on water management and resource conservation in the EU until 31 December 2026. Application of the “Do No Significant Harm” principle;
 - Support to the Western Balkans and Turkey to approximate further with EU’s legislation, policies and strategies on water and reducing pollution, including investments in water infrastructure;
 - Support to partner countries of the European Eastern Neighbourhood to improve their pollution legislation and regulation for a toxic-free environment for all citizens, improving access and modernising water services and governance, and on climate adaptation. Investments facilitated together with international financial institutions, mainly with European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and EIB;
 - Support to the European Southern Neighbourhood to address water management, for efficient use of water, sanitation and waste water reuse, depollution, particularly plastic pollution, and climate adaptation.
 - Team Europe Initiatives on water with Southern partners (in Jordan, Palestine, Tunisia and Egypt). [relevant amounts TBC]

28.	The EU commits to working on securing the necessary funding for water and water-positive investment flows through a variety of economic mechanisms, including appropriate pricing of all water uses, which will not compromise the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, especially to those living in conditions of poverty and vulnerability.
29.	The EU commits to continuing its work on the sustainable finance framework, mainly on the Taxonomy Regulation and the relevant Taxonomy Delegated Acts which may include the development of technical screening criteria for activities which contribute to the sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources, while not harming other climate or environmental objectives increasing transparency through the application of the requirements under the Taxonomy Disclosures Delegated Act. This work also includes transparency requirements under the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive and the Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation.

Enhancing research and innovation

30.	<p>The EU commits to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - promote scientific and technical actions to generate information (particularly on water allocation and groundwater) and knowledge to strengthen and facilitate policy dialogues across sectors (water, energy, food security, ecosystems) for a more integrated and sustainable use of natural resources; - generate development scenarios of water resources in order to strengthen and facilitate policy dialogue at multi-sectoral level; - stimulate dialogues and the exchange of knowledge, information and data between different multi-sectoral scientific, technical and professional networks (strengthen the science-policy-private sector interface); - assess and map water-related risks in terms of quality (chemical but also biological), as well as water-borne diseases, and human capacity development at technical and management level.
31.	<p>The EU commits to support water related research, including international R&I cooperation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Horizon Europe Cluster 6 (Food, Bioeconomy, Natural resources, Agriculture and Environment) Work Programme 2023-24): €133 million; European Partnership Water Security for the Planet: overall EU and EU Member States commitments €400-500 million from 2021-2027; - Partnership for R&I in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) (water availability for agriculture) 2018-2024: €494 million.
32.	The EU commits to protect and restore marine and freshwater ecosystems and biodiversity as well as to prevent and eliminate pollution of the oceans, seas and waters, through research and innovation, citizen engagement and blue investments. It has allocated around €350 million in seed funding for the period 2021-2023 for the Horizon Europe Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters”, including €43 million in 2023 on protection and restoration of European natural lake ecosystems and biodiversity, landscape water retention capacity, and addressing nutrient pollution in the source-to-sea system in the Mediterranean sea-basin, under the joint umbrella of the EU Missions “Restore our Ocean and Waters”, “Adaptation to climate change” and the “Soil Deal for Europe”.

33. The European Union commits to enlarge the community under the Charter of its Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030“, an inclusive, non-binding and inspirational framework created to enhance cooperation and mobilise resources to tackle the poor health of all waters. The EU will support the Mission community of Member States, Associated Countries, relevant third countries, regional and local authorities, representatives of sea and river basins, intergovernmental organisations, as well as academia, industry representatives, investors, and the civil society via outreach activities and access to services, tools and knowledge that the Mission Ocean and Waters will deploy.
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