

# UN 2023 Water Conference Outcomes

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Uniting the world for water

22-24 March 2023, UN Headquarters, New York

Co-hosted by the Republic of Tajikistan and the Kingdom of the Netherlands

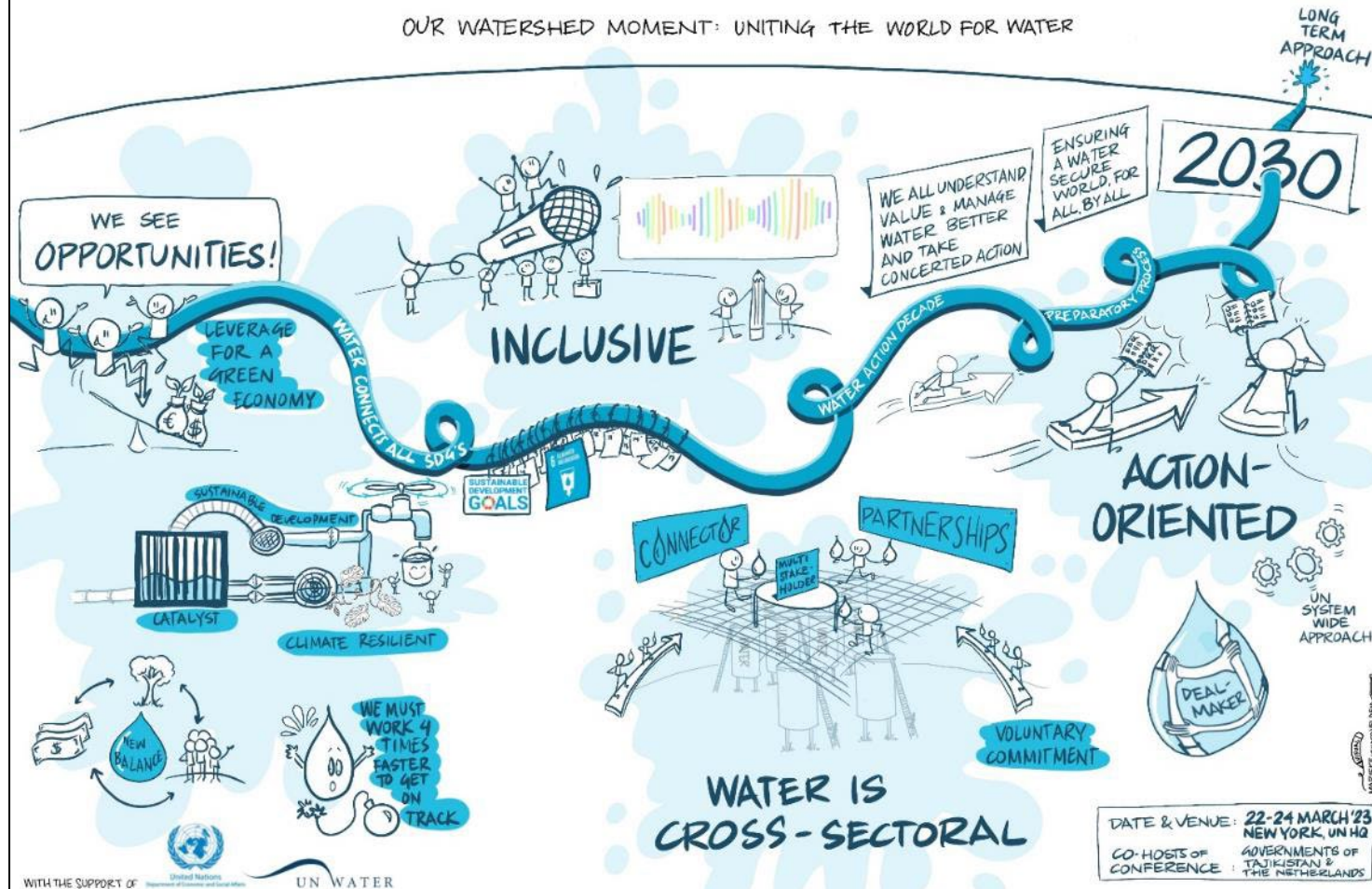




# UN 2023 Water Conference

## VISION STATEMENT UN 2023 WATER CONFERENCE

OUR WATERSHED MOMENT: UNITING THE WORLD FOR WATER

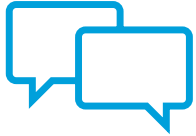


- **Objective: Midterm review of the Water Action Decade**
- **10,000 participants from over 160 countries including 120 Ministers**
- **Outcome: 829 voluntary commitments for the Water Action Agenda**

# Official Programme



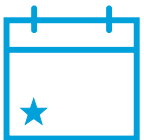
- **Six plenary meetings** which offer Member States a platform to announce commitments, plans, actions, and best practices



- **Five interactive dialogues** held in parallel with the plenary meetings



- **Opening and closing ceremonies**



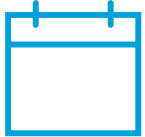
- **Side events, Special events and Exhibits**



Opening Ceremony

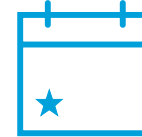
# Side Events and Special Events

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## Side Events

- Open call for events received 1,300 applications.
- 200 side events took place on site at UN Headquarters, 180 off-site anywhere in New York, and 160 virtually.



## Special Events

- Four special events were organized by major groups on-site at UN Headquarters.

# Five Themes of Interactive Dialogues

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- 1. Water for Health:** Access to WASH, including the Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation (SDG 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 and SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 17)
- 2. Water for Sustainable Development:** Valuing Water, Water-Energy-Food Nexus and Sustainable Economic and Urban Development (SDG 6.3, 6.4, 6.5 and SDGs 2, 8, 9, 11, 12)
- 3. Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment:** Source to Sea, Biodiversity, Climate, Resilience and DRR (SDGs 6.5, 6.6, 7, 11.5, 13, 14, 15)
- 4. Water for Cooperation:** Transboundary and International Water Cooperation, Cross Sectoral Cooperation, including Scientific Cooperation, and Water Across the 2030 Agenda (SDG 6.5, 6.b and SDGs 16, 17)
- 5. Water Action Decade:** Accelerating the implementation of the objectives of the Decade, including through the UN Secretary-General's Action Plan



# SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework



# 1. Water for Health (Chair: Dominican Republic, UK)

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- Fulfillment of the **human rights to water and sanitation** is needed, highlighting the links to gender, education and the need to vulnerable populations.
- **Government's leadership and willingness to drive change** are key. **Political will** is essential to accelerate transformative change. Development partners are ready to collaborate with other stakeholders and work across sectors.
- **Funding and financing** from the public sector, private sector and donors must increase dramatically. Governments must develop policy to guide funding and financing and make best use of the fund.
- Governments and development partners see the need to create a capable and motivated **WASH (water and sanitation) sector workforce**, investing in people and institutions.
- **Data and evidence** are key to progress, must reflect the voices of all people, including the marginalized, drive decision making, and reinforce accountability.

## 2. Water for Sustainable Development (China, EU)

- **International cooperation and partnerships** are essential for supporting countries affected by water scarcity.
- **Integrated Water Resources Management** needs to be strengthened to address the whole hydrological cycle, and achieve SDG 6 by 2030. This requires **integrated planning and policy making across sectors** with the necessary governance structures.
- **Resource efficiency and reuse** should become the norm for all economic sectors, such as improving agricultural water use efficiency, addressing sources of pollution, reducing industrial wastewater emissions, and stopping water leakage and loss in urban areas.
- Investments must be mobilized in **water-smart technology and water-risk resilient infrastructures**, backed by a sustainable finance policy and water pricing mechanisms. We should also redirect any existing harmful subsidies.
- The increasing water needs for sustainable urban development must be addressed by implementing **integrated urban and territorial planning** with nature-based solutions.



# 3. Water for Climate, Resilience & Environment (Egypt, Japan)

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- Natural disasters, population growth, and climate change, among others, put a lot of pressure on the **security of water, food, energy and ecology**.
- Exacerbated by climate change, the water crisis in quantity and quality is the most pressing global challenge. The **impact of climate change is felt through water**. COP28 is expected to feature adaptation and resilience and **put water in the COP process**.
- Countries need to develop and upgrade resilient water infrastructure to prepare for extreme situations by enhancing their multiple functions. **Nature based solutions and green-grey infrastructure** can bring co-benefits for climate, biodiversity and DRR.
- **Early warning and early actions** are key for a resilient society. Many participants supported the UN Secretary-General's call for early warning for all by 2027.
- A **“source to sea” approach** is vital to interlinkage between SDG 6 and SDG 14. UN Ocean Conferences will strengthen collaboration between the ocean and water sectors.

# 4. Water for Cooperation (Senegal, Switzerland)

- **Water acts as a driver of peace**, sustainable development, climate action and regional integration. Even during severe drought, surface and ground waters cooperate. Countries also find mutually beneficial solutions based on international water law.
- **Legal and institutional arrangements** need to be established or enhanced to deal with growing competition over shared resources and to prevent conflict.
- River, lake and aquifer basin organizations are veritable agents for peace and need to be set up. It is crucial to **strengthen basin organizations** by promoting information exchange, experiences, and best practices.
- The **two global UN Water Conventions** are essential tools for cooperation. Recent and upcoming accessions to the Conventions demonstrate political will to cooperate.
- The value of international and transboundary water cooperation for peace and security was highlighted, including **strengthening compliance with international law**, protecting the environment in conflicts, and addressing the impacts of wars on water resources.

## 5. Water Action Decade (Singapore, USA)

- A **Special Envoy on Water** should be named by the UN Secretary-General. Strengthening of the UN System, including UN-Water, can better address water issues across the UN.
- To achieve SDG 6 and implement the Water Action Agenda, participants urged the UN Secretary-General to develop an action plan to **place water at the center of the SDGs**.
- A **Member States' Task Force** was also proposed, guided by the Special Envoy, to carry forward the outcomes of the Water Conference and the Water Action Decade.
- Transformation, not just acceleration, is necessary. **Cultural change is also required**. We must learn from past mistakes to promote sustainable water management and **provide co-benefits for society, environment and economy**.
- The next UN Water Conference is expected to be convened before 2028 to **keep the momentum of water-related actions** and foster accountability for progress.

# Gamechangers Proposed by PGA 1/2

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- **Integrated water and climate policy** at national and global levels by 2030.
- **Operational Global Water Information System** to support water, climate and land management for socioeconomic resilience, ecological sustainability and social inclusion by 2030.
- **Early Warnings for All** to help safeguard lives and property by 2027.
- **Overcoming the dependence on ever-rising water consumption** for providing nutrition and power – as fast as possible.
- Re-defined financial principles to **make our economies water-, climate-, land-, and ecosystems-smart** and people centric.



# Gamechangers Proposed by PGA 2/2

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- **Global Water Education Network** to build the capacity of institutions and people, especially to support developing countries.
- **Inclusive, comprehensive transboundary agreements** to support countries, on the basis of the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), and the 1997 Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (Watercourses Convention).
- Institutional architecture to support transformation: a **board of UN agencies** under the leadership of the UN Secretary-General, managed by a UN Special Envoy for Water, supported by a reformed UN-Water coordinating body and an **independent scientific and advisory panel**, in addition to the arrangement for discussing water policy at the United Nations in New York to be developed by the General Assembly.
- **Intergovernmental processes on water** to be convened on a regular basis.

# Water Action Agenda

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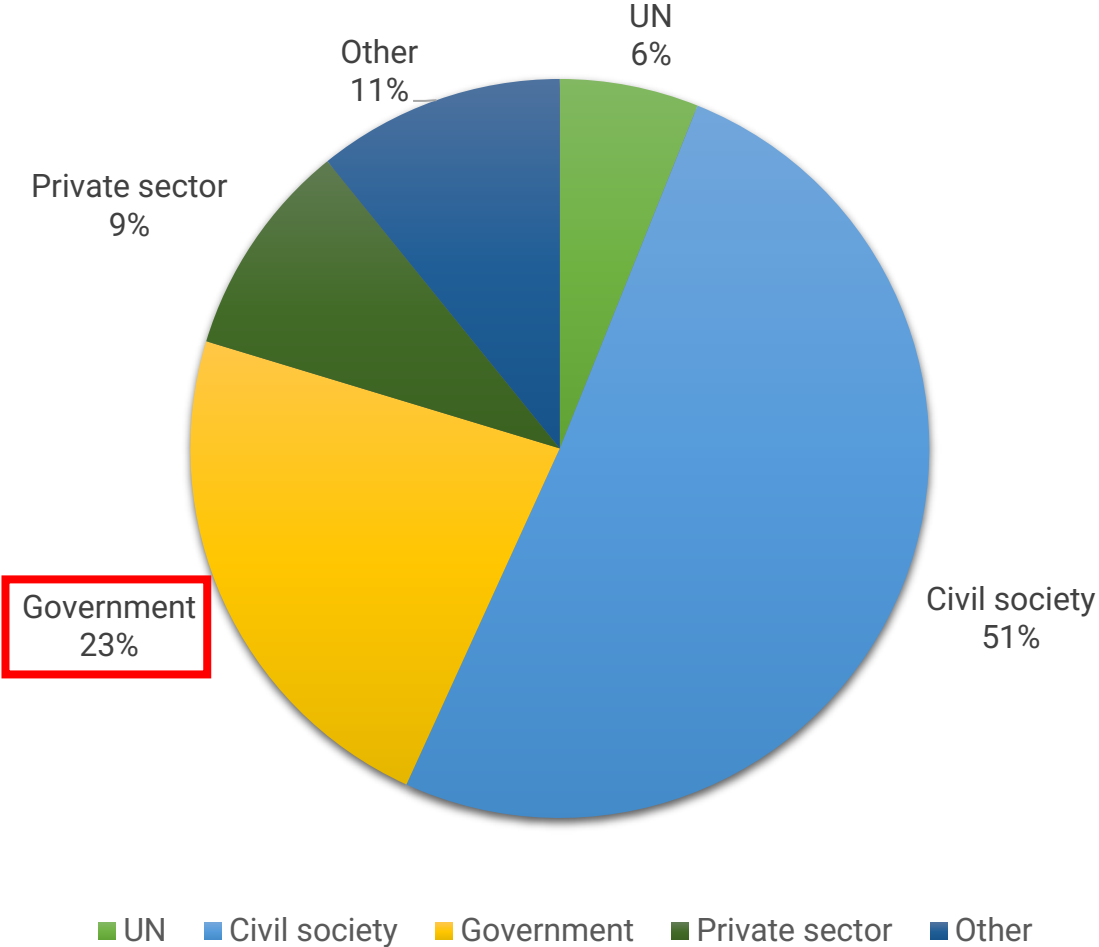
## Objectives:

1. Mobilize **voluntary commitments** (830 commitments so far)
2. Scaling up their **implementation in countries and across sectors**
3. **Follow-up & review** to learn lessons, measure progress, and encourage new commitments

# Examples of Voluntary Commitments

- With the **Continental Africa Investment Programme (AIP)**, the African Union Commission aims to **close Africa's water investments gap** by mobilizing at least US\$30 billion/year by 2030 through a range of initiatives, including the International High-Level Panel on Water Investments for Africa.
- The Niger Basin Authority (NBA) and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV) made a joint commitment of \$21.2 million in funding for a project that **strengthens the Niger Basin Authority (NBA)** and its member countries.
- Starbucks, Ecolab, Gap Inc., Reckitt and DuPont joined forces with U.S. Government to invest nearly \$140 million in **Water Access Fund** with the goal of reaching **5 million people with access to water, sanitation and hygiene**.

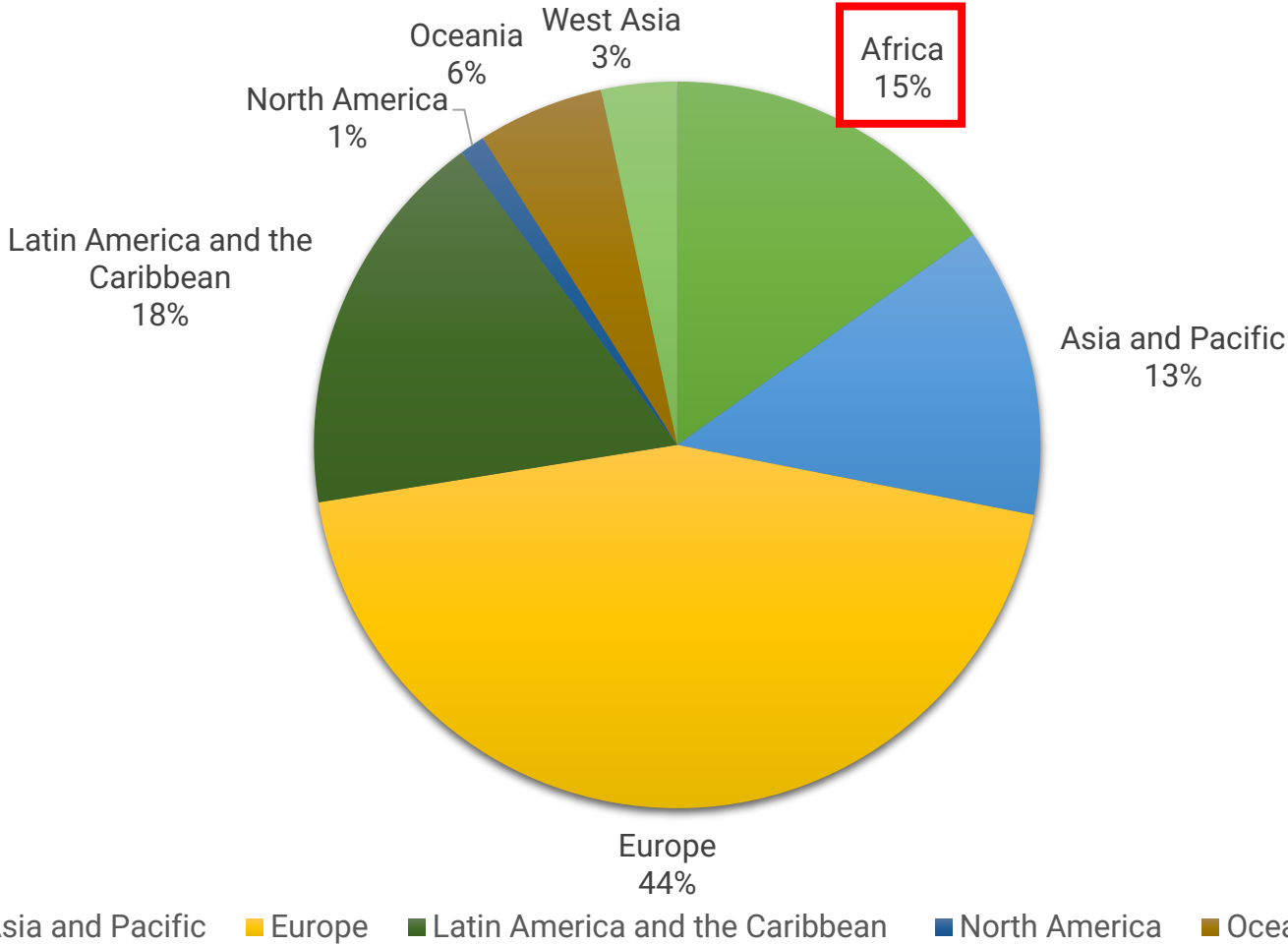
# Commitments by Entity



Note:  
'Civil society' includes: NGOs, CSOs, Academic, Scientific community and IGOs.  
'Other' includes: Partnerships, Philanthropic, Local government, Other



# Governmental Commitments by Region

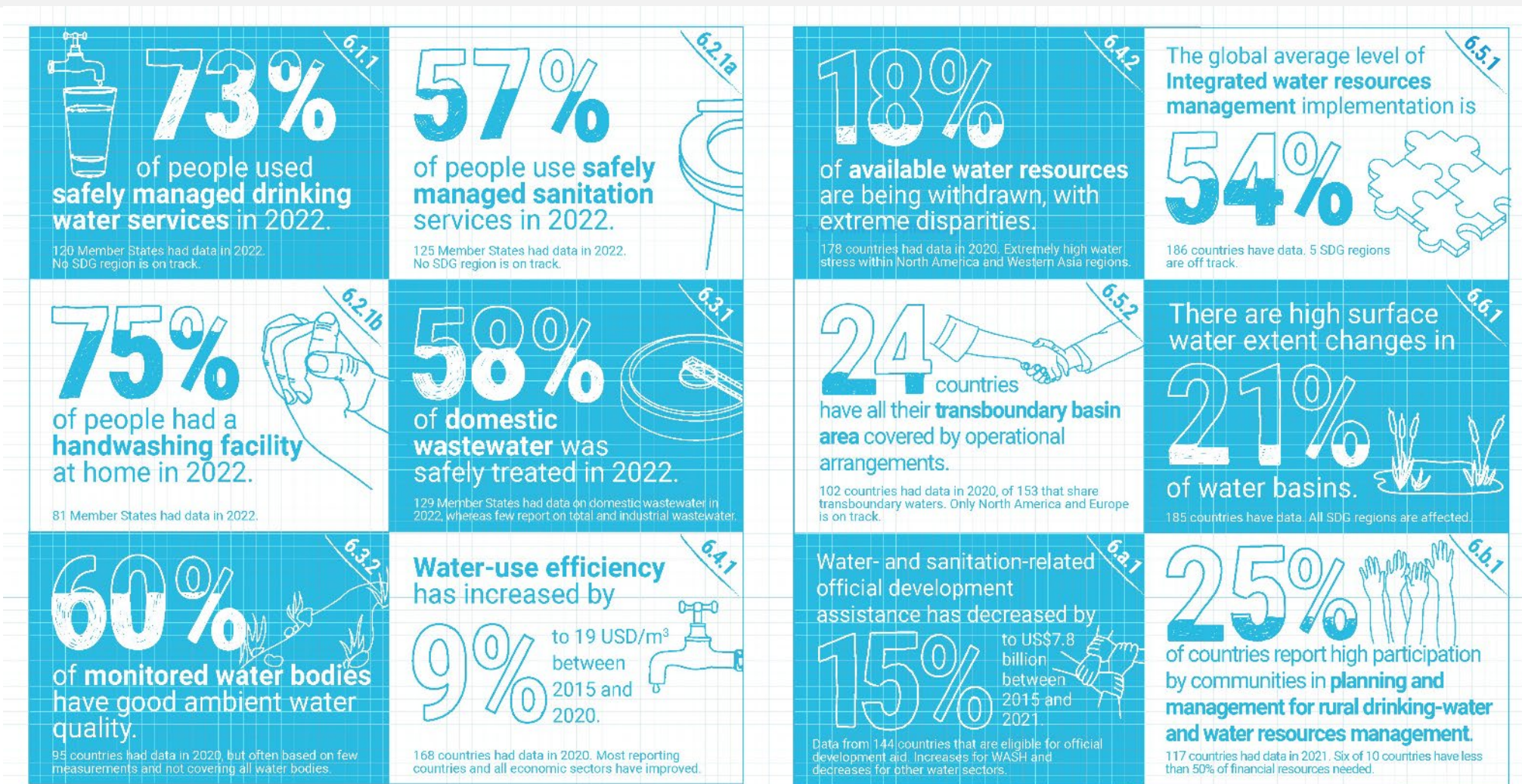


# Follow-up on Water Conference

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1. Annual SDG 6 event on the margins of the High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF)
  - **SDG 6 In-depth Review** on 11 July
  - **SDG 6 / Water Action Agenda Special Event** on 17 July
    - An analysis of water-related progress, across sectors and other SDGs and global frameworks
    - Success stories and lessons learned
    - New commitments to the Water Action Agenda
2. Other major water events
  - Dushanbe Water Process, Stockholm WWW, World Water Forum, SWA ministers meetings, IWRA World Water Congress, etc.
    - Mainstreaming water in climate, food systems, health, social justice, human rights, environment, disaster risk reduction, etc.

# SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2023 - Data



# SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2023 - Conclusion

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## We need to move much faster.

- We need to work ***six times*** faster on drinking water, ***five times*** on sanitation and ***three times*** on hygiene.
- At current speed, 2 billion people will still be living without safely managed drinking water in 2030.

## Water quality is suffering.

- 42 per cent of household wastewater is not treated properly, damaging ecosystems and human health.

## Climate change is hitting hard.

- Rising water-stress is impacting on food security and biodiversity.
- There are observable rapid changes in surface water in one-fifth of river basins.

## Silo thinking is holding us back.

- Implementation of integrated water resources management (IWRM) needs to ***double***.
- Only one SDG region is on track to have all their transboundary rivers, lakes and aquifers covered by cooperation arrangements by 2030.

## The wrong direction.

- Financing needs have gone up and overseas development assistance (ODA) disbursement is going down.

## We're not walking the talk on inclusivity.

- National policies and laws increasingly recognize participatory procedures, but implementation has been moderate.



# Thank you.

**UN 2023 Water Conference:** <https://sdgs.un.org/conferences/water2023>

**Water Action Agenda:** <https://sdgs.un.org/conferences/water2023/action-agenda>