



# The One Water Summit toward a water resilient world

The world needs better approaches and solutions to water management in the context of the disruption of the global water cycle, reflected in the context of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, exacerbated by the processes of desertification. The lack of access to adequate quality and quantity of water and to sanitation services, as well as growing water demand, necessitate appropriate governance strategies. Water is a common concern as 9 out of 10 natural disasters are related to water<sup>1</sup> and 9 out of 10 countries prioritize water actions in their NDCs<sup>2</sup>.

The issue of water cannot therefore be resolved simply on a national scale. By its very nature, and precisely because nature and our borders don't fit neatly into basins, it requires cooperation; thus, access to and management of water must be treated as a common good.

It is embedded in **all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, especially SDG6 on safe access to water and sanitation, but also across the agenda from health, food, agriculture, energy, and industry.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.unisdr.org/2015/docs/climatechange/COP21\\_WeatherDisastersReport\\_2015\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.unisdr.org/2015/docs/climatechange/COP21_WeatherDisastersReport_2015_FINAL.pdf) and [https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC\\_AR6\\_WGII\\_Chapter04.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGII_Chapter04.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/41138/water\\_management\\_climate\\_change.pdf?sequence=1](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/41138/water_management_climate_change.pdf?sequence=1)

## A MILESTONE FOR THE WATER AGENDA

While the UN Water process is maturing, from the UN Conference on Water in 2023 toward the two next UN Conferences on Water of 2026 and 2028, the One Water Summit held on December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2024, on the sideline of COP16 on desertification in Riyadh, pursued the **political momentum on the global water agenda**.

Organized by the French Republic, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the World Bank, this Summit aimed at:

- Elevating the issue of water at the highest political level, so it is not left behind anymore and is integrated into all cross-sector policies;
- Showcasing concrete and sustainable solutions for a water resilient world, to demonstrate that water is not only a challenge but also an opportunity to create new models and support for economic growth and human development.
- Paving the way to avoiding tensions on freshwater reserve in particular by developing and disseminating key technologies like desalinization and water reuse, and a better use of nature-based solutions for water storage, which will help to avoid tensions on freshwater reserves.

Gathering water sector champions, from Head of States and governments, to financial institutions, international organisations, private sector companies and civil society representatives, this One Water Summit led to ambitious announcements and the launch of transformative projects, to break out of silo approaches on water.

## RAISING WATER AMBITION AT THE HIGHEST-LEVEL

**The One Water Summit highlighted international initiatives and collaboration launched to address water challenges that require collective actions with comprehensive approaches, and made general announcements, acknowledging the need to place water at the forefront of global efforts toward a sustainable future, as emphasised in the recommendations of the report of the Global Commission on the Economics of Water.**

The **Kingdom of Saudi Arabia** invited the international community including UN member states, international organizations and the private sector to join the **Global Water Organization (GWO)**, which aims to enhance knowledge sharing and promote multilateral collaboration, ultimately advancing the sustainability of water resources, to develop and integrate efforts to collectively address water challenges, to find comprehensive solutions to challenges, innovative technologies and exchange of expertise in this field.

The **World Bank Group** underscored the urgency of the water crisis and the need to **apply a holistic approach to interconnected water issues**, and informed the summit about the World Bank Group's newly adopted **global water strategy**, articulated around three dimensions: Water for People, Water for Food and Water for the Planet. The World Bank Group will work holistically across these three areas implementing country level solutions to better leverage public resources, for example using de-risking instruments, strengthen public water utilities, including with tariff reform to better signal the value of water, and mobilize the private sector capital, efficiency and innovation capacity.

The **nine multilateral development banks** (ADB, AfDB, AIIB, EBRD, EIB, IADB, IsDB, NDB and WBG) [committed to greater levels of financing for the water sector](#)<sup>3</sup>, leading to increased investments, and pledged to jointly report on key results publicly.

A **coalition of companies** (Banka Bio, Danone, Ecolab, Kering, LMVH, Saur, Séché Environnement, Suez, Veolia) endorsed a joint statement committing to [accelerate action on the water footprint and impact towards the sustainable use of water in the global economy](#)<sup>4</sup>, to encourage other companies to join the dynamic and to showcase effective policies and framework initiatives.

**Kazakhstan** announced that it would host in **2026 a Regional Climate Summit** in partnership with the United Nations and other international organizations to accelerate regional climate mitigation and adaptation action, and further concrete solutions.

**Saudi Arabia** announced its preparations to **host the 11<sup>th</sup> session of the World Water Forum in 2027**, in cooperation with the World Water Council.

The **United Nations** represented by the Special Envoy for Water, Ms Retno Marsudi, nominated to facilitate the political mobilisation and implementation across the United Nations of the **new system-wide strategy for water and sanitation**, shared the new vision of the United Nations to **mainstream water in all related processes**, and her interest in recommendations and commitments from the **new One Water Summit process**.

→ France underlined the various challenges associated with water and adaptation and called for a **New Water Coalition**, to bring together States, communities, municipalities, local governments, businesses, technologies and funding bodies to come up with a package of solutions that will make it possible, on the one hand, to identify the needs, especially regarding desalinization and reuse, to stabilize the existing technological offer and make it available and accessible, and, on the other hand, to mobilize funding as quickly as possible to develop these solutions in a very practical way on the ground.

## SHARE AND COOPERATE

The **One Water Summit** underscored the role of transboundary water cooperation in efficient and peaceful management of the world water resources, through tools as the **Water Convention**, and with announcements and launch of coalitions.

The **Coalition for Transboundary Water Cooperation**<sup>5</sup>, formed in the run up of the UN Conference on Water in 2023, announced the intention to launch a **new Knowledge Platform which will serve as a global repository of good practices, solutions, and information** on the legal, technical and financial means to develop transboundary water cooperation.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.eib.org/files/press/CommitmenttoWaterSecuritywithlogos.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://oneplanetsummit.fr/sites/default/files/2024-12/Statement%20of%20Commitments%20from%20Companies%20to%20Accelerate%20Action%20on%20Water%20Footprint%20and%20Impact.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Chile, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Namibia, The Netherlands, Panama, Senegal, Slovenia, Switzerland, Uganda; the European Union as a regional integration organization; ESCWA, Global Environment Facility (GEF), Inter-American Development Bank (IaDB), Organization of American States (OAS), UNCDF, UNDP, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCO, World Bank, Centro Regional para la Gestión de Aguas Subterráneas en América Latina y el Caribe (CeReGAS), EcoPeace Middle East, Geneva Water Hub, Global Water Partnership (GWP), International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre (IGRAC), IHE Delft Institute for Water Education, International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO), IUCN, Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), University of Kinshasa, Water Diplomacy Center/Jordan University of Science and Technology)

The **One Water Vision**, a Coalition of international organisations and research institutes, led by the World Meteorological Organisation and the International Network for Basin Organisations, was launched with a New Research Consortium composed of research institutes and universities<sup>6</sup>. It is aiming to **improve partnerships on earth observation and data sharing for integrated water resource management**.

As part of the One Water Vision, Member organizations of the **Space for Climate Observatory (SCO)** signed a [Charter](#)<sup>7</sup> to affirm a shared commitment to taking concerted action at the national, regional, and international levels to **scale up water management related solutions** that have been developed by SCO projects.

The **International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS)** has agreed to expand cooperation with the French Development Agency (AFD) to address the pressing water stress in the region through a **new project under existing Fourth Aral Sea Basin Programme**.

The **Global Environment Facility announced 10.6 million \$ of facility to strengthen management of the Zambezi River basin** for climate resilience and ecosystem health by supporting the river basin management organization ZAMCOM and the eight basin countries.

## PRESERVE AND RESTORE

**Adaptation and water ecosystems preservation and restoration were brought forward as solutions to face the increasing global water challenges.**

The **Freshwater Challenge**<sup>8</sup> provides support to countries to preserve and restore 300 000 km of rivers and 350 000 ha of freshwater ecosystems which are critical in maintaining the global water cycle. It was accelerated during the Summit with:

→ **2 new countries** committing to its principles, **Australia and Kazakhstan**, bringing the number of members to 50, with 49 countries<sup>9</sup> and the European Union.

→ the **Global Environment Facility announcing 5 million \$ of investments** to support States in preserving and restoring these vital ecosystems.

The **second phase of the “Integrated Resilience in Sahel” of the World Food Program** was launched, which highlights the role of nature-based solutions to speed up agricultural production and resilience in desertic regions, in the framework of the Great Green Wall. The objective is to invest **1,5 billion \$ in the Sahel over the next 5 years to assist 5 million people** in resilience building programs.

<sup>6</sup> World Meteorological Organization (WMO), International Network of Basin Organization (INBO), Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (KazNU), Atmospheric Environmental Remote Sensing Society (AERSS) - Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), Bureau de Recherches Géologiques et Minières (BRGM), Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement (Cirad), Centre National d'Études Spatiales (CNES), Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), Centre de Recherche en Ressources en Eau du Bassin du Congo (CRREBaC), Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO), Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), Indian Institute of Sciences (IISc), Information and Analytical Center for Water Resources (IACWR), Institut National de Recherche pour l'Agriculture, l'Alimentation et l'Environnement (INRAE), Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD), International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), International Water Management Institute (IWMI), International Water Research Institute (IWRI) - Université Mohammed VI Polytechnique (UM6P), National Agriculture and Food Research Organization (NARO), National Institute of Agriculture Research (INRA), Serviço Geológico do Brasil (SGB), Syke – Finnish Environment Institute, Space for Climate Observatory (SCO), UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH), Wageningen University & Research (WUR)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.spaceclimateobservatory.org/sites/default/files/2024-12/One%20Water%20Summit%20Declaration.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Supported by WWF, IUCN, UNEP, The Nature Conservancy, Wetlands International, Conservation International, Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands, UNCCD

<sup>9</sup> Australia, Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Canada, Chad, Chile, Colombia, DR Congo, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Fiji, France, Finland, Gabon, Gambia, Germany, Guinea, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Moldova, Mozambique, Nepal, Netherlands, Niger, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Republic of Congo, Senegal, Slovenia, Spain, Tajikistan, Tanzania, UAE, Uganda, UK, USA, Zambia and Zimbabwe

**Kazakhstan announced the launch of the second phase of the Restoration of the Northern Aral Sea, in partnership with the World Bank.** The commitment of the private sector company **Kazakhmys Corporation of a 5 million \$ financing for the preservation of the Balkhash Lake**, whose southern areas are protected under the Ramsar Convention, were also announced.

It was also announced that Kazakhstan will work with leading institutions and partners on **Water Towers Partnerships** to address the yawning gaps in glaciers research that feed 2 billion of global population with an objective of **supporting and strengthening concrete research to fill in existing gap and provide recommendations for deglaciaded conditions**, supporting integration of local knowledge into the knowledge base about glaciers, and supporting young scientists who would like to dedicate their lives to science.

## INNOVATE AND CONVEY

**The One Water Summit provided a space for presenting new and innovative partnerships for water.**

**A memorandum of understanding** was signed between **Jordan and the company Meridiam** to advance the **Aqaba-Aman project** aiming to address Jordan's water scarcity, in the context of climate change and growing water demand with population growth and influx of refugees. In addition to improving wastewater management and fostering sustainable water use, Jordan adopted a strong strategy to supply 3 million people with drinking water while maintaining affordable pricing, through desalinisation and water services efficiency improvement.

The **relaunch of the Inga development process** was announced by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in partnership with the World Bank, offering a new economic perspective for the energy security of the region.

The **creation of Youth Parliaments for Water in France and in Kazakhstan** was announced, enabling multi-stakeholders' involvement in water decision-making processes.

The **project "Adopt a river"** was created to enable educational areas around rivers and wetlands as part of **UNESCO's "partnership for green education"** programme, which has developed quality standards for "green schools" and is responsible for their certification. This will enable **international certification of schools and twinning arrangements, to raise awareness of the importance of preserving river areas for sustainable access to quality water and the health of aquatic ecosystems**. This initiative was adopted by UNESCO's Executive Board in October 2024 ahead of the One Water Summit.