

UN 2023 Water Conference  
Interactive Dialogue 1: Water for Health  
Access to WASH, including the Human Rights to Safe Drinking  
Water and Sanitation

CLOSING SPEECH

**Your excellencies,**

I am pleased to present a short summary of the **first Interactive Dialogue on Water for Health**.

First I want to thank our co-chair, **Minister Hatton of the Dominican Republic** as well as our distinguished discussants, panellists and participants and our moderators, **Catherine Russell**, Executive Director of UNICEF, and **Maria Neira**, Assistant Director General of the WHO.

We listened carefully to **31 interventions**. Many included firm and accountable commitments on funding and institutional change.

Speakers recognised that water and sanitation are **human rights** and that **access to WASH is essential for health, education, gender equality and development**.

They emphasised that the **rights of vulnerable groups** have to be respected and fulfilled. In particular, women and girls, indigenous people, people with disabilities, and refugees and the internally displaced.

It is so important that we include **all** of these voices when discussing water security.

Speakers reinforced the central message that the WASH sector urgently needs better **political leadership and government systems, as well as smart financing**.

Development partners and stakeholders expressed their readiness to collaborate with governments.

This includes **reinforcing links with other sectors**, most obviously with health and education, and to ensure that **solutions safeguard the environment**.

There were calls to dramatically **increase funding and finance, including climate finance** - and to make the best use of these resources.

We also heard calls to invest in people and institutions, to ensure we have a **capable and motivated WASH sector workforce**.

And we recognised that **data and evidence** are key to good decision making and accountability.

Finally there were calls to encourage and support WASH **innovation and experimentation**.

As we take forward these recommendations, we should build on what is already there and working well.

For example **Sanitation and Water for All's** unique **accountability platform** that enables stakeholders to come together to frame, present and track commitments; As well as the **Fair Water Footprints** initiative, that brings stakeholders together to improve water stewardship, and ensure equity and sustainability;

Plus emerging **coalitions for systems strengthening** involving governments and their development partners.

Whilst these and other initiatives will help drive forward the Water Action Agenda well beyond the conference – we still need to go further, and ensure accountability for all in delivering a step-change in performance.

I urge you Secretary General, to heed the urgent call from Civil Society in their open letter for greater accountability, rigour, and ambition in the outcomes of the United Nations 2023 Water

Conference. We must respond if we are to make the most of this landmark opportunity and secure a more just, resilient, and sustainable water future that the world so urgently needs.

The UK stands ready to work with others, to help take these commitments forward. Thank you.