

# Mapping and Progress of the UN 2023 Water Conference Water Action Agenda

Advance Unedited

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# Mapping and Progress of the UN 2023 Water Conference - Water Action Agenda

## Foreword

A key outcome of the historic United Nations 2023 Water Conference was the Water Action Agenda, a compendium of voluntary pledges that were announced or registered in the lead up to, as well as during the Conference itself. As of today, over 840 commitments have been published. This enthusiastic response to the call for voluntary action reflects the collective ambition of the international community for water.

More than halfway past the mid-point of the 2030 Agenda and the Water Action Decade (2018-2028), progress towards the implementation of our common priorities on water remains woefully inadequate. To meet the global target of universal access by 2030, progress needs to increase six times faster for safely managed drinking water, five times faster for safely managed sanitation and three times faster for basic hygiene. Access to safely managed drinking water, sanitation and basic hygiene services is still out of reach for billions of people, particularly in rural areas and least developed countries (SDG targets 6.1 and 6.2).

Moreover, as we face a triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss, the year 2023 recorded the warmest year ever at 1.45 °C above the pre-industrial average, close to the global target of 1.5 °C increase under the Paris Agreement on climate change. Water is humanity's lifeline. The lack of access to safe water and sanitation amidst such harsh climatic conditions is leading to devastating outcomes for many, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised. With water being so intimately linked to with other socio-economic and environmental conditions, we cannot achieve sustainable development without securing clean water and sanitation.

Against this backdrop the imperative for urgent, accelerated and successful implementation of the commitments registered on the Water Action Agenda platform cannot be stressed enough. This report aims to follow up on and assess the progress of the Water Action Agenda based on the pledges registered. As custodian of the Water Action Agenda, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) continues to encourage all commitment holders to follow up on the registered commitments and make new pledges. To this end, UNDESA conducted a follow-up survey on the Water Action Agenda between November and December 2023 and received 280 responses that are equivalent to a third of the total commitments. This report is a reflection of the analysis conducted from those results and information provided by commitment holders in the platform itself.

The report finds that nearly half of commitments have global coverage, followed by Africa with the largest number of commitments among different regions. Civil society/NGOs and national governments are two main categories of lead organizations. The geographic and stakeholder diversity highlights the broad participation of actors tackling water-related issues globally. In addition to the main subject of SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), many commitments are aligned with SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), and SDG 15 (Life on Land) in descending order.

According to the survey, over 60 per cent of respondents recognize financial constraints as obstacles to implementation, and many also highlight the lack of an enabling policy as challenging to the successful implementation of their commitments. One-third of the commitments take more than five years of implementation period. Nearly 60 per cent of responses note that the commitments are somewhat in progress and have not reached midpoint. Periodic reviews of the commitments are needed to keep the momentum of the Water Action Agenda and support the achievement of each commitment.

As a follow-up to the 2023 Water Conference, in September 2023, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 77/334 to convene the next UN Water Conference in 2026 and the UN Conference on the Final Review of the Water Action Decade in 2028. The Water Action Agenda will to be a driving force and a collective effort to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda and the Water Action Decade, bridging UN Water Conferences in 2023 and 2026.



LI Junhua  
Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

# Mapping and Progress of the UN 2023 Water Conference Water Action Agenda

## Executive summary

The present document serves as a comprehensive mapping and progress report on the Water Action Agenda, a pivotal initiative born out of the UN 2023 Water Conference's call for voluntary commitments to advance Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 alongside related water and sanitation targets.

The Water Action Agenda has garnered 837<sup>1</sup> commitments, evidencing a significant global mobilization towards enhancing water and sanitation management. These commitments, stemming from a diverse array of stakeholders including civil society organizations, national governments, academic institutions and the private sector, span across multiple regions with notable contributions from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. This broad geographic and stakeholder diversity underscores the universal recognition of water-related issues and the collective effort to address them. The commitments primarily align with SDG 6, with substantial emphasis also placed on SDGs pertaining to climate action, partnerships life on land, health and sustainable cities. Furthermore, the financial commitments disclosed within the Agenda amount to an approximate total of USD \$77.2 billion, highlighting the considerable investment dedicated to achieving the set objectives.

The progression of the Water Action Agenda, as detailed in the report, unveils that a significant proportion of these commitments are in their nascent or intermediate stages of implementation. This revelation stems from a survey conducted among entities that have made commitments, which approximately a third of commitment-holders responded to (280), providing insights into their progress, stakeholder involvement and implementation challenges. Major hurdles such as financial constraints, lack of expertise difficulties in fostering an enabling environment and cooperation issues emerge as significant barriers to the fulfillment of these commitments. The commitments showcased in the report range widely in terms of financial scope and are aimed towards achieving mid to long-term objectives, as revealed by the survey which highlighted a pattern of funding distribution and preferred timelines across different types of organizations.

This document lays a solid groundwork for understanding the current landscape of Water Action Agenda commitments, the challenges faced, and the progress achieved. It presents a clear call to action for increased funding, enhanced international cooperation and the strategic amplification of effective water management practices. As the document suggests, the journey towards the ambitious goals of the Water Action Agenda is marked by robust global engagement, yet it also faces substantial challenges that require concerted efforts to overcome. By fostering collaboration, innovation and resilience, stakeholders globally can work together to navigate the complexities to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

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<sup>1</sup> As of December 2023



# Mapping and Progress of the UN 2023 Water Conference Voluntary Commitments

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# Mapping and Progress of the UN 2023 Water Conference Water Action Agenda

## I. Introduction

### a. The Water Action Decade

1. To effectively implement Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 on water and sanitation, Member States and the United Nations must coordinate their actions and accelerate progress towards the achievement of the goal. In this context, the General Assembly proclaimed 2018-2028 as the "International Decade for Action, 'Water for Sustainable Development'" (Water Action Decade) through resolution 71/222.<sup>2</sup> Running from 2018 to 2028, the Water Action Decade aims to enhance collaboration, partnerships, and capacity building to fulfill the ambitious objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda).
2. The resolution outlined the Water Action Decade's objectives, which are to provide more focus on:<sup>3</sup>
  1. The sustainable development and integrated management of water resources for
  2. The achievement of social, economic and environmental objectives; and
  3. The implementation and promotion of related programmes and projects; and the furtherance of cooperation and partnerships at all levels to achieve internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, including those in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
3. Overall, the Water Action Decade should support the 2030 Agenda by encouraging a shift from isolated efforts on thematic issues to integrated and aligned global actions, specifically with regards to activities related to water and sanitation with other themes under the 2030 Agenda.
4. In 2022, a mid-term review of the Water Action Decade was conducted, as detailed in a report by the Secretary-General.<sup>4</sup> This review acknowledged the first five years' achievements, outlined key activities and learnings, but also noted the inadequate progress towards SDG 6. It emphasized the need for increased collaboration and partnerships for the Water Action Decade's remaining years, calling for transformative actions to expedite progress towards water-related goals. The United Nations 2023 Water Conference was identified as a critical milestone event to boost momentum and progress and in late 2023, the UN General Assembly decided to convene the 2026 United Nations Water Conference.<sup>5</sup>

### b. Overview of the UN 2023 Water Conference

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<sup>2</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/documents/ares71222-international-decade-action-wa-23198>

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> [https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/A%2077%20249\\_Water.pdf](https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/A%2077%20249_Water.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N23/265/98/PDF/N2326598.pdf?OpenElement>

5. In 2018, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 73/226 to further the goals of the Water Action Decade, including SDG 6.<sup>6</sup> As part of this resolution, it was decided by the General Assembly to convene the United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Water Action Decade. The objective of the conference was to increase the emphasis on sustainable and integrated water resources management to meet globally recognized water-related goals and objectives, including those specified in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Conference was to bring together Member States and relevant stakeholders to advance the implementation of programs and projects in support of achieving these goals and foster cooperation and partnerships to this end. The UN 2023 Water Conference took place on March 22 to 24, 2023, in New York, the first of its kind in 46 years, the previous one, the UN Water Conference, having been convened in Mar del Plata, Argentina in 1977.
6. The co-hosts of the UN 2023 Water Conference, the Governments of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Tajikistan, aimed to make the Conference a pivotal moment. The Conference and its preparatory process was guided by three principles: inclusivity, action-orientation and a cross-sectoral focus. The Conference's goal was to deepen understanding of water's value and inspire collective action towards achieving water-related objectives as per the 2030 Agenda. The principal method through which this was carried out was the development of the Water Action Agenda,<sup>7</sup> a set of voluntary commitments made by stakeholders around the world.

### c. The Water Action Agenda

7. The Water Action Agenda represents the collective voluntary efforts to expedite advancements during the latter half of the Water Action Decade (2018-2028) and the 2030 Agenda. Leveraging the political engagement spurred by the Conference, this set of voluntary commitments aims to catalyze actions among Member States and stakeholders to fulfill global water and sanitation objectives and to transform the momentum generated by the UN 2023 Water Conference into concrete, ambitious actions to keep progress on track.
8. The Water Action Agenda was founded on three key principles to help ensure its success moving forward:
  - **Commit to action:** The mobilization of voluntary commitments from countries, sectors and stakeholders for swift and effective actions to reach SDG 6 and other water-related targets.
  - **Sustain and scale up implementation:** All stakeholders are essential in driving the Water Action Agenda and ensuring the replication and expansion of successful practices through partnership follow-ups.

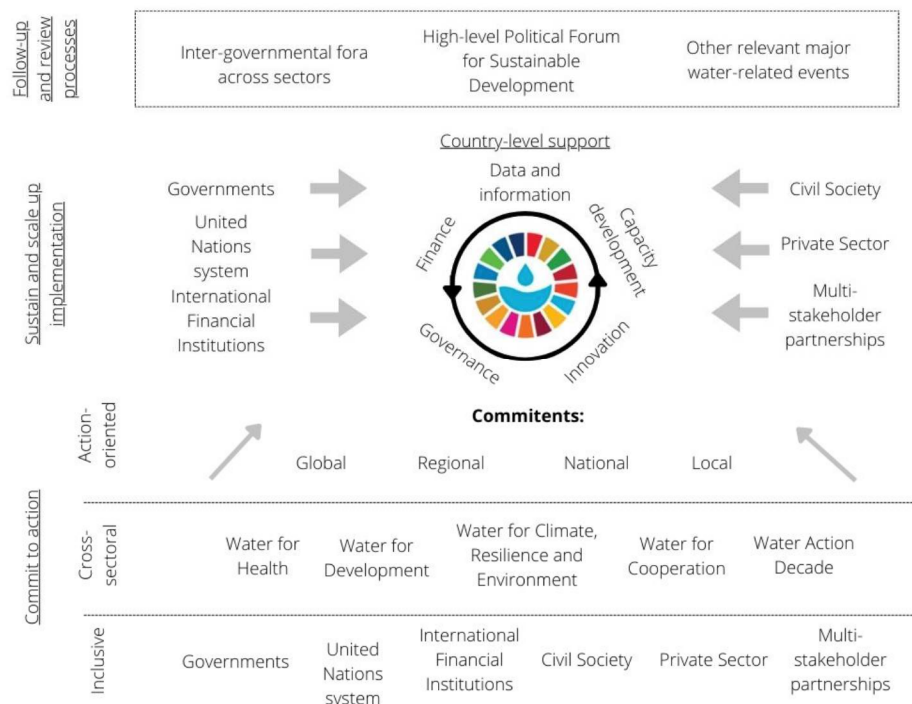
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<sup>6</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/documents/ares73226-midterm-comprehensive-review-implementation-international-decade-action-water>

<sup>7</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/action-networks/water>

- **Follow-up and review process:** Through both a dedicated online platform<sup>8</sup> and the High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF) and other intergovernmental, private sector and NGO fora, the Water Action Agenda, its commitments and achievements will be highlighted and lessons learned shared. Regular reviews of the Water Action Agenda, such as this report, will be carried out to monitor progress.
9. Through a continuous process of commitment, implementation, and review, and by facilitating peer learning, the Water Action Agenda aims to replicate effective strategies and elevate successful solutions to a global level. This may be spearheaded by the UN-Water Task Force on Water Action Decade Implementation, building on the expertise of the UN system, in collaboration with Member States.

Figure 1: Schematic overview of the Water Action Agenda<sup>9</sup>



**d. Purpose of this progress report**

10. The Water Action Agenda offers an opportunity for the international water community to focus on its voluntary commitments to help achieve SDG 6 and other water-related goals and objectives, including the 2030 Agenda. With only six years left to achieve these goals, it is

<sup>8</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/action-networks/water>

<sup>9</sup> UN DESA, 2022. Water Action Agenda: Concept note outlining its operations. Available from: [https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/Water\\_Action\\_Agenda\\_operations\\_concept\\_note.pdf](https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/Water_Action_Agenda_operations_concept_note.pdf)

important to track the progress not only of the goals themselves, but the efforts made in reaching those goals.

11. The present report will do just that by tracking the progress of the voluntary commitments of the Water Action Agenda. But, as a first step, understanding what the Water Action is made up of, and not, will help determine a path forward for its implementation and its success.
12. This progress reports aims to do a thorough assessment of the voluntary commitments of the Water Action Agenda, to see how these commitments can contribute towards achieving SDG 6 as well as identifying what significant gaps remain.
13. The objectives of this report are to:
  - Conduct an overall mapping of the voluntary commitments according to various criteria (Type, scale, location, timeline, target/goal, etc.).
  - Examine how the voluntary commitments of the Water Action Agenda fit into SDG 6 and carry out an analysis based on what problems they aim to address.
  - Highlight the potential impact on and synergies with other SDGs.
  - Assess each SDG 6 target's commitments through the “accelerators” of the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework<sup>10</sup> and identify gaps where there is not enough focus to make significant progress. Assess how the commitments fall under the Interactive Dialogue themes of the UN 2023 Water Conference.
  - Make a first overall assessment of the progress to date based on a distributed survey to the commitment holders (November 2023) with a special focus on the challenges that the commitments face in being achieved.
  - Look at progress by SDG 6 target, the impacts that the commitments have made, the challenges they face and identify where there are opportunities to support the fulfilling of the commitments.
  - Identify areas of success and lessons learned that others may draw from.
  - Recommend actions by different stakeholder groups (i.e., national governments, international organizations, civil society, private sector, academia, etc.) on how to advance the Water Action Agenda.

**e. Methodologies used for this report**

14. Two methods will be used to in this report. The first will be to carry out the mapping of the commitments, an examination of how the commitments fall under the SDG 6 targets and to identify what gaps may exist in their coverage. This will be done by organizing the voluntary commitments by SDG 6 target and then sub-categorizing them by the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework namely, financing, data and innovation, capacity development, innovation and governance.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.unwater.org/our-work/sdg-6-global-acceleration-framework>

15. The primary method used to assess the progress of the commitments will be through a survey that was filled out by 280 of the 837 commitment holders to report on the progress of their commitment. Information on the commitments to be analyzed will focus on how far the commitment has progressed, what challenges the implementers have faced and the resources at their disposal to fulfill the commitment (see Annex I for full survey). In addition to providing a snapshot of where the Water Action Agenda stands, this information will allow for analysis of where gaps are and where there is potential for support.

# Mapping and Progress of the UN 2023 Water Conference Water Action Agenda

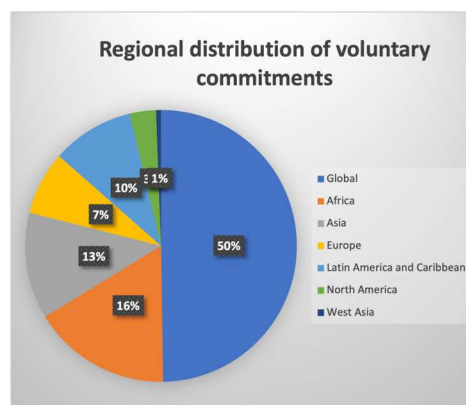
## II. Mapping of the Water Action Agenda

### a. Overview of the Water Action Agenda

16. While the call for voluntary commitments for the Water Action Agenda was made with the UN 2023 Water Conference, which was held in March 2023, in mind for their presentation to the wider world, the Water Action Agenda is a living database whereby organizations and governments can submit voluntary commitments at any time. At the time of the writing of this document, 837 commitments had been made and it is these that will be examined in the remainder of this report.

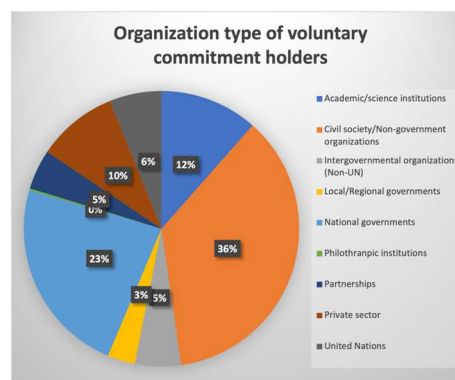
#### *Regional distribution*

17. Just under half of all commitments were designed for the global level or multiple regions, accounting for 49.8 per cent of the total. Africa stands as the second-largest contributor with 16.5 per cent of the commitments. Asia's participation is also notable, making up 12.7 per cent of the total. The Latin America and the Caribbean region shows a significant engagement in voluntary commitments, contributing 9.8 per cent. Europe represents 7.5 per cent of commitments. North America's involvement is relatively low at 3.1 per cent. The smallest share of voluntary commitments comes from West Asia, which accounts for 0.6 per cent of the global distribution.



#### *Organization type*

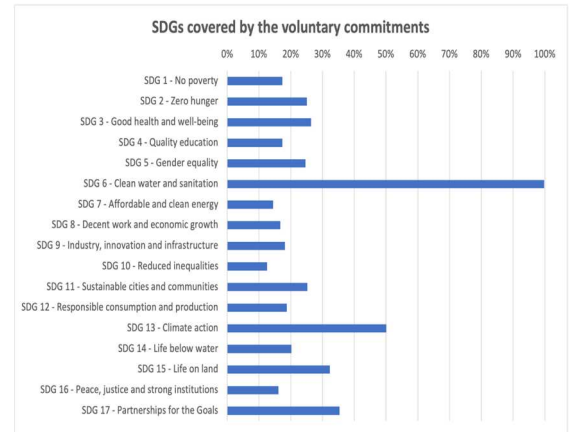
18. Civil society or non-government organizations represent the largest share with 36 per cent of the commitments. National governments are also significant contributors, accounting for 23 per cent. Academic and science institutions make up 11 per cent of the commitments, while the private sector contributes 9 per cent. The United Nations is responsible for 6 per cent of the commitments, followed by partnerships and intergovernmental organizations (excluding the UN), each with 5 per cent. Local or regional governments account for 3 per cent, and less than 1 per cent come from philanthropic institutions.





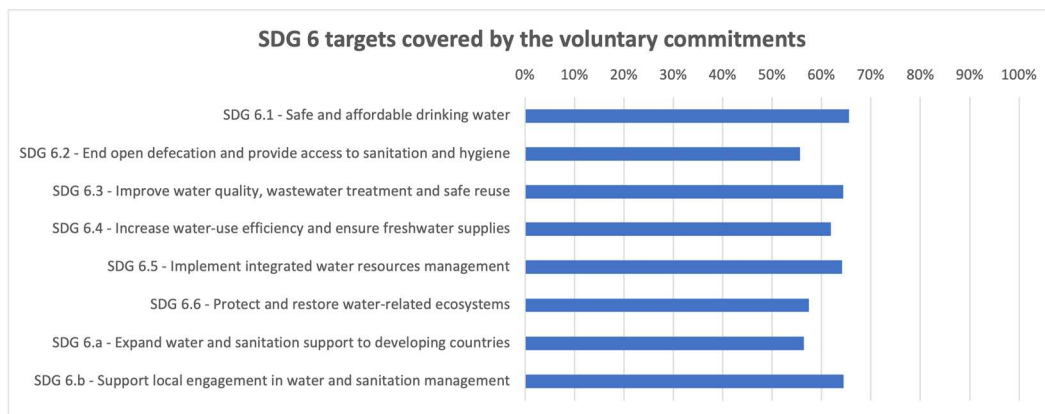
## ***Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)***

19. When registering a commitment, it was asked what SDGs the commitment contributes to. The highest commitment was, obviously, towards SDG 6. The next highest is SDG 13 - Climate action, with 50 per cent of commitments. This is followed by SDG 17 - Partnerships for the Goals at 35 per cent, and SDG 15 - Life on land at 32 per cent. SDG 3 - Good health and well-being receives attention from 26 per cent of commitments, which is slightly above SDG 2 - Zero hunger and SDG 5 - Gender equality and SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities all at 25 per cent. The remaining goals have commitments ranging from 13 per cent to 20 per cent.



### ***SDG 6 targets<sup>11</sup>***

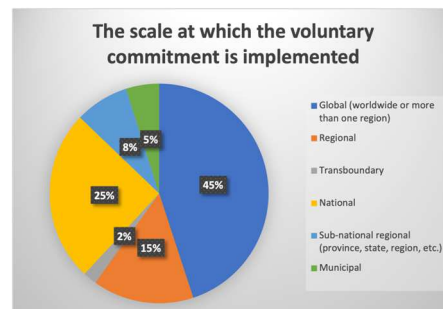
20. The highest percentage of commitments is for SDG 6.1 - Safe and affordable drinking water, at 66 per cent. There are strong commitments as well to SDG 6.3 and SDG 6.5, both at 64 per cent, which aim to improve water quality, wastewater treatment, and safe reuse, and to implement integrated water resources management, respectively. Close behind is SDG 6.b, with a 65 per cent commitment towards supporting local engagement in water and sanitation management. SDG 6.4 shows a 62 per cent commitment to increasing water-use efficiency and ensuring freshwater supplies. Following these, SDG 6.6 is at 57 per cent for protecting and restoring water-related ecosystems. The commitments to ending open defecation and expanding water and sanitation support to developing countries are at 56 per cent for both SDG 6.2 and SDG 6.a.



<sup>11</sup> The numbers in the section below reflect what those who submitted their commitments put as their responses to the form provided for submission of those commitments. These numbers do not show the reality of the commitments submitted, as the submitters' perception, or simply lack of understanding of the SDG 6 targets, does not match the reality of the content of the commitments. This demonstrates the challenges of carrying out such an exercise.

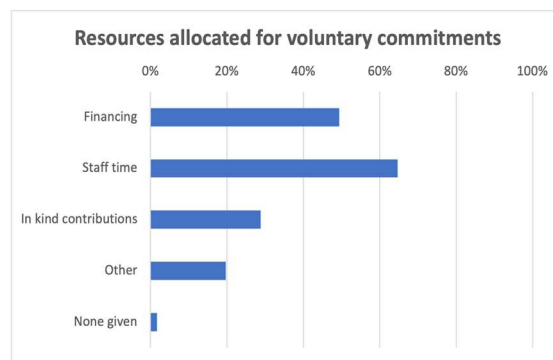
### *Scale of commitment*

21. These numbers reflect the scale of commitments made at different governmental and geographical levels. Global commitments, which span worldwide or across more than one region, make up the largest portion at 45 per cent. National commitments follow with a significant 25 per cent. Regional commitments, which cover areas within a single continent or economic zone, are at 15 per cent. There is a smaller proportion of commitments at the sub-national regional level, including provinces, states and regions, at 8 per cent. Municipal commitments, which involve city or local town administrations, account for 5 per cent. Transboundary commitments, affecting areas across national borders, are 2 per cent of the whole.



### *Resources for the commitments*

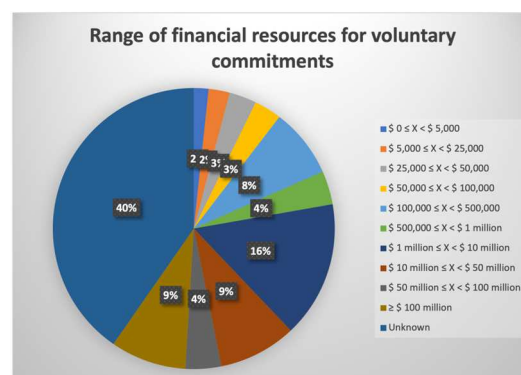
22. Many different types of resources will be provided to ensure that these commitments come to fruition by the organizations who have made them. The largest type of contribution is staff time, which makes up 65 per cent of the total. This is followed by financial contributions at 49 per cent. In kind contributions, which could include goods, services or other non-monetary support, constitute 29 per cent. Contributions categorized as 'Other' account for 20 per cent.



### *Financing for the commitments*

23. An estimate of the total amount of financial commitments for the Water Action Agenda is approximately USD \$77.2 billion.<sup>12</sup>

24. The commitments have a wide range of financial resources attached to them. Forty per cent of the commitments did not have a specific amount designated in their submission. For the known values, commitments of \$1 million to less than \$10 million represent the highest percentage at 16 per cent. Commitments ranging from \$100,000 to less than \$500,000 make up 8 per cent, while those from \$10 million to less than \$50 million account for 9 per cent. Commitments of at least \$100 million also constitute 9 per cent of the total. The rest of the contributions are relatively small in proportion, with each of the remaining monetary ranges (\$0

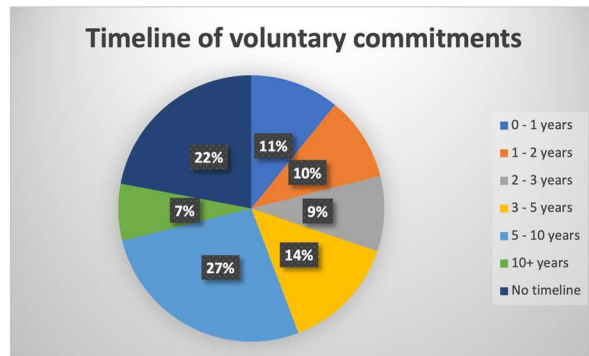


<sup>12</sup> The actual number is very difficult to pin down because for most of the commitments, it is not clear whether this is money that has been allocated for the commitment or if this is funding they hope to raise. In some cases, the identified funding has already been spent, especially in cases where the “commitment” started years before the UN 2023 Water Conference took place.

to less than \$5,000, \$5,000 to less than \$25,000, \$25,000 to less than \$50,000, \$50,000 to less than \$100,000, and \$500,000 to less than \$1 million) accounting for 2-4 per cent each.

***Timeline for the commitments***

25. How long these commitments will take to accomplish ranges widely, from some that were finished by the time to conference started to those with a 2030 timeframe. The majority of commitments, 27 per cent, have a mid-term horizon of 5 to 10 years. A significant portion, 22 per cent, have not been assigned a specific timeline. Shorter-term commitments, to be completed within 0 to 1 year, represent 11 per cent of the total, while those planned for 1 to 2 years and 2 to 3 years account for 10 per cent and 9 per cent, respectively.



Longer-term commitments, spanning 3 to 5 years, constitute 14 per cent, and those extending beyond 10 years make up a smaller portion at 7 per cent. Unfortunately, 43 per cent of the commitments were noted to have started before November 2022 and 28 per cent before 2020. This means that almost a half of the commitments were activities that were already being undertaken. This does not include commitments that were submitted after November 2022 that are part of regular activities of the organizations and not new.

**b. The Water Action Agenda by SDG 6 targets<sup>13</sup>**

26. The following section will examine the commitments of the Water Action Agenda through the lens of the eight SDG 6 targets. After reporting on how many of the commitments were dedicated to each target, there will be a section that summarizes the overall issues that the commitments attempt to address and then how the set of commitments are connected to each of the five SDG 6 Global Accelerator Framework accelerators (finance; data and information; capacity development; innovation and governance). This will be followed by exploring what gaps still need to be tackled in trying to achieve the SDG 6 targets.

**SDG target 6.1 – Safe and affordable drinking water**

***Overview***

27. Of the 837 commitments submitted to the Water Action Agenda, it was reported that 66 per cent of them addressed SDG target 6.1. When looking more closely at the content of the submissions, the number that actually focused on issues related to drinking water supply was closer to 20 per cent per the information noted in the previous section.

<sup>13</sup> Highlighted commitments in this chapter are not exhaustive but aim to provide examples of the kind of commitments made. Readers are requested to go to the registry and get more information in case of interest.

### ***Main problems the commitments will address***

28. The commitments identified as contributing to SDG target 6.1 focus on addressing global drinking water supply challenges. By and large, these initiatives aim to ensure universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water. A significant aspect of these commitments involves upgrading and improving water infrastructure, which includes the construction and renovation of water supply systems. Another key element is the emphasis on innovation and the use of technology to address water scarcity and quality issues. These commitments also stress the importance of financial self-sufficiency and cost-saving measures in water supply systems, aiming for efficient resource utilization. Education and advocacy play a vital role in these commitments, promoting sustainable water use and awareness at community levels.

### ***Global Acceleration Framework linkages***

- Finance

29. The commitments reflect that the financing of drinking water supply projects globally is increasingly focused on innovative and sustainable funding mechanisms, shifting towards more dynamic and inclusive models. Key strategies involve mobilizing large-scale finance from both public and private sectors, especially targeting low- and middle-income countries. This includes guiding utilities towards diverse sources of finance such as local capital markets and facilitating access to these resources through financial and technical assistance.

30. Efforts are also directed towards implementing sustainable service programs that ensure efficient and transparent public management systems in the water sector. These programs often rely on solidarity-based financing mechanisms to prioritize vulnerable populations and countries facing fragility.

31. Bridging financial gaps in drinking water supply was identified as crucial, with an emphasis on developing the market through investments in scalable and innovative solutions. This approach is seen as essential for achieving the goal of universal and equitable access to safe drinking water, underlining the need for adaptable and resilient financial models in the water supply sector.

### ***Highlighted commitments***

#### ***Making Water Count – Aqua for All (#SDGAction51271)***

The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Foundation Aqua for All are working together in the Making Water Count programme, which is a joint programme toward accelerating SDG 6, specifically to facilitate and finance innovative and scalable solutions for water and sanitation in Africa and South Asia. The overall goal of Making Water Count is to increase access to safe water and sanitation solutions that are inclusive, sustainable and scalable.

***Urban Water Catalyst Initiative (UWCI) – German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) (#SDGAction51786)***

The Urban Water Catalyst Initiative (UWCI) has the dedicated mission to accelerate urban water utility turnarounds in low- and middle-income countries and mobilizing large-scale public and private finance for performance improvement, climate-resilient infrastructure investment, and expanding discrimination-free water and sanitation access to the poorest. Particularly reform-minded utilities in low- and middle-income countries will be thereby guided towards additional and diversified sources of public and, in the longer term, private sources of financing instruments, including access to local capital markets.

▪ Data and information

32. The commitments include the advancement of drinking water systems through the development and application of data indices and monitoring platforms. There is an emphasis on the importance of having reliable data to guide evidence-based policy decisions, especially at the local level, regulatory planning and investments in addressing drinking water supply gaps.
33. Some of the commitments are aimed at assessing and tracking the progress of urban water systems in terms of availability, reliability and sustainability, which aims to inform various stakeholders about the status and needs for improvement in city water performance.
34. These approaches underscore the critical role of accurate data in enhancing the capacity for municipal-level planning and the implementation of effective water systems.

▪ Capacity development

35. The commitments range of projects are being implemented to strengthen capacity in the management of drinking water supplies. A key component of these initiatives is building the capacity of local organizations and communities, ensuring their active involvement in the development and management of drinking water systems. An inclusive and adaptive approach is promoted, involving various societal segments in a knowledge-based strategy to manage drinking water supply effectively.
36. Various programs are being implemented that aim to expedite capacity building through professional development, mentorship and sharing of best practices.

***Highlighted commitments***

***A gamechanger for water access – One Million Wells (#SDGAction50098)***

The plan to furnish water is a "self exponentially growing" plan. The proven method of training by One Million Wells is simple. Their trainers train client drillers in the classroom and with field instruction. The plan calls for each student installing 3 complete wells. They

require all of their client trainees to train others just as they have been trained. They help those who are trained to drill by furnishing, at no cost, the equipment to drill. They suggest that each of their trained crews train an additional 10 crews within a year for two years without their direct interference.

- Innovation

37. Globally, in the commitments, there is a growing emphasis on the role of innovation in the enhancement drinking water services. There is an emerging trend towards innovative institutional approaches in water services, particularly in areas struggling with specific water-related challenges. This includes the development of new types of institutions that share various risks.
38. Projects focusing on sustainable water access methods, like rainwater harvesting and hydropanels, are being implemented with the goal of impacting a significant population in the next few years.
39. The use of advanced technologies for clean drinking water is being explored in several locations. These technologies emphasize renewable energy sources, such as solar water farms, and aim to reduce reliance on traditional water supply methods and to link water suppliers with consumers, focusing on ensuring the traceability and quality of water.

### ***Highlighted commitments***

#### ***Providing Equitable Access to Clean Water in Rural, Climate-Vulnerable Communities through the Installation of Solar Water Farms – Green Hope Foundation (#SDGAction50927)***

Green Hope Foundation's Solar Water Farm is a unique technology which uses solar power to harness rainwater and groundwater to provide clean water to the local community. With the pilot project being implemented in a climate-vulnerable, rural community in the Small Island Developing State of Kiribati, Green Hope Foundation now commits to expanding the installation of the Solar Water Farm in Kiribati, Suriname, Liberia, India and Bangladesh.

#### ***Risk-pooling and institutional innovation for sustainable water service transitions – Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (#SDGAction51717)***

Institutional innovation is happening on a large scale, in which hybrid institutions emerge, which share environmental, financial, and operational risks between private, public and community actors in the context where SDG 6.1 is not met. A comparative assessment of risk-pooling in hybrid water utilities globally will highlight the differences and similarities in risk-pooling strategies and their effect on institutional design, thus informing policy and practice towards sustainable and safe water for all.



- Governance

40. Governance in the drinking water sector is pivotal for achieving SDG target 6.1 To this end, mechanisms within the commitments play a crucial role in fostering collaboration among stakeholders to realize the human rights to water and sanitation. These processes involve periodic monitoring of commitments by partners to ensure progress and accountability.
41. Among the commitments there is a focus to multisectoral collaboration and an integrated approach is essential for scaling up drinking water services, emphasizing community-focused strategies. This involves building local capacities and mobilizing community participation in the provision and maintenance of drinking water services through participatory processes that respect community needs and priorities.
42. Improving the sustainability of drinking water services also requires community engagement and multi-stakeholder cooperation in governance. The goal is to ensure both social and institutional sustainability, where service providers are responsive to community needs and institutions are equipped to fulfill their roles effectively.
43. Additionally, the commitments reinforce governance structures to enable continuous monitoring and regulation of drinking services, ensuring quality and reliability. This includes establishing policies, investment plans and regulatory bodies dedicated to advancing the water sector and addressing challenges in access to safely managed drinking water.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Water for Well-being, Justice and Action – AHAM Education Inc. (#SDGAction49750)***

Provide ongoing experiential practice, education, engagement, and action that decolonizes water access, restore water rights and connections, and leverage traditional and cultural knowledge on protection of water resources; applies ongoing research and evidence-based trauma-sensitive practices that center water as a catalyst for healing collective trauma, mental health and physical health challenges that arise due to exposure to contaminated water; increases water and climate justice for women, Indigenous, and Black and Brown communities; and promotes social and economic empowerment and employment of women, youth, Indigenous and Black and Brown communities in water-related industries.

***Gaps that could be addressed***

44. The commitments to enhance drinking water supply outline many actions, yet there are areas that could be developed further:
  - Affordability: Ensuring long-term affordability of water services for all socioeconomic groups.
  - Small-scale integration: Strategies to better incorporate small, community-led water initiatives alongside larger projects.

- Capacity building: Explicit strategies to develop local capacities for drinking water systems.
- Impact metrics: Clear metrics to assess the impact of financial investments on service improvements.
- Climate resilience: Integrating climate change adaptation into water supply systems.
- Local market development: Building local WASH markets to sustain services post-investment.
- Regulatory frameworks: Establishing comprehensive regulatory frameworks to oversee fund management and service equity.

## **SDG target 6.2 – End open defecation and provide access to sanitation and hygiene**

### *Overview*

45. In the Water Action Agenda, it was reported that 56 per cent of them addressed SDG target 6.2 of the 837 commitments. The content of the submissions themselves revealed that around 15 per cent of the commitments dealt specifically with sanitation.

### *Main problems the commitments will address*

46. The commitments described in the text focus on addressing sanitation issues and aim to improve the health and well-being of various communities through sustainable sanitation practices. These initiatives include constructing and rehabilitating sanitation infrastructure like latrines and toilets and implementing innovative processes such as wastewater reuse and treatment. The goals are to reduce disease burden, improve productivity, and enhance school attendance, particularly for girls.
47. There's a strong emphasis on developing sanitation projects that are environmentally sustainable and projects are designed to be inclusive, targeting vulnerable and traditionally marginalized groups, and aim to provide universal access to sanitation. This includes educating communities about hygiene, promoting gender equality, and ensuring social inclusion in sanitation practices. The commitments also involve strengthening national and subnational sanitation systems and policies, linking them with other sectors to create a holistic approach.

### *Global Acceleration Framework linkages*

- Finance

48. The financing aspects of the commitments related to SDG target 6.2 are geared towards creating sustainable and impactful sanitation solutions through strategic investment and funding models. A key element is the significant allocation of funds from both public and private sources, emphasizing the necessity of large-scale financial investments to address sanitation challenges effectively. This approach is complemented by the development of



innovative financing mechanisms, which are critical in bridging the funding gap in the sanitation sector.

49. There is a strong focus on mobilizing diverse financing instruments, including grants, loans and market-based solutions, to support sanitation infrastructure and services. These financial tools are employed to facilitate access to sanitation in both urban and rural areas, with a particular emphasis on the most vulnerable populations. The initiatives also highlight the importance of integrating financing with policy and institutional frameworks, ensuring that financial resources are managed efficiently and aligned with national and global sanitation goals.
50. Moreover, the adoption of integrated water resources management (IWRM) and circular economy principles in sanitation projects represents a shift towards more sustainable and resilient financial investments. This involves not only funding the construction and maintenance of sanitation infrastructure but also investing in systems that promote the reuse and recycling of sanitation by-products, thereby enhancing both environmental sustainability and economic viability.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Accelerate universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water and access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene in rural areas – Ministry of Public Works of Chile (#SDGAction52109)***

The commitment advances from 2023 in the creation of 25 Rural Sanitation Systems (RSS) per year in Semi-concentrated rural localities, (growing from 120 to 520 by 2030), going from 39 thousand homes (2022) with drinking water systems in such localities to 69,681 (2030); and increasing the current 124 thousand beneficiaries to 216 thousand by that year. The Rural Sanitation Services Sub-Directorate of the Ministry of Public Works has been provided with a budget (2023) of 370 million USD for investment initiatives in drinking water, sanitation and wastewater treatment, which is a substantial increase in the project portfolio, under the commitment to sustain it for the next five years.

- Data and information

51. The commitments related to sanitation demonstrate the crucial role the enhancement of data and information systems in addressing sanitation-related challenges. The integration and processing of data, particularly through advanced technologies, are key to understanding and managing sanitation needs effectively. This involves the collection, analysis and dissemination of information regarding sanitation infrastructure and services, which is critical for planning, implementing, and monitoring sanitation projects.
52. The development of robust monitoring and early warning systems is essential in ensuring the effectiveness of sanitation interventions, especially in areas prone to environmental stresses

that impact sanitation, such as droughts. These systems provide valuable insights into the status and performance of sanitation facilities, enabling timely responses to potential issues and ensuring the maintenance of hygienic conditions.

- Capacity development

53. The commitments' focus on capacity development in sanitation has been identified as important for ensuring sustainable and effective management of sanitation services. This involves enhancing the technical, financial, managerial and leadership skills of staff involved in sanitation projects. Training in these areas is essential for the successful implementation, maintenance and governance of sanitation systems. Additionally, capacity building in water governance and fund mobilization skills is important to ensure the sustainability and expansion of sanitation services.

54. The commitments include building institutional capacity, promoting multisectoral collaboration and integrating community participation in sanitation projects. This participatory process ensures that the needs and priorities of communities are addressed, and local organizations are empowered to manage sanitation services effectively.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Community-Focused Multisectoral Collaboration for Scaling Up WASH Services – Amref Health Africa (#SDGAction52055)***

The objectives include building the capacity of local organizations, facilitating partnerships among various sectors, and mobilizing community members to take an active role in the provision and maintenance of WASH services. The commitment will be implemented through participatory processes to ensure that the needs and priorities of the community are taken into account.

- Innovation

55. Innovations are being prioritized in the voluntary commitments to achieve significant improvements in sanitation. A key focus of these innovations is the development of affordable and efficient toilets. The designs are tailored to local needs, offering a range of products from traditional latrine pans to more advanced systems for challenging environments. Some systems are specifically developed to address local issues like clogging and to facilitate rapid installation, making them suitable for widespread use in various regions.

56. Waterless toilets not only address environmental concerns by reducing pollution and conserving water but also transform waste into useful resources like fertilizer or energy. The design of these toilets allows for local production and easy installation in diverse settings, enhancing access to sanitation facilities.

***Highlighted commitment***

***100 million people: Accelerating impact in Sanitation and Hygiene – LIXIL  
(#SDGAction50824)***

LIXIL has set out to improve sanitation and hygiene for 100 million people around the world by 2025 through the introduction of innovative and affordable toilet and hand hygiene solutions. SATO Toilet Solutions are a range of simple and aspirational, yet affordable, toilets and connection systems designed for use in rural and urban areas lacking access to reliable sanitation.

▪ Governance

57. The focus on sanitation and governance in the commitments involves enhancing accountability, regulatory harmonization and multisectoral collaboration to improve sanitation services. Key initiatives include global accountability mechanisms dedicated to stakeholders collaborating towards achieving sanitation.
58. Additionally, commitments aim to enhance multisectoral collaboration to scale up sanitation services with a community focus. This includes building the capacity of local organizations, fostering partnerships among various sectors, and engaging communities in the provision and maintenance of sanitation services. These efforts are grounded in participatory processes that prioritize community needs and perspectives.
59. In some regions, coordinated actions are directed towards improving access to safely-managed sanitation. This involves creating comprehensive surveys, establishing policy-making and regulatory bodies, formulating investment plans and adopting national programs for sanitation services. The establishment of monitoring systems for the sector is also crucial, serving as a basis for technical and economic regulation, with support from international partners.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Achieve safely managed water and sanitation for household and beyond household –  
Ministry of National Development Planning of the Republic of Indonesia  
(#SDGAction51085)***

Among the objectives of the commitment are to strengthen equity-driven monitoring and reporting and community-engagement to ensure sustainable WASH services, strengthen policies and regulation at the national, local (provincial and city), and rural level, ensure the formation of regulators, operators, and supervisors, ensure the existence of a tiered and continuous evaluation and monitoring system and ensure the participation of the community and other stakeholders, both for awareness of safe access and awareness of paying tariffs.

### *Gaps that could be addressed*

60. The following are additional areas where gaps could be filled:

- Rural and remote areas: Enhanced focus on sanitation in rural and remote communities where challenges are often intensified by geographical and infrastructural constraints.
- Behavioral change and education: More intensive behavioral change campaigns and educational programs to encourage proper sanitation practices and address cultural and social barriers.
- Innovation in sanitation technology: Increased emphasis on advanced, sustainable and locally manageable sanitation technologies.
- Waste management integration: A holistic approach to include efficient waste management systems, particularly for sewage and human waste, to prevent contamination and promote recycling.
- Vulnerable populations: Special attention for the sanitation needs of vulnerable groups, including women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities, ensuring accessible and appropriate facilities.
- Financial and resource allocation: Clearer financial models and resource allocation strategies for the long-term sustainability of sanitation projects.

### **SDG target 6.3 – Improve water quality, wastewater treatment and safe reuse**

#### *Overview*

61. The SDG 6 target focused on improving water quality, wastewater treatment and safe reuse of water saw 64 per cent of the commitments address these topics. Upon looking more in detail at the commitments, the actual number sits around 15 per cent.

#### *Main problems the commitments will address*

62. The commitments aim to improve water quality through enhanced wastewater management, involving a comprehensive strategy that includes reinforcing monitoring by relevant authorities, addressing the impact of solid waste, and increasing resilience against extreme weather events. There is a push to retrofit existing wastewater systems and incorporate nature-based solutions to optimize costs and manage stormwater effectively. Policy reforms advocate for integrated, inclusive approaches to wastewater management, recognizing the need for both on-site and off-site solutions. The commitments also recognize the value of wastewater-based epidemiology in monitoring public health and preparing for future pandemics.

63. Initiatives that are part of the Water Action Agenda include optimizing water treatment processes, implementing risk assessments for water systems and deploying technology for the purification and disinfection of water supplies, particularly in rural areas. Sustainable management practices and environmental sanitation are being strengthened to mitigate nutrient pollution from untreated sewage and agricultural runoff.
64. Commitments focus on increasing the recycling of urban wastewater, aiming to reduce the discharge of untreated water and integrate treated wastewater into existing water systems for agricultural and industrial use. Infrastructure enhancements and policy reforms are being pursued to support these objectives, with the goal of establishing a more sustainable and circular approach to water management that emphasizes the reuse of water as a valuable resource.

***Global Acceleration Framework linkages***

- Finance
65. Existing commitments with a focus on finance involve an allocation of funds, integrating public and private financing to upgrade and modernize wastewater treatment facilities. There is an emphasis on transforming these facilities into efficient, resource-recovering systems, capable of addressing emerging challenges such as aging infrastructure, climate change and pollution. These financing strategies emphasize sustainable investment practices, with principles like "do no significant harm" guiding environmentally responsible investments.

***Highlighted commitment***

***PNRR Investments in sewage and purification – Ministry of Environment and Energy Security of Italy (#SDGAction51181)***

The specific objective is to improve the process of wastewater treatment and, where it is possible, transform the treatment plants into "green factories" to allow the reuse of the treated wastewater for irrigation and industrial purposes.

- Data and information
66. Key objectives of the commitments related to SDG target 6.3 and data and information include enhancing awareness and leveraging decades of expertise in waterborne outbreak awareness and wastewater-based surveillance. These efforts contribute to detecting and identifying waterborne pathogens efficiently and support environmental surveillance of multiple infectious diseases. Effective policy and management interventions require robust water quality monitoring and assessment. Scaling up real-time water quality monitoring systems is crucial for identifying water quality status and impacts, essential for future management decisions. Additionally, key indicators can measure progress in sustainable wastewater treatment and disposal practices.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Implement the interactive platform for the visualization of the indicator 6.3.2 percentage of the body of water of good environmental quality at the water observatory – National Water Authority of Peru (#SDGAction50509)***

Periodic update of water quality data, as a summary for the indicator report 6.3.2. Percentage of water bodies of good environmental quality. To have a reliable diagnosis of the quality of water bodies, which contributes to better decision-making regarding water quality.

- Capacity development

67. A central goal is to elevate the capabilities of various stakeholders in the water sector, from utilities and community organizations to industry professionals and policymakers with regards to wastewater treatment, water quality and water reuse. This involves the creation and dissemination of comprehensive strategies that underpin investment in human capital, from workforce training to entrepreneurial support in water technology. Technical assistance programs are established to guide communities in obtaining and utilizing funds effectively for water infrastructure projects.
68. Capacity development activities also include the rollout of educational and hands-on experiences, such as interpretative paths that engage community members and authorities in practical water sustainability exercises. Moreover, the initiatives aim to expand the knowledge base on sustainable chemical management and wastewater treatment through standardized guidelines.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Capacity Building of Water Utilities for Accelerating SDG6 Implementation - The Danube Learning Partnership (D-LeaP) – The International Association of Water Service Companies in the Danube River Catchment Area (IAWD) (#SDGAction50592)***

The Danube Learning Partnership (D-LeaP) provides a comprehensive curriculum to the staff of water supply and sanitation utilities located in the Danube region. This mechanism allows the national water associations to offer eight regionally developed training programs following learning-by-doing principles and delivered by national experts and in local language.

- Innovation

69. The commitments explore the implementation of cutting-edge technologies and approaches to transform wastewater treatment processes and promote sustainable materials. The actions aim to extract valuable biopolymers from sewage sludge, advancing towards a circular

economy by creating local value chains and replacing oil-derived materials with greener alternatives. The process not only recovers nutrients but also encourages the use of treated wastewater for irrigation and industrial purposes.

70. Innovative strategies are proposed to reframe wastewater management, making it climate-resilient and inclusive. By integrating good practices and stimulating investment, the initiatives work towards aligning international efforts for wastewater management. This includes reviewing wastewater statistics and policies to support a global transition to a circular and resilient economy, emphasizing the need for better treatment and safe reuse of wastewater.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Circular wastewater treatment: Extracting biopolymers from wastewater sludge in Campinas, Brazil – TU Delft (#SDGAction51999)***

With partners from the private and public sector, a demonstration installation for the extraction of a valuable biopolymer from sewage sludge will be brought from Europe to Brazil. The installation was built in the TU-led and EU financed Water Mining project and will be implemented for the first time, outside Europe.

▪ Governance

71. Commitments are underway to improve water quality and wastewater management through upgraded infrastructure, better monitoring and policy reforms. Regulatory updates aim to reduce pollutants and plastic pollution, with a focus on cross-sectoral coordination. Additionally, there is a push for increased urban wastewater reuse, with studies to evaluate the economic viability and necessary legal and policy changes to encourage infrastructure upgrades.

***Highlighted commitment***

***European Union commitments to strengthen the policy and regulatory framework on water and zero pollution – European Union (#SDGAction51182)***

The European Union commits to strengthen the policy and regulatory framework on water and zero pollution by: (1) aiming to improving EU water quality, (2) improving water quality protection by regularly reviewing current levels of protection, (3) aiming to reduce by 50% its plastic litter at sea and by 30% its microplastics released into the environment. (4) 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, (5) committing to addressing land-based sources of pollution and (6) committing 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.

### ***Gaps that could be addressed***

72. There are still many gaps that can be taken into consideration when moving forward:

- Wastewater management strategies: More focus on integrating treatment, recycling and reuse within wastewater management strategies.
- Infrastructure in the Global South: Significant investments in the Global South in wastewater infrastructure to address inadequate systems and prevent pollution.
- Pollution source management: Identifying and managing sources of water pollution, including industrial, agricultural and urban runoff.
- Real-time water quality monitoring: Implementing advanced, real-time monitoring systems for water quality assessment.
- Public health and wastewater epidemiology: Expanding the role of wastewater in public health surveillance for disease prevention.
- Regulatory frameworks: Strengthening and enforcing regulatory frameworks for wastewater treatment and water quality standards.
- Community engagement in wastewater management: Increasing public awareness and community involvement in understanding the impacts of wastewater on ecosystems and health.
- Climate resilience in wastewater systems: Enhancing the resilience of wastewater systems to climate change impacts, such as extreme weather events.
- Integrated water resource management: Emphasizing the interconnectedness of wastewater, water supply, and water quality through integrated management approaches.
- Innovation in wastewater treatment: Encouraging research in new and sustainable wastewater treatment technologies, including nature-based solutions.

### **SDG target 6.4 – Increase water-use efficiency and ensure freshwater supplies**

#### ***Overview***

73. SDG target 6.4 focuses on water use efficiency, ensuring sustainable withdrawals of water and reducing the number of people suffering from water scarcity. Of the reported 62 per cent of the 837 commitments submitted addressing this goal, 12 per cent actually address the issues related to the target.

#### ***Main problems the commitments will address***

74. The commitments are geared towards enhancing water use efficiency by modernizing water infrastructure and management. Renovating pipelines and introducing automated



systems aim to minimize water loss, while new metering and pricing strategies incentivize conservation. Technological advancements are set to lower energy needs in water distribution, aligning with reducing the overall environmental footprint of water services. In the realm of agriculture, enhancing water efficiency is a critical goal being addressed through various measures such as implementing advanced irrigation technologies, including drip irrigation systems and solar irrigation systems.

75. The commitments aim to combat water scarcity through enhancing infrastructure for efficient water use and reuse, promoting scientific research to accurately map and manage water resources and mobilizing financial resources for adaptation strategies. Initiatives also focus on community engagement and capacity building, ensuring that local stakeholders are equipped to implement sustainable water management practices. Emphasis is placed on innovative technology and private sector involvement to develop solutions that optimize water consumption and minimize waste, all within strengthened policy frameworks that support sustainable water governance.

### ***Global Acceleration Framework linkages***

- Finance

76. The commitments center on enhancing water use efficiency through innovative financing. Financing is a critical component, with initiatives focusing on increasing investment in water infrastructure and management to close funding gaps. This includes mobilizing resources from both public and private sectors, employing international financial instruments, and leveraging partnerships for investment in water efficiency projects.

77. To address water scarcity, financial strategies are being mobilized to prioritize investments in water sector adaptation, focusing on areas most susceptible to climate change. This includes increasing adaptation finance to match the levels traditionally reserved for mitigation, redirecting it towards regions facing acute water shortages. The finance is being channeled into developing scientific and policy tools that integrate climate considerations into economic planning, which is essential for water-scarce regions.

### ***Highlighted commitment***

#### ***Arab Initiative for Mobilizing Climate Finance for Water (AIM Climate Finance for Water) – United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) (#SDGAction52303)***

This objective supports regional and global commitments to increase adaptation finance so that it becomes on par with mitigation finance. This is particularly relevant for the water-scarce Arab region where only one-third of international public climate finance flows are directed towards adaptation. Arab States have also repeatedly emphasized the importance of

adaptation in the water sector and water-dependent sectors in their nationally determined contributions and in their national and sectoral policies and plans.

- Data and information

78. The focus on water use efficiency and data management is evident in the development and application of sophisticated web-based information systems that monitor and analyze irrigation and water use. This system facilitates informed decision-making and effective planning by providing comprehensive data on various factors affecting irrigation, water usage, and agricultural output. Efforts to enhance water efficiency are increasingly focused on leveraging data and technology. The creation of centralized data portals is pivotal for effective water management and informed policy-making. In the business sector, there's a rising commitment to invest in water-efficient practices, indicating a broader trend towards sustainability. Real-time water quality and monitoring platforms exemplify the critical use of technology in optimizing water resource management.
79. Efforts to mitigate water scarcity are increasingly dependent on advanced technologies and data analytics. Utilizing satellite observations and analytical platforms, key water cycle data such as evapotranspiration are monitored, enhancing the understanding of water resource availability and the impacts of climate change and demographic shifts. Artificial intelligence amplifies this data's utility, offering predictive insights for water management, including quality monitoring, leakage detection and consumer usage patterns. This data-driven approach bolsters water efficiency and supports sustainable management practices. Furthermore, sophisticated models are being crafted to thoroughly examine water systems and pollutant pathways, thus providing a comprehensive perspective on water dynamics essential for informed policy-making and tackling the challenges of water scarcity.

***Highlighted commitment***

***The IRCAI Water Observatory - AI in the service of SDG 6 – The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia (#SDGAction50321)***

The Water Observatory will utilize a science-based set of state-of-the-art technological tools for water management and ESG (environmental, social and governance) reporting and informed decision making. It is a SaaS platform that helps governments collect, process and analyze water and ESG data to automate reporting in accordance with key frameworks of the UN. It reports water footprints in real time across multiple data sources to better align with SDG 6, national and international policies and assess "Reflect and Respond" commitments.

- Capacity development

80. Training programs targeted at technical and managerial staff within water utilities contribute to a cycle of performance improvements that impact water efficiency directly. Knowledge exchange programs further support the development of capabilities in efficient water

management practices. Such efforts ensure that stakeholders are equipped to optimize water use, contributing to the sustainable management of water resources. The focus of these initiatives is to foster a skilled workforce capable of employing innovative water management strategies, thereby safeguarding the longevity and sustainability of water resources.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Practical college-based continuous education training facility for flood-drought mitigation, MAR, Hydrogen for Sustainable Agriculture application, Quinoa drought-resistant crop production – Kyrgyzstan Osh region (#SDGAction50696)***

The initiative requires proper TVET (technical and vocational education and training) capacity-building support to use new sources of energy, and fertilizers for farmers. The balanced use of natural resources and sustainable use of mineral fertilizers, combined with eco-friendly technologies, including sustainable water usage, a responsible attitude to nature, and biodiversity, require proper knowledge, and advanced irrigation technologies with scientific and TVET support.

▪ Innovation

81. Innovative strategies are being deployed to enhance water use efficiency in residential sectors by substituting traditional water fixtures with high-efficiency alternatives. Research organizations are focusing on developing resilient water strategies that include efficient water usage, reuse and eco-friendly solutions, especially to counteract the impact of climate change. They are advancing these initiatives through strategic partnerships and influencing policy to promote the adoption of these practices broadly.
82. Nationally, there is a focus on employing water conservation techniques in sectors that traditionally consume large quantities of water, like agriculture. This involves upgrading infrastructure and embracing water-saving irrigation practices, with the effectiveness of such initiatives being rigorously evaluated to ensure ongoing water efficiency improvements.
83. Technological collaborations are also producing advanced analytical tools that utilize artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things to optimize water network management. These tools streamline data analysis, facilitating more efficient decision-making in water resource management, leading to substantial improvements in network efficiency and a reduction in wastage. Such innovations are vital for addressing the dual challenges of water scarcity and energy conservation.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Promote water conservation in agriculture and improve the use efficiency of farmland irrigation water – Ministry of Water Resources of the People, Republic of China (#SDGAction50836)***

The effective utilization coefficient of farmland irrigation water is a key indicator of the efficiency of irrigation water use and the level of water conservation in agriculture, and has been included in the most stringent assessment of water resources management system for many consecutive years. Monitoring is conducted every year and the measurement results of the coefficient of nationwide irrigation areas on different scales are obtained.

- Governance

84. Efforts to govern water use efficiency are increasingly prioritized through the revision and implementation of comprehensive water management policies and laws. Governance reforms focus on embedding climate change considerations into water planning and establishing rigorous water efficiency standards across sectors. These reforms often mandate the creation of specialized management units within public agencies to develop and oversee water efficiency action plans and enforce efficiency indicators.

***Gaps that could be addressed***

85. The commitments provided emphasize increasing water supply and improving water infrastructure, with less focus on specific strategies for enhancing water use efficiency. Key gaps include:

- Agricultural water efficiency: Improve irrigation efficiency and adopt water-saving agricultural practices.
- Incentives for water-saving technologies: Incentivize and support for the adoption of water-efficient technologies across sectors, including agriculture, industry and domestic use.
- Non-revenue water: Reduce non-revenue water in distribution networks.
- Innovation in technologies to mitigate water scarcity: Stronger focus on funding and developing technologies specifically designed to combat water scarcity, such as advanced desalination methods, atmospheric water generation, and more effective water recycling and reuse systems.
- Demand-side management: Balance supply-side management with the importance of managing and reducing non-essential water use with such actions such as tiered pricing structures and incentives for reduced consumption.
- Infrastructure modernization: Explicit commitment to repairing and modernizing aging water delivery systems to minimize leakage and ensure efficient distribution.
- Financial frameworks for water scarcity: More detailed investment framework to direct funds into water scarcity solutions including creating financial incentives for water-saving technologies and conservation efforts, especially in the most vulnerable regions.

## **SDG target 6.5 – Implement integrated water resources management**

### ***Overview***

86. SDG target 6.5 has two important and very much linked components, integrated water resources management (IWRM) and transboundary water cooperation. Although of the 837 commitments, 64 per cent were reported to address this target, a more accurate counting puts the number at approximately 20 per cent.

### ***Main problems the commitments will address***

87. The commitments under SDG target 6.5 include developing projects that enable a balanced use of water between different sectors. They also involve monitoring and evaluation processes to understand the progress and impacts of IWRM implementation. This includes using indicators to identify challenges, establish roadmaps that respond to national contexts, and accelerate IWRM implementation. The initiatives also encompass providing technical assistance and advice for policy processes, planning and management instruments related to IWRM. Emphasis is placed on engaging multiple stakeholders and sectors in consultation processes, creating alliances and overcoming financial gaps in IWRM implementation.
88. The commitments addressing transboundary water cooperation encompass a range of strategies and approaches that underscore the significance of collaborative efforts in managing shared water resources. A prominent aspect of these commitments is the ratification and implementation of international legal frameworks. Alongside these legal measures, there is a strong emphasis on capacity building, knowledge sharing and joint management and planning. This involves the development and execution of integrated water resource management plans in transboundary catchments, which are tailored to ensure sustainable and equitable water use while considering aspects like water quality, ecosystem health and resilience against climate change.
89. Lastly, financial aspects are also addressed, with some commitments proposing mechanisms to mobilize resources and investments for sustainable water projects. This includes exploring innovative financing solutions to support the various initiatives and projects related to transboundary water management.

### ***Global Acceleration Framework linkages***

- Finance

90. Some of the commitments around IWRM are centered around financial strategies, with a significant emphasis on mobilizing funding. They include the allocation of funding to support the development and scaling of high-impact water resilience projects, from pilot stages to mature programs. These financial resources are critical in meeting the demands of water governance, particularly in the face of climate change and water-related challenges. Additionally, these programs feature matchmaking initiatives, designed to link water

management projects with appropriate financial sources, thereby addressing the funding gaps in conservation and development activities.

91. To bridge the financial gap in addressing transboundary waters, innovative financial strategies proposed amongst the commitments, including mobilizing both public and private investments. They exemplify the need for collaborative action and substantial investment in large-scale projects for effective water management. These initiatives aim to reinforce institutional frameworks and sustainable water policies, fostering cooperation among nations sharing water bodies. Addressing the financial constraints is key to enabling countries and local basin organizations to collaborate effectively. Therefore, these commitments aim to create innovative financing mechanisms and transforming water cooperation frameworks into robust investment platforms.

***Highlighted commitment***

*Financing transboundary water development - Blue Peace Financing – Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs / Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC (#SDGAction50767)*

The Blue Peace Financing Program funded by SDC and implemented by UNCDF contributes to unlocking public and private capital for better access to water-related services and transboundary water cooperation; promoting access to public and private capital for water local and regional non-sovereign entities (e.g. River Basin Organizations), who manage water resources (surface and Groundwater); providing Technical Assistance to strengthen the institutional capacity of these local and regional non-sovereign entities for them to mobilize and manage private and public capital; providing technical support to these non-sovereign entities to develop pipeline of investment projects; amongst other benefits.

- Data and information

92. Key objectives of IWRM commitments related to data and information include developing hydrological data to inform data-driven decision-making in the water sector. This involves the digitization of water networks, implementing intelligent systems for optimal water resource management and reducing water loss.
93. Transboundary water cooperation relies heavily on the collection, sharing, and analysis of data and information. Data-driven decision-making is key to equitable and efficient water allocation, particularly in the context of climate change. By enhancing the accessibility and exchange of hydrometeorological data, these initiatives aim to foster a comprehensive understanding of water availability, demand and usage. They also work to inform economic valuations of water, supporting the creation of forward-looking water allocation strategies.
94. Commitments also underscore the importance of data and knowledge production and increasing the research-policy interface in water-related fields. By updating databases, enhancing information systems and providing training, these projects work towards a future

where and IWRM and transboundary water cooperation is informed by a solid foundation of data and shared knowledge.

***Highlighted commitment***

*Committing to Action for the African Great Lakes – African Center for Aquatic Research and Education (#SDGAction51740)*

IISD-ACARE, through the African Great Lakes Advisory Group Network, commit to thriving, transboundary African Great Lakes, through collaborative actions, including: capacity building, standardized data collection protocols, accessible information and data, harmonized research priorities, strengthened networks, and inclusive engagement strategies for communities.

- Capacity development

95. The IWRM-related commitments included some capacity development activities including empowering individuals and strengthening governance through enhanced capacity to promote IWRM principles, emphasizing training and development programs to facilitate the implementation of technology-driven water management solutions. Efforts also focus on training decision-makers in IWRM tools and methodologies.
96. Transboundary water cooperation commitments contain aspects of capacity development, ensuring that regions and communities have the necessary skills, knowledge and tools to manage shared water resources effectively. The core of such capacity-building efforts focuses on enhancing the competencies of various stakeholders, including scientists, policymakers and water managers. Moreover, improving governance frameworks and institutional capabilities has been identified as a key strategy in promoting effective multi-country cooperation and ensuring the long-term sustainability of transboundary water resources.

***Highlighted commitment***

*Capacity building for transboundary water cooperation in Namibia – Ministry of the Environment and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Finland (#SDGAction51340)*

The cooperation aims to provide support to Namibia's accession process to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) and develop cooperation between Finland and Namibia on transboundary water management.

The cooperation will cover e.g. the topics of monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters and capacity building on institutional mechanisms for transboundary water cooperation

- Innovation

97. Innovation was the focus of many of the IWRM-related commitments. These innovations include integrating land and watershed management with nature-based solutions like rainwater harvesting and decentralized aquifer recharge. In agriculture, there is a shift towards sustainable practices such as regenerative agriculture, permaculture and agroecology, blending modern techniques with indigenous knowledge. Urban development also incorporates innovative blue-and-green infrastructure to mitigate urban heat effects and enhance nature conservation. Technological advancements also play a crucial role in some of the commitments, with the development of digital tools for integrated water data management, improving early warning systems, disaster risk management and establishing global water information services.
98. Innovation in transboundary water cooperation combines technological advancements and creative financing to enhance water resource management and planning across borders. This includes developing sophisticated decision support systems (DSS), information systems that support organizational decision<sup>14</sup> for equitable water distribution, considering various demands and the impacts of climate change. Innovative approaches also rejuvenate policymaking and stakeholder engagement, utilizing cutting-edge research for sustainable water resource management. Crucial to these efforts is innovative financing, which mobilizes public and private capital to support cooperative water management initiatives, transforming them into investment platforms for peace and sustainable development.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Strengthening nature-based solutions, such as the expansion of Rain Nests: rainwater harvesting – Ministry of Integrated Water Management, Government of Jalisco (Local/Regional Government) (#SDGAction50942)***

The search for decentralized alternatives that apply on the short, medium and long term, for the drinking water supply led to the conceptualization of the "Rain Nests" program, which seeks to create a decentralized network of rainwater harvesting infrastructure, increasing thus, water resilience for the inhabitants of homes with greater water vulnerability in the Metropolitan Area of Guadalajara and the interior of the State of Jalisco.

- Governance

99. Commitments related to governance and IWRM encompass the integration of policies and decision-making across sectors and levels, including legal, institutional and administrative aspects. This holistic approach enables collaborative decision-making involving governments, the private sector and communities, ensuring sustainable and equitable water management that meets diverse needs. IWRM governance strengthens institutions and policies for

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<sup>14</sup> Example: <https://rrp.unescap.org/decision-support-system>



comprehensive water management, establishing clear stakeholder roles, enhancing coordination and promoting transparency and accountability. These commitments aim to balance social, economic and environmental goals, recognizing the interconnectivity of water with sectors like agriculture, energy and urban development. Participatory governance models aim to engage local communities and diverse interest groups, ensuring inclusive decision-making that reflects the needs of marginalized groups.

100. Commitments under SDG target 6.5 related to transboundary water cooperation and governance involve establishing robust legal and institutional frameworks, often guided by international conventions, to facilitate collaborative decision-making and conflict resolution among countries sharing water bodies. Effective governance mechanisms in transboundary cooperation incorporate integrated water resource management practices, considering diverse water uses, ecological conservation and climate change adaptation.

***Highlighted commitment***

***BIO-PLATEAUX: strengthen transboundary cooperation for water resources and aquatic biodiversity management in the Guiana shield – Guiana Water Office (OEG), France (#SDGAction51650)***

Moving forward, the Transboundary Observatory has four components:

(1) Institutional prefiguration (legal, organizational, and economic studies) (2) animation of the network of actors, with international conference, participative activities in coordination with local authorities and autochthonous communities, territorial workshops, identification of priority joint projects, awareness raising, and articulation with the Amazonian basin, (3) knowledge and studies, with three main technical working groups on hydrology and risks; pollution, quality of aquatic environments and aquatic biodiversity; and essential services (drinking water supply, sanitation, solid waste management) and (4) river basin planning, starting with defining a joint methodology, prepare baseline, common diagnosis on the basin and definition of joint objectives.

***Gaps that could be addressed***

101. While the commitments under SDG target 6.5 cover a lot of ground, some gaps could still be focused on:
- Stakeholder involvement: Detail strategies for involving local communities, indigenous groups and women in IWRM processes.
  - Allocation and conflict resolution mechanisms: Outline procedures for allocating water resources and resolving disputes over water use, particularly in transboundary water management scenarios.
  - Data and information sharing: Inadequate focus on establishing integrated data management systems for informed decision-making across all sectors involved in IWRM.

- Legal and regulatory frameworks: Approaches to developing or strengthening legal and institutional frameworks to support IWRM and transboundary water cooperation at regional, national and sub-national levels.
- Capacity building for transboundary water diplomacy: Train government officials, diplomats and other stakeholders in negotiation, conflict resolution and cooperative management of shared water resources.
- Joint monitoring and data sharing: Establish joint monitoring systems and protocols for shared data management.
- Funding and investment for transboundary initiatives: Funding and investment in transboundary water projects.

## **SDG target 6.6 – Protect and restore water-related ecosystems**

### ***Overview***

102. SDG target 6.6, had a reported 57 per cent of the commitments in addressing on the protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems, but upon closer review, around 10 per cent of the commitments focused on these issues.

### ***Main problems the commitments will address***

103. The collective commitments aimed at protecting water-related ecosystems are characterized by a diverse range of strategies and collaborations, each addressing different facets of water ecosystem conservation and restoration. These initiatives leverage community engagement, cross-sectoral partnerships and international support to enhance the resilience of vulnerable water-stressed communities, advocate for the intrinsic rights of wetlands and integrate water conservation targets into national policies. Academic and government-led initiatives emphasize the interconnectedness of water governance with broader sustainable development goals, while indigenous knowledge and citizen observatories play crucial roles in preserving traditional water management systems and addressing local water scarcity. There's a significant focus on implementing nature-based solutions, improving water infrastructure, and fostering sustainable development in rural and urban settings. Additionally, efforts are being made to promote legal frameworks that recognize the rights of water ecosystems, with global alliances advocating for policy shifts that align human activities with ecological realities. The restoration of small water cycles and peatland ecosystems is also a priority, supporting the maintenance of biodiversity and mitigating climate change impacts. These commitments are part of a comprehensive approach to ensure the sustainability and protection of the planet's vital water-related ecosystems.

### ***Global Acceleration Framework linkages***

- Finance
104. The initiatives for protecting water-related ecosystems with a focus on finance are multifaceted and integral to sustainable development. They involve the establishment of frameworks and

partnerships aimed at preserving and rejuvenating rivers, recognizing their vital role in supporting life and economies. International financial institutions back large-scale river basin management programs that integrate ecological protection with economic growth, emphasizing the importance of nature-positive approaches in investment and policy decisions. Conservation organizations commit significant financial resources to safeguard extensive stretches of rivers and vast areas of wetlands, linking the health of freshwater systems directly to climate change mitigation and the well-being of global communities. These efforts combine direct action with substantial investment, reflecting a growing recognition of the intrinsic connection between ecosystem vitality, climate resilience and the need for sustainable financial strategies.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Freshwater and 2030 – The Nature Conservancy (#SDGAction49791)***

The Nature Conservancy commits to conserving 1 million kilometers of rivers and 30 million hectares of lakes and wetlands benefiting tens of millions of people by 2030. To deliver on this commitment, we will invest \$250 million over the next seven years in partnership with the public and private sector through projects around the world.

- Data and information

105. Efforts to protect water-related ecosystems are increasingly relying on the integration of comprehensive data and information systems. Initiatives are underway to enhance biodiversity information and monitoring systems, allowing open access to data on ecosystems in various basins, facilitating the prioritization of studies, monitoring and actions. The development of secondary water quality standards is part of these endeavors, aiming to conserve ecosystem characteristics and support associated activities. Additionally, networks are embarking on ambitious projects to define safe and just Earth system boundaries, with a focus on surface and groundwater flows, informing target setting for various sectors. These initiatives underscore the importance of sound knowledge frameworks to address water-related risks and impacts and the adoption of science-based solutions for sustainable water futures.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Accelerate use of digital solutions for a sustainable future for water – DHI A/S (#SDGAction50804)***

DHI commits to accelerate the use of digital solutions for a sustainable future for water by developing digital tools and solutions which integrate water data from source to sea with coherent information systems that can support water and climate services; improving early warning systems and further developing data-driven disaster risk management solutions to reduce or mitigate negative impacts of natural hazards; and establishing and implementing integrated global water information services that allow for improving water and land management, adapting to climate change and improving socio-economic and environmental resilience.

- Capacity development

106. Commitments to capacity development in the protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems encompass a comprehensive approach to enhance the abilities of communities and decision-makers in tackling water-related challenges. These commitments involve initiatives aimed at enabling cities and regions to better understand and assess existing and future water risks, thereby improving their resilience against climate change and urbanization pressures. Emphasizing the importance of collaborative learning and access to technical expertise, these commitments facilitate peer-to-peer exchanges and provide access to high-quality data and analytical tools. By strengthening local expertise in areas such as coastal protection, flood management and weather prediction, these initiatives aim to build a more informed and capable workforce.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Building expertise on coastal protection and flood management – PUB, Singapore's National Water Agency) (#SDGAction51112)***

The Coastal Protection and Flood Management Research Programme (CFRP) will have a Centre of Excellence (CoE) on Coastal Protection and Flood Management as the main vehicle to carry out in-house research and to drive and integrate coastal-related research agenda. The CoE aims to attract and anchor international experts and researchers to Singapore for research collaborations. Through knowledge transfer and research collaborations, this will over time help to build up the local capacity and expertise in coastal protection solutioning.

- Innovation

107. Innovative approaches are being adopted to protect water-related ecosystems, focusing on practical, sustainable solutions that integrate environmental restoration with community development. These projects encompass a range of innovative methods such as implementing small, centralized water purification systems, reverse osmosis treatments and sedimentation tanks to improve water quality. Additionally, they include the construction of waste collection pools, terraced fields and check dams to mitigate soil erosion and water pollution. Rainfall and soil moisture monitoring stations, as well as water level telemetering stations, are being set up to enhance disaster preparedness.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Freshwater Challenge – World Wildlife Fund (WWF) (#SDGAction51667)***

The Freshwater Challenge is a multi-stakeholder partnership to integrate freshwater restoration in national action programs, relevant policies and planning frameworks across

sectors and channel support at country and basin-level with the aim of bringing life and ecosystem services back to our rivers and inland wetlands and of supporting sustained prosperity for people and nature.

- Governance

108. In the realm of water-related ecosystem protection, the commitments reflect a global shift towards enhanced governance and legal frameworks. This movement is characterized by a growing emphasis on collaborative strategies involving various stakeholders, including governments, indigenous communities and environmental organizations. Key to these efforts is the focus on establishing robust legal structures and policy frameworks that recognize and protect the rights of water ecosystems, linked to current initiatives promoting the rights of nature.
109. Governments are increasingly acknowledging the need for comprehensive action plans and agencies dedicated to safeguarding freshwater resources. These plans often encompass wide-ranging objectives, from monitoring and restoring significant water bodies to improving coordination among different levels of governance and stakeholders.
110. Furthermore, international collaborations and commitments are focusing on enhancing water quality, reducing pollution and restoring natural waterways. These efforts are often integrated into broader environmental and climate action frameworks, highlighting the interconnected nature of water ecosystems with global sustainability goals.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Building Towards Recognition of the Nature Rights of the River Shannon – Environmental Justice Network Ireland (EJNI) (#SDGAction51261)***

This commitment aims to build support and recognition for the rights of the River Shannon as a separate legal entity and has the objective to: (1) Draft a declaration on the rights of the River Shannon, (2) build support with a coalition of NGO signatories to the declaration, (3) build support with the river communities up and down the Shannon, (4) form a Community of Protectors/Guardians of the River and (5) begin a campaign for national recognition of the rights of Ireland’s greatest river.

***Gaps that could be addressed***

111. The commitments related to SDG target 6.6 on protecting and restoring freshwater ecosystems have room to further address the following:
  - Ecosystem-based policy frameworks: Policy frameworks that explicitly incorporate ecosystem-based approaches to prioritize the health of ecosystems in water

management. Legal and policy provisions that ensure the integration of ecosystem services into water governance.

- Combating pollution and over-extraction: Strategies to prevent and mitigate pollution in aquatic ecosystems and measures to control over-extraction of water resources.
- Habitat fragmentation: Initiatives to address the fragmentation of habitats which is critical for the survival of many aquatic species.
- Biodiversity preservation: Explicit commitment to preserving the biodiversity within aquatic ecosystems.
- Targeted restoration projects: Targeted restoration projects that are action-oriented and have clearly defined objectives and outcomes.
- Legal protections for ecosystems: Legal protections and enforcement mechanisms for the conservation of water-related ecosystems.
- Funding for ecosystem services: Support for the valuation and payment for ecosystem services.
- Integration of traditional ecological knowledge: Integrate traditional ecological knowledge and practices of Indigenous and local communities in water management.

### **SDG target 6.a – Expand water and sanitation support to developing countries**

#### *Overview*

112. SDG target 6.a refers to the amount of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) given to water and sanitation. Over 55 per cent of the commitments said they addressed this target, but possibly represents a misunderstanding about the contents of SDG target 6.a. Around 2 per cent of the commitments fit under this target.

#### *Main problems the commitments will address*

113. Among the commitments that have a link to ODA, there's a strong emphasis on providing sustainable water and sanitation services, improving public management systems and building capacities in recipient countries. These efforts align with the goal of ensuring human rights to water and sanitation, contributing to broader SDGs.
114. There are initiatives to foster open dialogue and strengthen cooperation to create efficient financial ecosystems for water-related projects, particularly through blended finance facilities. This approach seeks to synergize different instruments and organizations, aiming for significant leverage in investments.
115. Collaborative programs between various international organizations and government ministries aim to facilitate and finance innovative water and sanitation solutions. These initiatives focus on bridging service and financial gaps in water, sanitation and hygiene.

116. Other initiatives focus on supporting water sector investments in the Global South, aiming to mobilize investment funds, increase the scale of water, sanitation and hygiene projects and extend benefits to vulnerable groups.
117. Efforts are also made to influence quality, sustainability and innovation in water-related operations, leveraging financial instruments and promoting global dialogue. These efforts are part of a larger strategy to achieve water-related SDGs and develop climate-resilient water management strategies.
118. These actions collectively represent a commitment to improving water management, enhancing access to clean water and sanitation and addressing climate change challenges. These commitments involve a mix of policy development, financial investment, capacity development and innovative approaches to ensure sustainable and equitable water resource management.<sup>15</sup>

***Highlighted commitments***

***Kumamoto Initiative for Water - Promoting both climate change adaptation and mitigation measures and measures to improve people's basic living environment – Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism and relevant Ministries (#SDGAction50308)***

Japan will proactively contribute to the solution of water-related social issues faced by the Asia-Pacific region by developing “Quality Infrastructure” capitalizing on Japan’s advanced technologies, and based on a “New Form of Capitalism,” which means promoting public-private partnerships and fostering digitization and innovation to solve social issues as a growth engine for sustainable development and the formation of a resilient society and economy.

***Partners for Water 2022-2027 “Driving water security worldwide” – Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, Kingdom of the Netherlands (#SDGAction51243)***

Partners for Water is a programme of the Dutch government that works on water-related issues across the world. The programme does this in long-term cooperation with local partners and the Dutch water sector and encourages knowledge sharing, innovations and an integrated approach. This is how the Kingdom of the Netherlands contributes to improving water safety and sustainable water management for people, plants and animals.

***Gaps that could be addressed***

119. The challenge of financing the world's water and sanitation needs is immense and complex, with the current levels of Official Development Assistance (ODA) falling short of what is required to effectively address these critical issues. The gap between the available ODA

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<sup>15</sup> There were not enough commitments to break them down by the GAF accelerators.

and the actual financial requirements for water and sanitation infrastructure, maintenance and services are significant. This shortfall is particularly pronounced in the Global South, where the need for sustainable water and sanitation solutions is most acute, and where access to clean water and sanitation facilities can have transformative effects on health, education and economic development. To bridge this gap, innovative financing solutions beyond traditional ODA are essential:

- **Prioritizing domestic financing:** Prioritize water and sanitation in governmental budgets, exploring improved tax collection or reallocating expenditures to increase fiscal space.
- **Exploring impact investing and social bonds:** Utilize these financial instruments attract investments focused on social and environmental impacts, aligning with socially responsible investing trends.
- **Implementing community-based financing models:** Local population contributions to funding and management to enhance project ownership and sustainability.
- **Incorporating true cost in pricing models:** Reflecting environmental and social costs in water and sanitation pricing can generate necessary funds while promoting conservation.
- **Leveraging technology for cost reduction:** Technological innovations to reduce costs and increase efficiency, making projects more affordable and feasible in resource-constrained settings.
- **Engaging public-private partnerships:** Leveraging private sector expertise and capital through public-private partnerships to mobilize additional resources and introduce innovation.
- **Balancing affordability and sustainability:** Ensuring water and sanitation services remain affordable for vulnerable populations while achieving financial sustainability.

## **SDG target 6.b – Support local engagement in water and sanitation management**

### *Overview*

120. While over 50 per cent of the commitments stated that they addressed SDG target 6.b, which is the “proportion of local administrative units with established and operational policies and procedures for participation of local communities in water and sanitation management,” in reality, less than 1 per cent of all commitments addressed this issue.

### *Main problems the commitments will address*

121. Key actions under these commitments include the formation of advisory councils, composed of community members, to guide and influence strategic decision-making about water issues. These councils play a crucial role in ensuring that the voices and needs of local communities are heard and addressed.



122. A key aspect of these actions is the educational and empowerment component directed at local communities. Awareness campaigns and training programs are being conducted to enhance understanding of water as a common good and to equip communities with the skills needed for effective management and conflict resolution. Such educational efforts are aimed at ensuring the long-term maintenance and sustainability of water infrastructure, fostering social cohesion and promoting active community participation in water resource management.

***Highlighted commitments***

***Empowering First Nations Voice – Northern Territory Government, Canada  
(#SDGAction52278)***

By 2024, the Northern Territory Government will establish an Aboriginal Water Security Advisory Council for the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water Security to ensure Aboriginal Territorians have a voice on strategic water issues and enhance Aboriginal participation in decisions around water. In addition, the Northern Territory Government will partner with First Nations organizations to progress cultural values mapping for water across the Territory.

*Supporting and strengthening the participation of local communities in the integrated management of water resources, flood risk and local development through the River Contracts - RCs (Contratti di Fiume - CdF) – Italian Ministry of the Environment and Energy Security (#SDGAction50845)*

The specific objective of the project is to contribute to the development and strengthening of watershed governance through the River Contracts (RCs), voluntary-based tools of strategic and negotiated planning, that contribute to the integrated management of water resources, flood risk and local development at catchment and sub-catchment scale.

***The universal model of the “Local water partnership” and “Local water strategy” as the basis for building water security at the local and global level - Alina Gromadzka Farm / Gospodarstwo Rolne Alina Gromadzka (#SDGAction50747)***

The aim of new theoretical initiative (proposal for future actions under the Water Action Agenda) is to present of the universal model (possible to implementation in any conditions, globally, according to one methodology) 'local water partnerships' as the basic organizational unit (public-private-nongovernmental partnerships) which will be planning and implementing 'local water strategies' at the local (micro / small catchment) level.

***Gaps that could be addressed***

123. The lack of public participation in decision-making on water and sanitation at the local level presents several gaps that need addressing:

- Enhance community engagement and representation: Establish structured platforms for community dialogues to hear and integrate the voices of local, marginalized and indigenous groups into policy and project planning.
- Increase transparency and accessibility of Information: Ensure project details are disseminated in understandable language and formats, making data accessible to the public.
- Develop capacity within communities: Train and educate community members on water management and sanitation issues to empower their participation in decision-making processes.
- Strengthen legal and institutional frameworks: Mandate community participation in water and sanitation governance for consistent and meaningful involvement.
- Establish feedback mechanisms: Use regular surveys, community meetings and online platforms to gather community input and monitor service satisfaction, facilitating continuous improvement.
- Foster partnerships for resource enhancement: Collaborate with local governments, NGOs and the private sector to bring additional resources and expertise, improving the quality and sustainability of water and sanitation services.

### **Commitments not captured under specific SDG 6 targets**

124. Not all actions related to water can find a home in the SDG 6 framework, and this is also true for the commitments of the Water Action Agenda. The following section will try to briefly capture some of the major areas that emerged when looking more closely at the commitments. Both gender and education also had a significant number of commitments, but they will be found in the section following this one that looks at the interlinkages with other SDGs.

#### ***Awareness-raising***

125. There are dozens of commitments aimed at elevating awareness of water and sanitation issues on different scales targeting enhanced collaboration, education and knowledge sharing across diverse sectors and communities. These initiatives strive to cultivate a comprehensive understanding of water's role in health, cultural heritage and sustainable development. By fostering international partnerships, emphasizing the integration of traditional and ecological knowledge, and promoting community-led solutions, the goal is to empower individuals and communities to become proactive stewards of water resources. The endeavors span from local to global, leveraging digital platforms, training programs and strategic communications to amplify the message of water conservation and the importance of equitable access to clean water, aligning with the broader objectives of the SDGs.

#### ***Highlighted commitment***

***International Conference on Glaciers' Preservation - 2025 – Government of the Republic of Tajikistan (#SDGAction53210)***

Organizing an international conference on preservation of glaciers in 2025 (following the initiative of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan supported through the UN resolution on declaring a year 2025 - an International Year of Glaciers' preservation) will offer an opportunity to raise awareness and address the escalating challenges posed by the global climate change and water crisis worldwide. It will urge governments, corporations, and individuals to take urgent action concerning water resources and the preservation of glaciers from intensive melting and disappearance. It is expected to reinforce global efforts in mitigating climate change.

### ***Indigenous Peoples***

126. The commitments regarding Indigenous Peoples and water issues are deeply rooted in a respectful engagement with Indigenous communities, recognizing their traditional knowledge, cultural values and inherent rights to water. These efforts are multifaceted, encompassing the establishment of advisory councils, investment in infrastructure to improve water access and promoting Indigenous-led water governance. A significant focus is on ensuring Indigenous communities have a voice in strategic water decisions and are active participants in identifying and prioritizing projects. There's a strong emphasis on acknowledging Indigenous ownership and need for water entitlements that support their spiritual, cultural and socio-economic wellbeing.
127. Additionally, these initiatives involve educational efforts to raise awareness about the challenges Indigenous communities face regarding water access, and research collaborations that blend traditional and Western knowledge. The aim is to create sustainable and equitable water management practices that respect Indigenous rights and knowledge.

### ***Highlighted commitment***

#### ***Strengthening Water Sovereignty of Indigenous People through Community Water Resources System – VAAGDHARA (#SDGAction50395)***

VAAGDHARA has been organizing discussions with Indigenous People on water sovereignty through dialogue. In these dialogues, the community disseminate their various traditional methods of water conservation and harvesting, practices of reliable and judicious usage of water, establishing its linkage with other related elements of the society. In this dialogue process, the Indigenous community demonstrates the significance of water in their lives and how their control over water resources and their traditional methods of conservation have been an essential element of their sovereignty.

### ***Youth***

128. The commitments dedicated to youth underscore the pledges of various organizations and networks to involve youth in addressing water-related issues within their communities and

beyond. They create platforms for young professionals to engage in knowledge sharing, receive mentorship and participate in international discussions on water governance. By focusing on cross-border partnerships, capacity building and educational programs, these efforts aim to foster innovation and active youth participation in the water sector. Some initiatives specifically target the mobilization of youth through awareness campaigns, skill-building workshops and community science programs, aiming to empower young people to take action on water conservation and management. The overarching goal is to cultivate a generation of informed and proactive young leaders who can contribute to the sustainable management of water resources and advocate for solutions to water-related challenges.

### ***Highlighted commitment***

#### ***Engaging Youth in Accelerating SDG Implementation beyond Capacity Building – Global Water Partnership (GWP) (#SDGAction51102)***

GWP is launching the Water Academy for Youth (WAY) as a programme to promote leadership, regional youth capacity building, mentorships, fellowships, internships, networking and intergenerational dialogues. The WAY is envisioned to be a customizable programme implemented at a regional scale that can be adapted according to the needs and context of the region in which the programme is being implemented. The core objective of the programme is to support the acceleration of the SDGs and improving the skills of young leaders (18–35-year-olds).

### **a. Water Action Agenda commitments' interlinkages with the SDGs**

129. The Water Action Agenda's commitments are not just about achieving SDG 6. As reported above, the commitments make contributions to all of the other SDGs. The below section outlines how the Water Action Agenda influences each of the other 16 SDGs.

#### **SDG 1 - No poverty**

130. The commitments in the Water Action Agenda outline the critical role of sustainable water management, access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in reducing poverty and enhancing socio-economic development. By focusing on initiatives that improve water availability for agriculture, energy production and domestic use, these commitments directly contribute to poverty alleviation by ensuring food security, generating income opportunities, and improving health outcomes. The emphasis on community-led solutions and integrating water management with disaster risk reduction strategies further supports resilient and sustainable communities capable of withstanding environmental and climate-related challenges. Additionally, the promotion of gender equality and the inclusion of vulnerable groups in decision-making processes ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities, further contributing to poverty reduction.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Cooperation Fund for Water and Sanitation (Fondo de Cooperación para Agua y Saneamiento) – Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional al Desarrollo (#SDGAction51621)***

The Cooperation Fund for Water and Sanitation (FCAS) is the most ambitious instrument of the Spanish Cooperation in the water and sanitation sector. It works towards the fulfilment of human rights to water and sanitation (HRWS), prioritizing the most fragile countries and the most vulnerable populations, with the aim of reducing pockets of poverty and inequality.

**SDG 2 - Zero hunger**

131. The commitments significantly contribute to reducing hunger by enhancing sustainable agriculture and food security through innovative water management practices. By integrating advanced water-saving technologies and efficient irrigation systems, these efforts not only optimize water use in agriculture but also mitigate the impacts of climate change, further stabilizing food production. Collaborative efforts with educational institutions and various stakeholders aim to empower communities with knowledge on sustainable water and agriculture practices, fostering resilience in food systems against environmental challenges. Additionally, the focus on creating sustainable urban agricultural zones and promoting soil and water conservation techniques addresses immediate and long-term food security needs, ensuring that communities, especially in vulnerable regions, have reliable access to nutritious food, thereby making strides towards eradicating hunger.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Smart Water Utilization for Smart and Precision Farming, Urban Farming and Food Security Innovation – Caribbean Applied Engineering and Science Research Foundation (#SDGAction51376)***

Applied research and engineering for renewable and natural resources management and agriculture management to introduce technologies, skills and innovation to allow optimal use of small-scale farming, provide food security, focusing on smart technologies for water, energy, health, agriculture and biodiversity through effective and sustainable use of water, land and biodiversity resources.

**SDG 3 - Good health and well-being**

132. The commitments on water are pivotal in directly addressing health by enhancing the integration of water management with disease prevention and public health improvement strategies. These initiatives illustrate the critical link between access to clean water and sanitation and achieving good health and well-being, by ensuring communities have access to safe water to significantly reduce the incidence of waterborne diseases. Furthermore, they acknowledge the psychological impacts of

water insecurity, aiming to mitigate mental health issues through comprehensive approaches that build resilience against water-related disasters. By improving water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities, especially in healthcare settings, these commitments directly contribute to better health outcomes by preventing infections and supporting safer healthcare environments. Overall, these water-focused actions are foundational to advancing health equity, reducing the burden of disease, and ensuring access to essential services for maintaining health and well-being across communities.

***Highlighted commitment***

***W4CCMH - Water for Climate Change Mental Health - Integrating inclusive water strategies in climate services – United Nations University - MERIT (UNU-MERIT) (#SDGAction51888)***

Building on existing research from the United Nations University - Climate Resilience Initiative project (<https://cri.merit.unu.edu/>), this commitment will support a collective “call for action” towards the aggregated knowledge and better understanding of robust evidence and “fit for propose” solutions to address mental health implications of water insecurities and disaster events, and overall, boosting the water for climate resilience agenda..

**SDG 4 - Quality education**

133. An array of commitments outlined in the Water Action Agenda aim to advance water education, with a focus on equipping both educators and students with the knowledge and tools necessary to understand and address water-related challenges. By developing interactive educational materials, facilitating workshops and establishing collaborative networks, these actions seek to deepen the integration of water science into school curricula and popular science education. The efforts extend to creating platforms for knowledge exchange and fostering intergenerational and cross-cultural learning experiences. These projects underscore the importance of water literacy as a catalyst for behavioral change and informed decision-making, empowering young people, women and educators to become active participants in water conservation and management. By emphasizing the link between water and broader sustainability goals, the initiatives strive to cultivate a well-informed and engaged global community, capable of contributing to the attainment of the SDGs through informed action.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Educate one million youngsters on water annually until 2030 - together – Wavemakers United Foundation (#SDGAction51358)***

Many smart, technical solutions are available – now we all need to learn how to apply them. Within this process the accessibility of quality education can be the catalyst for positive impact. Therefore, this consortium of partners and beneficiaries commits to make quality education around the topics of water challenges available to the next generation. Through an

online toolkit with interactive education materials on water, connected to the SDGs, our employees, volunteers and network can educate the next generation.

## **SDG 5 - Gender equality**

134. There are numerous commitments focused on empowering girls and women in target communities by providing access to safe water, sanitation, hygiene facilities and menstrual hygiene products and education. It emphasizes the importance of education and awareness on menstrual hygiene while improving access to safe WASH facilities for women and girls. Some of the actions are dedicated to addressing gender disparities in water-related decision-making and support women's leadership in water management. The overarching goal is to foster inclusive water governance that recognizes and integrates women's roles and rights, aiming to transform water management into a more equitable domain for all genders.

### ***Highlighted commitment***

#### ***Involvement of rural women in access to drinking water and literacy in rural areas of Côte d'Ivoire – Association Mafubo (#SDGAction51509)***

Overall, this project aims to improve access to drinking water for households, to promote the economic role of women and to strengthen their management capacities. Specific objectives: Inform and raise awareness among the rural populations of two villages in the Lakota Department on the importance of integrated management of water resources; establish hydroelectric infrastructure and improve access to drinking water available to women's village groups with a view to alleviating chores are of water; and enable more than 2,000 rural women to know how to read, write and calculate and manage income from the sale of drinking water.

## **SDG 7 - Affordable and clean energy**

135. The commitments on water have a profound impact on addressing energy issues by focusing on the sustainable and efficient use of resources in hydropower projects and other renewable energy initiatives. By improving the sustainability assessment standards for hydropower and focusing on adaptive technologies and demonstration sites, these commitments enhance the efficiency and environmental compatibility of energy production. The emphasis on training technical personnel in renewable energy sectors, particularly small hydropower, aims to bolster capacity and innovation, promoting sustainable energy solutions that are less dependent on fossil fuels and more resilient to climate change.
136. Additionally, integrating water conservancy with renewable energy initiatives, such as solar-powered wells and irrigation systems by providing reliable and sustainable energy sources for rural and underserved communities. This approach not only addresses the immediate energy needs



but also supports long-term environmental sustainability and socio-economic development by reducing dependency on non-renewable energy sources and minimizing the environmental footprint of energy production.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Demonstrating sustainability in water-related infrastructure: Increase the number of hydropower projects certified against the Hydropower Sustainability Standard to 50 before 2025 – Hydropower Sustainability Council (#SDGAction51503)***

Through application of the Hydropower Sustainability Standard and by increasing the number of certified hydropower projects, more sustainable water-related infrastructure, most notably hydropower projects, will be planned and developed thanks to strengthened institutional capacity, and opportunities will be increased for climate finance investments in developing countries.

**SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth**

137. The Water Action Agenda commitments underscore a comprehensive approach to promoting economic growth through the integration of sustainable water management and the circular economy. By advancing water recycling, wastewater treatment, and innovative water-efficient technologies, these initiatives directly support sustainable economic development. They aim to enhance sustainable water management, foster sustainable agriculture, and stimulate job creation across various sectors, including renewable energy and infrastructure development. The emphasis on inclusive growth is evident in efforts to improve access to clean water and sanitation, thereby contributing to public health, gender equality and reduced inequalities.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Livelihoods and Environmental Actions for Development (LEAD) – Mercy Corps (#SDGAction50684)***

Livelihoods and Environmental Actions for Development (LEAD) is a multi-sectoral, two-year project that aims to develop the technical and financial capacities of rural communities to strengthen their sustainable water management and agricultural production. In partnership with our local partners, the project will achieve this through three main objectives: (1) strengthen the capacity of local community water governance structures, (2) support smallholder farmers in adopting climate-resilient agricultural practices and water-efficient technologies and (3) build capacity of local CBO partners to provide business development support to local smallholder farmers, aggregators, and food producers.



## SDG 9 - Industry, innovation and infrastructure

138. The Water Action Agenda contributes toward building resilient infrastructure by emphasizing the development, modernization and improvement of water and wastewater systems. Through targeted training programs, demonstration projects and collaborative research centers, these initiatives aim to enhance the technical and management capacity of professionals in the water sector, directly benefiting communities through improved access to clean and reliable water sources. By fostering international cooperation and adopting principles for resilient infrastructure, these commitments support the creation of sustainable, efficient and climate-resilient water infrastructure systems. Furthermore, they underscore the role of nature-based solutions and green infrastructure in enhancing ecosystem services and biodiversity, thereby contributing to the resilience of water infrastructure against climate and environmental changes.

### *Highlighted commitment*

#### *Leveraging the Principles for Resilient Infrastructure and UNDRR's Stress-testing tool to advance water infrastructure resiliency – United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) (#SDGAction50852)*

With partners from government and industry, UNDRR has developed Principles for Resilient Infrastructure that provide guidelines and criteria to help stakeholders (governments, private sector, regulators, and communities) better understand what infrastructure resilience entails, and to ensure that resilience is embedded into infrastructure decisions and investments. These Principles are now being piloted and implemented at the national level and can be directly applied to the water sector.

## SDG 10 - Reduced inequalities

139. The commitments aim to address and reduce inequalities by ensuring equitable access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene for all, with a particular focus on vulnerable and marginalized groups. By emphasizing the need for clear regulations, regular monitoring, and public reporting on water quality, these initiatives seek to boost confidence in the safety of drinking water and enhance inclusivity in water management decisions. Research exploring the links between water scarcity and societal issues underscores the importance of sustainable water resource management to prevent adverse outcomes and inequalities. Actions to improve water and sanitation infrastructure are designed to be foundational to broader development goals, focusing on strengthening service delivery systems to support equitable access. Efforts to mobilize knowledge, partnerships and funding aim to accelerate progress towards equitable water access, emphasizing the role of community participation and leadership in driving change. Overall, these approaches highlight the interconnectedness of sustainable water management with social equity, aiming to build resilient and inclusive systems that ensure safe and accessible water for every individual.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Increasing access to safe water for 1,000,000 residents in low-income urban communities, schools, health facilities and public places in Ghana, through innovative financing and inclusion by 2030 – Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL) (#SDGAction50117)***

Under this commitment, the initiative will seek to offer households, schools, health centers and public spaces in low-income communities who do not have access to GWCL's pipe network, the opportunity to access GWCL's safe and affordable services. These beneficiaries, though are not currently served by GWCL's piped network, do obtain water for daily usage from other sources that are marked by relatively higher costs (10 to 20 times higher than the utility's approved rates) and excessive time spent.

**SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities**

140. The voluntary commitments emphasize the development of sustainable cities and communities by aiming towards universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation services. These initiatives aim to enhance water consumption efficiency, reduce health risks associated with waterborne diseases and minimize economic burdens related to water access and infrastructure. By renovating and optimizing water distribution networks and infrastructure, these commitments contribute to reducing water losses, improving energy efficiency in water services and achieving financial sustainability for water service providers. Furthermore, they recognize the intrinsic value of water in increasing land value and the overall well-being of communities. Collectively, these actions foster resilient infrastructure, enhance the quality of life and support the creation of sustainable, inclusive urban and rural communities.

***Highlighted commitment***

***100 Water Resilient African Cities – ACWA Platform (#SDGAction51515)***

The ACWA Platform provides partner cities with technical assistance and capacity-building support to identify, design and prepare innovative solutions for investment and piloting. With up to \$5 billion in financing from the ACWA Fund, the Platform advances high-impact pilots to mature water resilience programs for scaling water action.

**SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production**

141. The commitments on water detailed above focus on promoting sustainable consumption and reducing environmental footprints through a multifaceted approach aimed at enhancing water efficiency, advocating for equitable water resource allocation and advancing climate resilience in water management practices. Efforts to rationalize water consumption, utilize alternative water sources, and implement bioremediation techniques aim to ensure the efficient use of water resources, thereby reducing waste and promoting sustainable practices.

These actions collectively support a transition towards circular water management, emphasizing the reduction of water uptake, minimization of wastewater emissions, and promotion of green infrastructure and technologies. This holistic approach not only seeks to address water scarcity and enhance sustainable water management but also aims to reduce the water and carbon footprints of communities, industries and agricultural practices.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Credible, verified private sector action on SDG6 – Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) (#SDGAction49803)***

AWS is the custodian of a sustainability standard system that incentivizes, guides and verifies credible private sector action on water that aligns with the priorities and engages civil society, the public sector and ecosystems. The goal is that by 2030 adoption of the AWS Standard is the norm in several business sectors, creating a global network of tens of thousands of sites making meaningful, verifiable contributions to the sub-targets within SDG 6.

**SDG 13 - Climate action**

142. The commitments related to climate change emphasize enhancing resilience and adaptive capacities across various sectors and regions. These initiatives aim to address the challenges posed by changing weather patterns, fluctuations in water levels and increased climate risks, which significantly impact water availability and quality. Actions include capacity building in cities for improved planning and decision-making, promoting natural solutions for flood mitigation, and integrating water resource management with climate adaptation efforts. Efforts also focus on fostering cross-sectoral and transboundary cooperation to manage water resources sustainably, leveraging innovative solutions and financing mechanisms to mitigate climate risks and support sustainable water management. By strengthening governance frameworks, encouraging participatory approaches and implementing nature-based solutions, these commitments seek to build resilient communities, safeguard freshwater resources, and ensure sustainable development in the face of climate change.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Implement water related priorities in the updated Nationally Determined Contributions to improve Uganda’s resilience to Climate Change – Ugandan Ministry of Water and Environment (#SDGAction52331)***

Uganda commits to (1) the implementation of water related priorities in the updated Nationally Determined Contributions for Uganda initiated (2) develop the capacity to implement water-related priorities in the updated NDCs built (3) to finance the implementation of water-related priorities in the updated NDCs mobilized and (4) integrated water-related priorities in the updated NDCs fully into water resources planning, infrastructure development and environmental protection strategies.

## SDG 14 - Life below water

143. Some commitments in the Water Action Agenda focus on bridging the gap between freshwater and marine conservation efforts to achieve sustainable management of water resources from source to sea. These actions are organized around enhancing capacities at the science-policy-management interface, fostering source-to-sea management through policy development and awareness-raising, and tackling pollution across aquatic systems. By employing innovative technologies for monitoring water systems, developing inclusive policy frameworks and implementing pollution mitigation measures, these commitments aim to establish integrated governance models for water resources. This holistic approach ensures the protection of both freshwater and marine ecosystems, promoting biodiversity, reducing pollution and enhancing resilience against climate impacts. Additionally, the focus on shared governance and community engagement highlights the importance of participatory decision-making in conservation efforts, ensuring sustainable use and protection of aquatic resources.

### *Highlighted commitment*

#### *Creation of La Esmeralda Co-management zone in the Republic of Panama – Aquatic Resources Authority of Panama (#SDGAction51341)*

A shared governance of this area will allow the local population to get the right to sustainable use of aquatic resources along with the responsibility to sustainably manage and protect these resources. The idea is to allow local communities to use the aquatic resources which are owned by the state for their livelihoods. In return, local communities take over a part of the responsibility to protect the resources.

## SDG 15 - Life on land

144. Certain Water Action Agenda commitments demonstrate a comprehensive approach to integrating water management with biodiversity conservation, directly contributing to SDG 15. These initiatives recognize the intrinsic link between water resources and biodiversity, emphasizing the need for holistic, integrated management practices that span from source to sea. By addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss, commitments aim to foster resilient ecosystems and livelihoods through sustainable water management. Initiatives that advocate for the protection, restoration and sustainable use of ecosystems, underscore the importance of healthy water systems for biodiversity, climate mitigation and adaptation. Additionally, efforts to bridge gaps between water and climate actions at the basin level, promote nature-based solutions, and enhance the water-retaining capacity of landscapes, not only aim to improve sustainable water management but also to restore and protect vital ecosystems. Such strategies highlight the role of water stewardship in preserving biodiversity, advocating for an integrated approach to managing water resources that supports the conservation and sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, and counters land degradation and biodiversity loss.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Defend the Marañón River, working towards its declarations as a subject of rights, in such a way that the conservation of biodiversity and aquatic ecosystems is guaranteed, and mainly of the lives of the Indigenous Peoples who inhabit the Amazon basin – Federación de Mujeres Indígenas Kukama Kukamiria "Huaynakana Kamatahuara Kana" (#SDGAction50530)***

This project will enable Kukama women to strengthen their capacities in the defense of the river, giving value to their *saberes* (knowledges) and *sentires* (feelings/emotions), as well as their everyday life experiences. Through foregrounding their knowledge and worldview, this project will enhance Kukama women's agency in defending the river by promoting the conservation and sustainable use and management of the wetlands that conform Marañón River. Huaynakana's base communities are located within the Pacaya Samiria National Reserve (2,080,000 ha; designated a Ramsar site in 1986), and in its buffer zone.

**SDG 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions**

145. The commitments on water outlined above emphasize the pivotal role of water management in fostering stability, cooperation and harmony among communities and nations, particularly in transboundary contexts. These initiatives prioritize the sustainable management of water resources, access to clean drinking water and sanitation, and the enhancement of water governance frameworks to mitigate conflicts and promote collaborative decision-making. By focusing on building capacities, leveraging innovative technologies, and engaging in scientific research, these efforts aim to bridge divides and encourage peaceful coexistence. The promotion of equitable and efficient water usage agreements, alongside the reinforcement of international water law, underscores a collective commitment to addressing the shared challenges posed by water scarcity and climate change. These actions, through enhancing transboundary cooperation and fostering inclusive dialogue, not only aim to secure water resources for all but also to lay the groundwork for enduring stability by recognizing the interconnectedness of sustainable water management with overall well-being among communities and nations.

***Highlighted commitment***

***Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition – Coalition of almost 40 governments and organizations with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) hosting the secretariat (#SDGAction50479)***

The coalition will provide a catalyzing framework for commitments and progress on transboundary water cooperation, especially linked to the UN 2023 Water Conference and the call for voluntary commitments that will comprise one of the outcomes of the Conference, the Water Action Agenda. The Coalition objective is to promote and support both the sustaining and the advancement of transboundary water cooperation in the context of the Water Action Agenda and SDG 6, in light of growing risks, including those linked to climate change.

## SDG 17 - Partnerships for the Goals

146. The Water Action Agenda is full of commitments that advanced SDG 17 given the Goal's links to capacity development, finance, financial inclusion, multi-stakeholder partnerships, science and technology. These commitments include fostering international collaboration to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, resources and cutting-edge technologies pertinent to water management. The organizations involved pledge to enhance capacity building to improve governance in the water and sanitation sectors significantly. A cornerstone of these efforts will be innovations in financing and technology, leveraging public-private partnerships and advanced technological solutions to address water scarcity and sanitation challenges effectively. Community engagement is prioritized to ensure initiatives are inclusive and tailored to the specific needs of local populations. Additionally, advocating for robust policy and regulatory frameworks will underpin the commitment to ensuring universal access to clean water and sanitation. Through these actions, the aim is to foster sustainable partnerships that drive substantial progress towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, demonstrating a strong commitment to enhancing collaboration for sustainable development.

### ***Highlighted commitment***

#### ***CAWST WASH Capacity Accelerator – Centre for Affordable Water and Sanitation (CAWST) (#SDGAction51497)***

CAWST is launching a WASH Capacity Accelerator, committing to do more, faster. They will increase the availability of local expertise by leveraging our 20+ year experience in capacity strengthening, their network of thousands of local training and implementing organizations and advancements in digital transformation. CAWST commits to an additional \$3M CAD over three years to reach their commitment of supporting 100 local organizations providing high quality technical training and other forms of capacity development by 2026.

### **a. The Water Action Agenda and the UN 2023 Water Conference Interactive Dialogues**

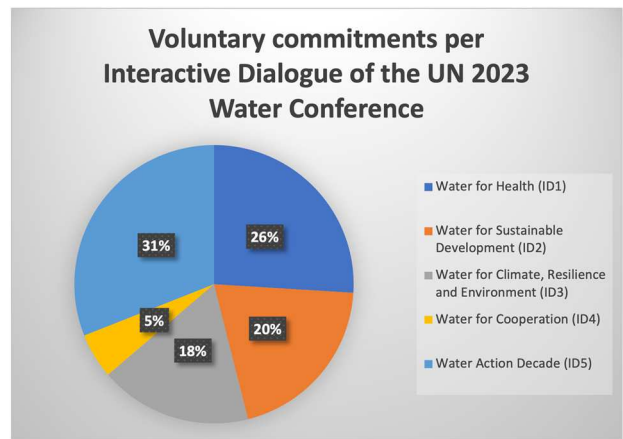
147. The UN 2023 Water Conference was structured around five thematic areas that were organized into half-day Interactive Dialogues during the conference itself. There were as follows:
- Interactive Dialogue 1 – Water for Health: Access to WASH, including the Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation
  - Interactive Dialogue 2 – Water for Sustainable Development: Valuing Water, Water-Energy-Food Nexus and Sustainable Economic and Urban Development



- Interactive Dialogue 3 – Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment: Source to Sea, Biodiversity, Climate, Resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction
- Interactive Dialogue 4 – Water for Cooperation: Transboundary and International Water Cooperation, Cross Sectoral Cooperation, including Scientific Cooperation, and Water Across the 2030 Agenda
- Interactive Dialogue 5 – Water Action Decade: Accelerating the implementation of the objectives of the Decade, including through the UN Secretary-General’s Action Plan

148. In examining the voluntary commitments of the Water Action Agenda, for the purposes of this exercise, each one was given a primary link to the one of the Interactive Dialogues to see how the commitments are organized in this thematic framework. Many of the commitments have links across dialogue themes, but can be generally categorized as follows:

149. "Water for Health" (ID1) represents 26 per cent of the commitments, underscoring its priority in health-related water initiatives. "Water for Sustainable Development" (ID2) accounts for 20 per cent of the commitments, reflecting the integral role of water in sustainable development. "Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment" (ID3) sees 18 per cent of the commitments, highlighting its significance in addressing environmental and climate resilience through water management. "Water for Cooperation" (ID4) has the fewest commitments at 5 per cent, indicating a smaller yet vital focus on collaborative efforts in water governance. Lastly, "Water Action Decade" (ID5) receives the highest proportion of commitments at 31 per cent indicating the importance of the components of the Water Action Decade in helping achieve SDG 6 and other water- and sanitation-related targets.



150. The below table reflects the most frequently identified topic within the Interactive Dialogues for the categorized commitments:

<b>Water for Health (ID1)</b>	<b>Water for Sustainable Development (ID2)</b>	<b>Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment (ID3)</b>	<b>Water for Cooperation (ID4)</b>	<b>Water Action Decade (ID5)</b>
Access to WASH	Water management	Conservation/Protection	Transboundary cooperation	Awareness-raising
Health	Food systems	Climate change	Water management	Data/information
Wastewater	Energy	Water management		Youth

Human rights to water and sanitation	Wastewater	Marine		Capacity development/ education
Indigenous Peoples		Disaster risk reduction		Gender



## Mapping and Progress of the UN 2023 Water Conference Water Action Agenda

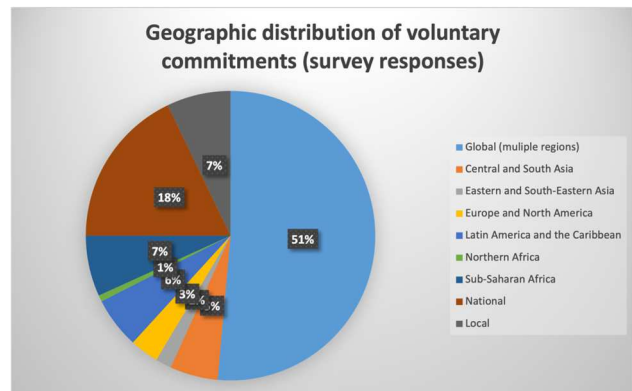
### III. Progress on the Water Action Agenda’s voluntary commitments

151. In November 2023, UN DESA distributed a survey to the governments and organizations that submitted voluntary commitments to the Water Action Agenda to find out what progress had been made up until that point on their commitments. The survey covered the following points of information: (1) geographic distribution, (2) stakeholder groups involved, (3) which SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework accelerators do they cover, (4) the thematic focus, (5) which SDG 6 targets the commitments covered, (6) the challenges faced in achieving the commitments, (7) the budget, (8) timeline and (9) where progress is.
152. Of the 837 commitments that were submitted to the Water Action Agenda, 280 governments and organizations responded to the survey, approximately one-third of the total. The following section will start with an overview of the responses, with a deeper look at the challenges, and then be followed by a review of the progress on commitments by SDG 6 target.

#### a. Overview of the progress to date

##### *Geographic distribution*

153. Most of the commitments, 52 per cent, are global or encompassing multiple regions. National-level commitments make up 18 per cent, showing a considerable focus on country-specific initiatives. Local commitments account for 7 per cent. When looking at specific regions, Sub-Saharan Africa is the focus of 7 per cent of the commitments, while Latin America and the Caribbean garner 6 per cent. Central and South Asia have a 5 per cent share.



Surveyed commitments in Europe and North America are relatively low at 3 per cent. Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, as well as Northern Africa, have the least shares with 2 per cent and 1 per cent, respectively. This spread reflects a high level of global engagement, with notable attention at the national and Sub-Saharan African regional levels.

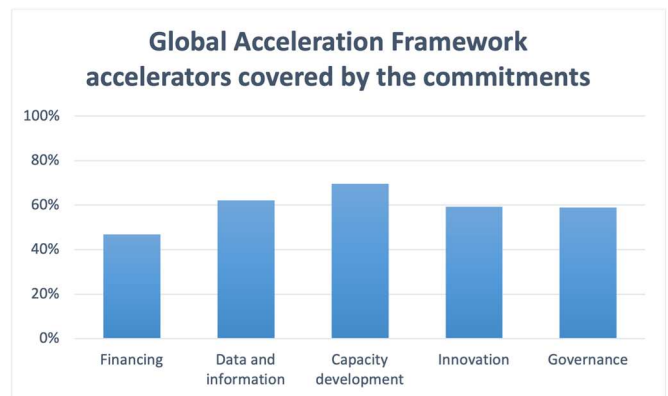
### ***Stakeholder groups involved<sup>16</sup>***

154. NGOs were the most involved in developing the commitments submitted in the survey, with a participation rate of 66 per cent. Local authorities also show significant engagement at 59 per cent. Education and academia sectors are active as well, with a 57 per cent involvement rate. Scientific and technological stakeholders have a 50 per cent participation rate, while women (gender) are represented at 46 per cent. Business and industry sectors are involved in 40 per cent of the commitments, followed by children and youth at 34 per cent. Volunteers, Indigenous peoples and farmers have engagement rates around 25 per cent. Aging populations, persons with disabilities and workers and trade unions all have relatively low rates of being involvement in the submitted commitments.



### ***Global Acceleration Framework accelerators***

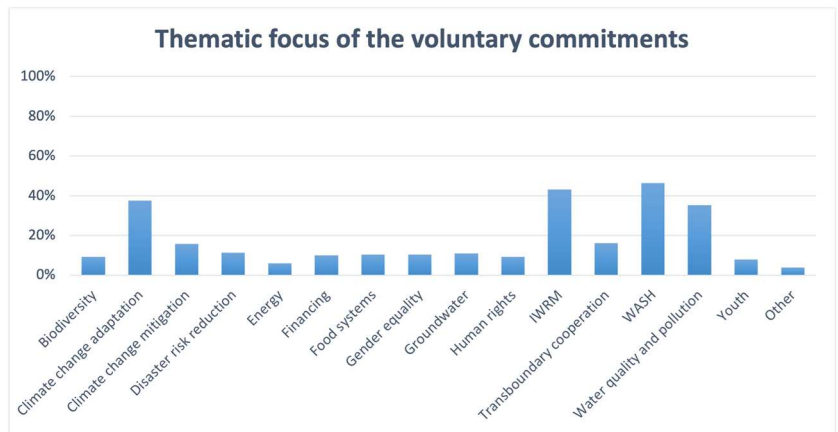
155. The most covered accelerator, with 70 per cent of the commitments, is capacity development. Data and information come next, with 62 per cent coverage. Innovation and governance each receive attention from 59 per cent of the commitments. Financing has the least coverage among the accelerators but is still significant at 47 per cent. This suggests that while financial support is crucial, the emphasis on building capacity, improving information accessibility, fostering innovation, and enhancing governance is equally, if not more, prioritized in the commitments.



<sup>16</sup> The question in the survey read, “Have any of the following stakeholder groups been actively involved in the development of your Water Action Agenda commitment?” This is a very specific question, but many of the responses do not reflect the question. Almost 26 per cent answered this question as to who the beneficiaries were of their commitment, in many cases selecting all stakeholder groups when this is not the case. This was part of nearly 32 percent of responses that were not aligned with the question. For 27 per cent of the responses, there was considerable alignment with who they had identified as partners when submitting their commitments prior to the UN 2023 Water Conference. Approximately 39 per cent were aligned between the survey and their commitment, with the remaining percentage (2 per cent) being not applicable.

### Thematic focus

156. The highest proportion of commitments is directed towards water, sanitation, and hygiene, with 46 per cent addressing this area. IWRM is also a major focus, covered by 43 per cent of the commitments. Climate change adaptation is another significant area, with 38 per cent of the commitments, followed closely by water quality and pollution at 35 per cent. Climate change mitigation and transboundary cooperation are each the focus of 16 per cent of the commitments. Disaster risk reduction, groundwater and financing all stand at around 10-11 per cent, alongside food systems and gender equality. The remainder of topics all have less than 10 per cent focus in the commitments.



157. The following table illustrates the primary and second most referenced focus of the different types of organizations in terms of the themes their commitments address:

Entity Type	Primary theme addressed	Secondary theme addressed
Academic institution	Water quality and pollution	Integrated water resources management
Civil society organization	Integrated water resources management	Water quality and pollution
Government	Integrated water resources management	WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene)
Intergovernmental organization	Integrated water resources management	Water quality and pollution
Local / Regional Government	Integrated water resources management	Climate change adaptation
Non-governmental organization (NGO)	WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene)	Water quality and pollution
Partnership	WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene)	Integrated water resources management
Private sector	WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene)	Water quality and pollution
Scientific community	Integrated water resources management	Climate change adaptation

Entity Type	Primary theme addressed	Secondary theme addressed
United Nations / Multilateral body	Climate change adaptation	Integrated water resources management
Other relevant actors	WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene)	Integrated water resources management

### *SDG 6 targets*

158. SDG target 6.5 and SDG 6.b both have the highest level of focus in the commitments, with 60 per cent of targets in implementing integrated water resources management and supporting local engagement in water and sanitation management, respectively. This is followed by SDG target 6.1, with 58 per cent progress towards ensuring safe and affordable drinking water. SDG target 6.4 also shows in over half the targets, at 51 per cent, focusing on increasing water-use efficiency and securing freshwater supplies. Improvements in water quality, wastewater treatment and safe reuse, as well as expanding support to developing countries and protecting water-related ecosystems, are seen in 48 per cent of targets. The target with the least presence is SDG target 6.2 on ending open defecation and providing access to sanitation and hygiene, with a 41 per cent.



159. For each SDG 6 target, different organization types have a more frequent prevalence in addressing them in the Water Action Agenda. All organization types' most frequent target addressed was SDG target 6.5 on integrated water resources management, which fits, because of the cross-sectoral nature of the target. Secondary frequency of targets demonstrates slightly more nuance in that for SDG target 6.1, academic institutions, intergovernmental organizations, including the United Nations, local/regional governments, NGOs and the private sector were all heavily focused on this target. SDG target 6.3 had as the second most frequent, civil society organizations and the scientific community was more focused on SDG target 6.4.

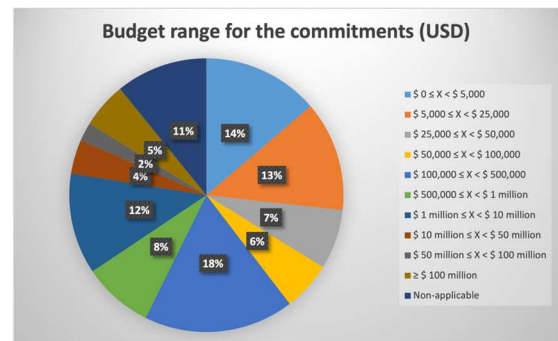
## Challenges

160. Financial issues are the most significant barrier, cited by 66 per cent of respondents. Creating an enabling environment, which could include regulatory, institutional or policy frameworks, is a challenge for 39 per cent of the commitments. Lack of expertise is also a notable challenge, affecting 22 per cent of the commitments. Cooperation issues are a concern for 16 per cent, while in-kind contribution delays and other unspecified challenges are less prevalent, reported at 6 per cent and 9 per cent, respectively. There is a portion, 15 per cent, for which these challenges are deemed non-applicable, suggesting that either these commitments have been met or the challenges identified do not pertain to them.



## Budget

161. The most common budget categories for the commitments are at the lower and mid-range of the financial spectrum. The largest single group, at 18 per cent, falls within the \$100,000 to \$500,000 range. Commitments with budgets under \$5,000 and those between \$5,000 and \$25,000 are also notable, comprising 14 per cent and 13 per cent respectively. There is a fair amount of commitment in the \$1 million to \$10 million range, at 12 per cent. Smaller proportions of commitments have higher budgets, with those between \$500,000 and \$1 million at 8 per cent, and a relatively small percentage in the higher millions: 4 per cent for \$10 million to less than \$50 million, 2 per cent for \$50 million to less than \$100 million, and 5 per cent for \$100 million or more. A portion of the commitments, 11 per cent, is listed as non-applicable, indicating that these commitments may not have a specified budget or are not reliant on financial resources.
162. National and local/regional governments have the largest amounts of budgets dedicated to their commitments with their most frequent response being the USD \$1 million to \$10 million category. Intergovernmental organizations, including the United Nations, the scientific community and the private sector all have as their most referenced budget between USD \$100,000 and \$500,000. Academic institutions and NGOs reported having a budget of USD \$5,000 to \$25,000 with civil society organizations and partnerships describing their budgets between USD \$0 to \$5,000. This suggests, as the overall financial numbers of the commitments suggests, that governments still are providing the most funding for water- and sanitation-oriented activities.



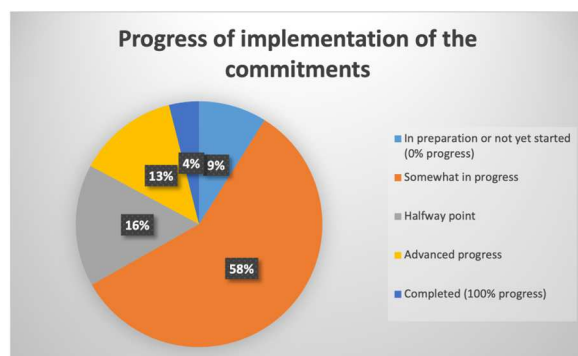
### *Timeline*

163. Nearly half of the commitments, at 47 per cent, have a horizon set at 5 years or more. A significant portion, 18 per cent, is slated for completion within 3 years. Shorter timelines are less common, with 13 per cent of commitments aiming for a 2-year timeframe and 12 per cent for 4 years. The smallest group, at 10 per cent, is expected to reach their goals within 1 year. All organization types had as the most frequent timeline of five or more years and for the second most referenced, academic institutions and the scientific community was four years, with all other organizations reporting three years except for civil society and private sector which stated two years for their second-most referenced timeline.



### *Progress of implementation*

164. Most the commitments, at 58 per cent, are somewhat in progress. A smaller portion, 16 per cent, has reached the halfway point of implementation. Those in the advanced stages of progress account for 13 per cent. Commitments that are in preparation or have not yet started represent 9 per cent. Only a small fraction, 4 per cent, of the commitments have been fully completed. This snapshot suggests that while most commitments are underway, the journey to full implementation is still ongoing for the vast majority. All organization types had as the most frequent answer, “Somewhat in progress” with partnerships, local/regional governments and the scientific community reporting “Advanced progress” as their second-most frequent response, all others being at their halfway point.



#### **a. A deeper dive into the challenges**

165. With two-thirds of the commitments reported on being either (1) in preparation/not yet started or (2) only somewhat in progress, meaning less than halfway achieved, there was ample feedback from the respondents, outside the numbers and categorical responses, as to what are the obstacles preventing their advancement. Understanding what these constraints are can help the governments and organizations overcome them. The below provides an overview of the written feedback in the survey as to what is holding commitments back from being achieved.

### *Financial constraints*

166. Organizations are facing significant financial constraints which are impeding their ability to meet the commitments of the Water Action Agenda. Despite attempts at fundraising and

securing grants, many find that the funds available is insufficient to support their commitments. This challenge is not only about initiating new projects but also about sustaining existing ones and ensuring their growth. The financial crisis is repeatedly mentioned as a primary obstacle, with a call for support from the UN and other international entities to secure the financial resources necessary to achieve their commitments.

### ***Knowledge translation and application***

167. There is a disconnect between the wealth of theoretical knowledge available within the water community and its practical application, particularly in the fields of water legislation and sustainable management practices. Translating this knowledge into actionable steps for decision-makers is crucial for bridging this gap.

### ***Policy alignment and advocacy***

168. Aligning the commitments with policy is a slow process that contains political and regulatory challenges. Advocacy efforts to overcome bureaucratic hurdles and establish supportive international policies are ongoing, but these efforts are often met with resistance or a lack of understanding from both governmental bodies and the public.

### ***Community engagement and awareness***

169. Community awareness and action towards a proper understanding of the value of water and wise use is essential for the success of water initiatives. However, organizations often struggle with making their commitment visible to different people and in different languages. The fast pace of initiatives and the constant lack of adequate staff and funds to keep up with this pace are challenges in maintaining and expanding community engagement.

### ***Institutional and staffing limitations***

170. Many organizations report a lack of institutional strength and a shortage of experienced staff, particularly when working in remote rural areas. Contributions from partners are often voluntary, and when other professional priorities arise, it becomes challenging to direct time to voluntary work. The lack of committed human resources significantly hinders the ability to run movements and initiatives that rely heavily on volunteer support.

### ***Political and legal challenges***

171. Differences in legislation and bureaucratic procedures across countries create a complex landscape for water initiatives to navigate. The political context often prevents timely decision-making and budget allocations, which are critical for strategic actions.

### ***Technological and educational aspects***

172. There is a need for scaling up technology to meet global needs while maintaining sustainability and efficiency. However, this is often hampered by financial limitations and a lack of



understanding of the technology among the broader population. Educating the public about the long-term implications of water scarcity and the potential solutions available is crucial for garnering support and engagement.

### ***Integration and coordination***

173. Integrating multiple governmental organizations at national and local levels and coordinating their actions presents a challenge. Integrated approaches to water management require significant time investment due to organizational boundaries that hinder participation.

### ***Public perception and engagement***

174. Public perception and engagement are critical for the success of these commitments. There is a widespread lack of awareness and attention around drinking water supply and sanitation crises where household-level data is scarce. The failure to implement the human rights to water and sanitation hinders progress and engagement in addressing these issues.

### ***Strategic planning and implementation***

175. Strategic planning and implementation are affected by a multitude of factors, including political instability and the challenges of aligning multiple agendas. Long-term transformation and creative systems thinking are often hindered by these factors, making it difficult to carry out far-reaching actions that yield tangible long-term results.

### ***Technical challenges***

176. Technical challenges are manifold, ranging from the need for more standardized approaches to the implementation of sustainable practices in water management. The commitment to reducing the water scarcity impact exemplifies the technical challenges of discovering and utilizing sustainable and cost-effective water resources.

### ***Global collaboration and momentum***

177. Maintaining global collaboration and momentum is a significant challenge. The need for continued mobilization of funds and active involvement from all types of organizations, from NGOs and national governments to the private sector and international organizations, is crucial to maintaining this momentum.
178. Each of these categories illustrates the multifaceted nature of the challenges faced in implementing the Water Action Agenda. Organizations must navigate a complex interplay of financial, operational, political and technical hurdles while striving to engage communities, align policies and foster global collaboration in pursuit of the achievement of SDG 6 and other water- and sanitation-related goals.



## a. Progress by SDG 6 targets

179. One of the main objectives behind the Water Action Agenda was to make commitments with an emphasis on “accelerated implementation and improved impact towards achieving SDG 6 and other water-related goals and targets.”<sup>17</sup> With the world at the halfway mark towards the end of 2030 Agenda, and progress towards the SDG 6 targets having fallen further behind as reported in the latest UN-Water SDG 6 Synthesis Report,<sup>18</sup> actions to achieve those targets will be important if SDG 6 is to be realized.
180. Along those lines, the following section will summarize by SDG 6 target how the commitments of the Water Action Agenda are helping towards that end. This will be able demonstrate what is being done and what more needs to be done.

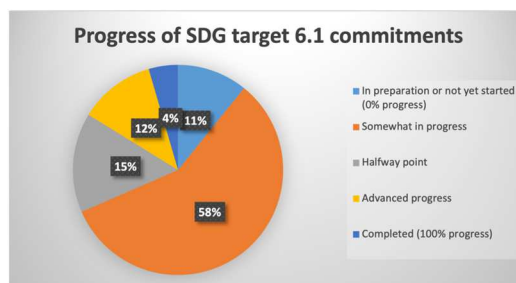
### *SDG target 6.1 – Safe and affordable drinking water*

181. The mapping of the voluntary commitments showed that 381 out of the 837 commitments address SDG target 6.1. In the survey, 163 of the respondents stated that their commitment addressed the target, 43 per cent of the original commitments for SDG target 6.1.

### *Summary of results*

#### ▪ *Overall progress*

182. The responses show that the commitments that were focused on SDG target 6.1 have the same level of progress as the average for the entire Water Action Agenda with the vast majority, 84 per cent, having reached the halfway point of achievement or less.



- Key   stakeholders

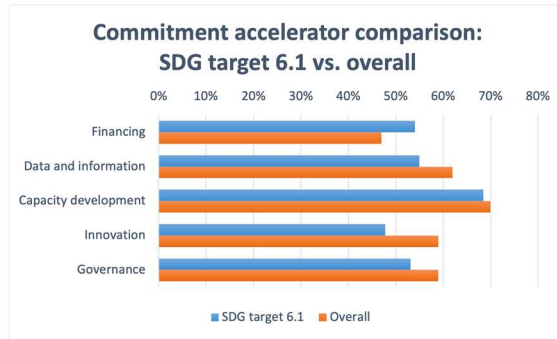
183. Of the 13 groups of stakeholders that were identified as part of the survey for who was most involved in the commitments, SDG target 6.1 showed higher than average levels of involvement from non-governmental organizations and women, but demonstrated lower engagement from business and industry, education and academia, farmers and the scientific and technology communities.

<sup>17</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/conferences/water2023/action-agenda>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.unwater.org/publications/sdg-6-synthesis-report-2023>

- Global Acceleration Framework accelerators

184. The GAF accelerators’ relevance in the SDG target 6.1 commitments of the Water Action Agenda showed that financing was more relevant to these commitments related to drinking water supply than the average while data and information, innovation and governance were less so. Capacity development was almost on par with the average.



### Challenges

185. Compared to the commitments in general, SDG target 6.1 has relatively the same level of challenges except in terms of finance, which is higher than the average, 74 per cent compared to 66 per cent. This has a certain degree of alignment with the fact that the number of commitments for SDG target 6.1 that had a budget of USD \$100,000 or higher was 9 percent higher than the average.



186. The challenges for provision of drinking water supply services within the context of the Water Action Agenda commitments are multifaceted. Entities face difficulties in transitioning from policy frameworks to practical implementation, often caused by discrepancies between community needs and government action. Efforts to secure funding for water supply projects are described as “Herculean,” indicating a systemic issue in resource allocation and financial support.
187. Many organizations are pushing for a paradigm shift in the rural water supply sector, advocating for the acceptance and understanding of new approaches by international financial institutions, governments and the general population. This is a slow process, particularly in areas with complex challenges and unstable political situations.
188. Environmental concerns also pose significant challenges to the drinking water supply, such as the mercury contamination in the Amazon's Tapajos basin, which underscores the necessity for responsible environmental practices in WASH investments. The connection between the environment and the quality of water supply is evident, and addressing contamination is essential for safe drinking water.
189. On the ground, local organizations struggle with limited finances to support projects that improve water collection, supply, use and treatment. There is a call for more comprehensive financial support to enhance technology that ensures a consistent and clean

water supply. This need for financial cooperation is critical for achieving significant and sustained economic growth, especially for vulnerable populations.

190. Efforts to scale up the measurement of water insecurity experiences globally aim to better understand and address these challenges. However, there's a noted need for more political buy-in and funding for data collection efforts, which are vital for informed decision-making and strategic water supply planning.

**Examples of the challenges faced for SDG target 6.1 as reported by commitment holders:**

- (1) Limited social participation and need for more transparency in the processes of privatization and delegation of water supply and wastewater services;
- (2) Polarization in the public debate regarding the privatization of water and sewage services obscures discussions toward practical solutions;
- (3) assignments and responsibilities related to the sanitation sector are scattered across different ministries in the federal government.
- (4) Widespread lack of data on household level water and sanitation access contributing to a widespread lack of awareness and attention around WASH crises.
- (5) Governmental hesitancy to declare water and sanitation as human rights in countries.

*Areas to address*

191. The narrative is consistent: achieving water security, particularly in drinking water supply, requires overcoming significant financial and institutional challenges. These include mobilizing necessary finance, securing political and legal frameworks, standardizing approaches and ensuring coordinated efforts among diverse stakeholders. To this end, partnerships with governments and financial bodies are essential, yet often difficult to foster due to issues such as political will, institutional strength and capacity, both personnel and institutional.
192. In summary, the Water Action Agenda commitments related to SDG target 6.1 highlight a clear need for increased funding, better coordination and stronger institutional support to address the pressing challenges of drinking water supply on a global scale.

*Highlighted commitments at or near completion*

Title	#SDG Action ID	Entity	Location	Examples of progress
<b>Indicators of Human Rights to Water and</b>	#SDG Action 50936	Instituto Mexicano de Tecnología	Mexico	Advanced progress on the publication of indicators of human rights to water and sanitation in the Platform of the National System for

<p><b>Sanitation integrated and published in the Platform of the National System for the Evaluation of the Level of Compliance with Human Rights of the Mexican Government</b></p>		<p>del Agua (IMTA)</p>		<p>the Evaluation of the Level of Compliance with Human Rights of the Government of Mexico</p>
<p><b>Water source of life and development</b></p>	<p>#SDG Action 51977</p>	<p>AMU- Azione per un mondo unito</p>	<p>Burundi</p>	<p>Advanced progress on the construction of new extensions to the drinking water supply network in various locations, benefiting families, students, and the local primary school; renovation of the existing Karaba-Misugi-Kigamba water supply network; construction of 40 ecological latrines; capacity building for the municipal water authority, project staff, community leaders and local families.</p>
<p><b>Supporting communities in Latin America on Water &amp; Sanitation</b></p>	<p>#SDG Action 50704</p>	<p>Wavin B.V.</p>	<p>Latin America</p>	<p>In Colombia, a successful project resulted in the installation of hydro-sanitary units alongside rainwater collection and purification systems, significantly improving basic sanitation and hygiene while ensuring better access to water resources. In Brazil, a completed initiative in the São Paulo region saw the renovation of WASH facilities in vulnerable communities, coupled with the distribution of essential products and comprehensive community training. Peru witnessed the successful implementation of a technical</p>

				irrigation system in the San Juan de Iris community, in the Lima region, which has markedly improved local water management. Additionally, in Colombia's Atlántico department, another accomplished project provided crucial access to water, sanitation, and basic hygiene for local and migrant communities living in informal and vulnerable settlements.

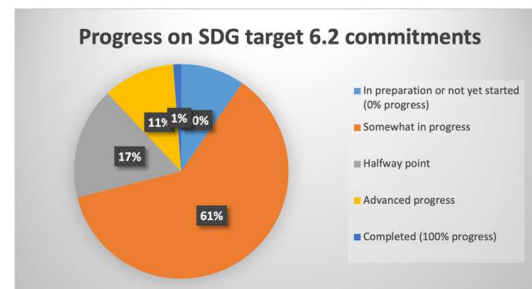
### SDG target 6.2 – End open defecation and provide access to sanitation and hygiene





193. The mapping of the voluntary commitments showed that 298 out of the 837 commitments address SDG target 6.2. In the survey, 116 of the respondents stated that their commitment addressed the target, 39 per cent of the original commitments for SDG target 6.2.

#### Summary of results

- Overall progress

194. The survey showed that the rate of progress of the commitments related to SDG target 6.2 is very similar to the average of the entire Water Action Agenda commitments but is slightly further behind in terms of those that have not yet started, in preparation or somewhat in progress (71 per cent versus 67 per cent).

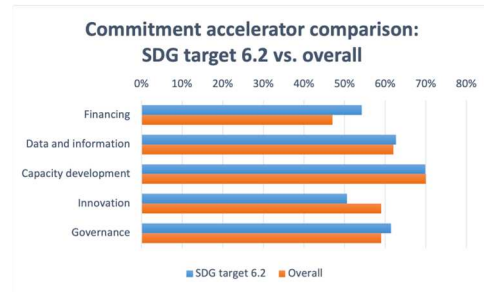


- Key stakeholders    

195. Of the 13 groups of stakeholders that were identified as part of the survey for who was most involved in the commitments, SDG target 6.2 showed higher than average levels of involvement from non-governmental organizations, persons with disabilities, women and volunteers, but demonstrated lower engagement from business and industry, education and academia, farmers and the scientific and technology communities.

- Global Acceleration Framework accelerators

196. The GAF accelerators' relevance in the SDG target 6.2 commitments of the Water Action Agenda showed that financing was more relevant to these commitments related to drinking water supply than the average while data and information, innovation and governance were very similar and innovation was lower than average.



### Challenges

197. Compared to the commitments in general, SDG target 6.2 has higher more challenges when it comes to financing, expertise and the enabling environment, which is significant and shows the difficulties that sanitation has in comparison with the other SDG 6 targets.



198. The challenges in achieving sanitation goals are both structural and operational that hinder progress. One of the primary issues is the ineffective translation of policy into practice and vice versa, along with a gap in converting knowledge into implementation. These cascading failures span multiple levels, from global to local governance, affecting the alignment between community needs and government action, and complicated financing mechanisms.

199. Financial constraints are at the core of these challenges, with many initiatives struggling to secure the necessary funding to realize their commitments. This difficulty is compounded by a lack of understanding among agencies regarding innovative solutions, which hampers the acquisition of environmental licenses.

200. Local organizations often face obstacles in securing financial resources for project development, particularly in regions afflicted by socio-political turmoil. This situation is exacerbated by a widespread lack of data on sanitation access, contributing to insufficient awareness and governmental inertia towards recognizing sanitation as a human right. Moreover, there's a critical need for more political support and investment to scale up measures that address sanitation.

201. Initiatives have been hindered by the inability to conduct necessary assessments, build volunteer capacity and organize knowledge-sharing events. The situation is further complicated by the need to motivate the public towards sustainable sanitation practices

amidst the financial and operational constraints exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and economic challenges globally.

202. Political unrest and regulatory barriers hinder entrepreneurs and a general resistance to change pose additional obstacles to achieving sanitation goals. Rural water governance issues highlight the vulnerability of people living without adequate sanitation in certain regions.
203. The lack of political interest, climate change impacts, capacity issues and the need for standardization of approaches remain significant barriers to implementing sanitation solutions.

**Examples of the challenges faced for SDG target 6.2 as reported by commitment holders:**

- (1) Lack of political will and commitment to the issue of sanitation.
- (2) Lack of financing and the lack of maintenance and destruction of the property requires a constant vigil and expense.

***Areas to address***

204. To effectively address the challenges of achieving sanitation goals, a concerted effort must focus on strengthening governance frameworks and financial mechanisms. Enhancing multilevel governance is crucial, ensuring that global commitments translate into localized actions that directly address community needs and environmental concerns. This approach requires a smooth policy-to-practice, fostering an environment where innovative financing solutions can thrive.
205. Moreover, engaging communities and building local capacities emerge as pivotal elements in the sanitation discourse. Initiatives aimed at changing behaviors and mindsets towards sanitation must prioritize youth engagement and education, starting from early childhood. Collaborative efforts that leverage partnerships across governments, NGOs, the private sector and local communities are essential for technical and financial support, facilitating a shared responsibility model. By advocating for the implementation of the human right to sanitation and enhancing data collection for informed decision-making, stakeholders can ensure a cohesive and effective response to the global sanitation challenge, driving towards the realization of sanitation goals with a unified and strategic approach.

*Highlighted commitments at or near completion*

Title	#SDGActionID	Entity	Location	Examples of progress
<b>Cooperation Fund for Water and Sanitation (Fondo de Cooperación para Agua y Saneamiento)</b>	#SDG Action 51621	Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional al Desarrollo	Mexico	Most of the programmes implemented by the Cooperation Fund for Water and Sanitation are completed or in an advanced progress with four new initiatives in 2023.
<b>Decentralized and Onsite Sanitation Solutions to Meet Everyone's Needs</b>	#SDG Action 50397	Banka BioLoo Limited	India	Advanced progress on introducing bio-toilets, fecal sludge and sewage treatment plants across various communities, focusing on underserved areas. These initiatives are grounded in resource recovery and circular economy principles, yielding treated water, biosolids, and biogas. This holistic approach not only addresses sanitation challenges but also fosters environmental sustainability.

**SDG target 6.3 – Improve water quality, wastewater treatment and safe reuse**

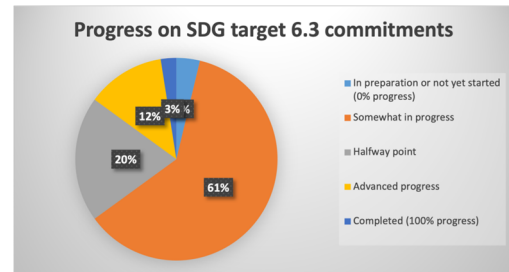
206. The mapping of the voluntary commitments showed that 371 out of the 837 commitments address SDG target 6.3. In the survey, 134 of the respondents stated that their commitment addressed the target, 36 per cent of the original commitments for SDG target 6.3.

*Summary of results*

- Overall progress



207. The responses show that the commitments that were focused on SDG target 6.3 have a lower percentage of commitments that are in preparation or not yet started (4 per cent) than the average of the Water Action and higher percentages for those somewhat in progress (61 per cent) and at the halfway point (20 per cent), which show this targets' commitments are further along than other SDG 6 targets.

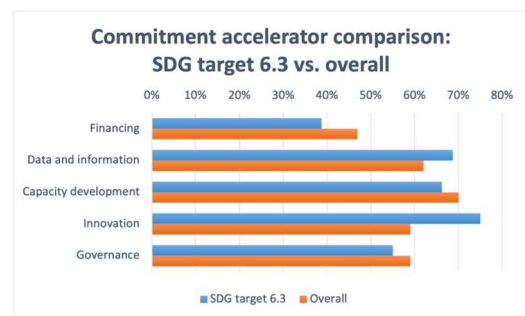


- Key stakeholders

208. Of the 13 groups of stakeholders that were identified as part of the survey for who was most involved in the commitments, SDG target 6.3 did not show higher than average levels of engagement in any of the stakeholder categories and reflected a lower-than-average engagement with education and academia, farmers, Indigenous People, local authorities, NGOs, persons with disabilities and scientific and technology.

- Global Acceleration Framework accelerators

209. The GAF accelerators' relevance in the SDG target 6.3 commitments showed that, compared to the average of the Water Action Agenda, both innovation and data and information were of greater significance. Finance was 8 percentage points lower while capacity develop and governance, although slight lower, were more or less the same.



### Challenges

210. Compared to the Water Action Agenda commitments in general, SDG target 6.3-oriented pledges have relatively the same level of challenges except in terms of both lack of cooperation from partners (19 per cent) and difficulties with the enabling environment (48 per cent), the latter being 10 percentage points higher than the average of 38 per cent.



211. Challenges in enhancing water quality and wastewater management underscore the critical need for broader community awareness and the strategic deployment of innovative technologies for the efficient collection, supply, use and treatment of water. Despite progress in water resource management, the sector still faces substantial hurdles. Among these are the need for substantial financial support to implement large-scale projects, the complexity of achieving a sustainable water footprint across various industries, and the imperative to establish comprehensive standards for water usage and its

environmental impact. Additionally, the variation in legislation and bureaucratic processes across jurisdictions complicates the realization of projects, especially those involving innovative water treatment technologies. Environmental concerns, such as contamination and the need for environmental licenses, further challenge project execution. The overarching issue of securing adequate funding, coupled with the need for visible support and effective collaboration within the international community, highlights the financial, regulatory and logistical challenges that need to be addressed to advance water quality and wastewater management efforts effectively.

**Examples of the challenges faced for SDG target 6.3 as reported by commitment holders:**

- (1) Difficulties in the collaboration between basin authorities and regional authorities and with the digitalization and data sharing process.
- (2) In cases of partnership between two or more countries is concerned, obtaining environmental licenses can be difficult particularly when cooperation between countries is involved. This can be owing to differences in specific legislation between the countries as well as the bureaucratic procedures involved in processing the legal instruments that govern the partnership.

*Areas to address*

- 212. Addressing water quality and wastewater challenges requires a comprehensive approach that integrates community awareness, technological innovation, financial support and international cooperation. There's a pressing need for enhanced knowledge and data analysis, backed by financial support, to develop and scale up technologies for water collection, treatment and recycling. The significant financial requirements for large-scale projects highlight the critical gap in funding that impedes progress. Overcoming bureaucratic hurdles and aligning specific legislation across countries are also vital for facilitating international partnerships and innovative water treatment projects.

*Highlighted commitments at or near completion*

Title	#SDGActionID	Entity	Location	Examples of progress
<b>Monitoring of micropollutants and water quality in the Hydrographic Basin of the</b>	#SDG Action 51044	Itaipu Binacional	Brazil/Paraguay	Advanced progress on efforts to manage water resources have evolved from a binational commission to collaborations with academic and research institutions, focusing on data-driven approaches to water quality and management. This initiative, particularly involving Itaipu,

<b>Itaipu Reservoir</b>				emphasizes the importance of understanding water from various perspectives to inform decisions affecting its multiple uses, including energy production, with an environmental focus. Technological advancements have been leveraged to monitor and address pollutants more effectively, aiming for sustainable energy production and water safety. The monitoring network spans numerous stations across the Itaipu reservoir and surrounding areas, with regular assessments to ensure the health and safety of these water bodies.
<b>Santiago River Recovery and Restoration</b>	#SDG Action 50929	Government of Jalisco	Mexico	The Government of Jalisco has made advanced progress on increasing sanitation in the Santiago River basin, energy efficiency in wastewater treatments plants and reused water in the Santiago River basin, mainstreamed the gender perspective in decision-making spaces and the preparing of the 2050 Santiago Plan.

**SDG target 6.4 – Increase water-use efficiency and ensure freshwater supplies**

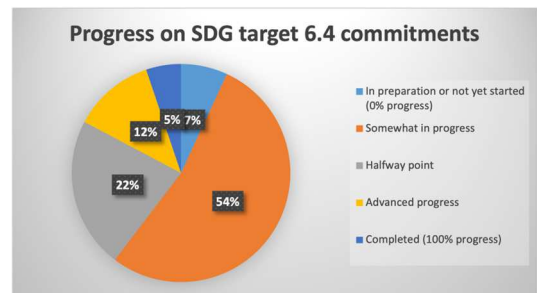
213. The mapping of the voluntary commitments showed that 350 out of the 837 commitments address SDG target 6.4. In the survey, 143 of the respondents stated that their commitment addressed the target, 41 per cent of the original commitments for SDG target 6.4.

*Summary of results*

- Overall progress

214. The responses show that the commitments that focused on SDG target 6.4 are slightly ahead of the rest of the Water Action Agenda as a whole with more commitments at the halfway point and less commitments that are only somewhat in progress.

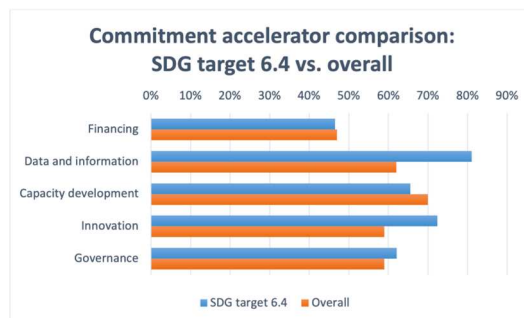
- Key stakeholders



215. Of the 13 groups of stakeholders that were identified as part of the survey for who was most involved in the commitments, SDG target 6.4 showed higher than average levels of involvement from farmers, business and industry and the science and technology community. Lower than average engagement came from aging persons, children and youth, NGOs and volunteers.

- Global Acceleration Framework accelerators

216. The GAF accelerators' relevance in the SDG target 6.4 commitments of the Water Action Agenda showed that data and information were far more significant for 6.4 than the average for the rest of the Water Action Agenda. Innovation also showed higher than average. Governance was slightly more relevant while capacity was slightly lower and financing was virtually the same.



### Challenges

217. Compared to the commitments in general, SDG target 6.4 has relatively the same level of challenges in all categories with lack of expertise and enabling environment being slightly higher and financial issues and lack of cooperation from partners slightly lower.



218. The myriad challenges faced in enhancing water use efficiency and addressing water scarcity under the Water Action Agenda commitments predominantly orbit around financial constraints, the need for integrated and holistic planning and the translation of data into actionable insights for decision-makers. This is further complicated by the logistical challenges of reaching remote areas, political and social resistance, and the overarching need to align water and climate policies with science and community needs.

219. Moreover, the challenges extend to securing political will, managing electoral political contexts that hamper decision-making and budget allocations and overcoming resistance to change. The intricacies of monitoring compliance, promoting behavior change towards sustainable practices, and raising further awareness among businesses about the importance of water resource management highlight the complexity of the situation. Bridging the gap between stakeholders, policymakers and scientists to foster a systemic and holistic understanding of water resource management, alongside securing financial support for data collection and the implementation of nature-based solutions, underscores the multifaceted challenges that must be navigated to achieve sustainable water use and mitigate water scarcity effectively.

**Examples of the challenges faced for SDG target 6.4 as reported by commitment holders:**

- (1) Implementation in the most remote and less inhabited areas can become an ongoing logistical and resources management issue throughout the process.
- (2) Even if the requisite data is freely available globally, often hurdles in local uptake impedes its full use.

*Areas to address*

220. The primary gaps that need addressing to enhance water use efficiency and combat water scarcity include financial constraints, the integration of cross-sectoral planning and the effective utilization of data for decision-making. Financial constraints severely limit the scope and scale of water management projects, highlighting the urgent need for innovative financing solutions, international funding and private sector engagement. There is a critical gap in creating cohesive, integrated strategies that facilitate holistic planning and collaboration across public and private sectors, and ensuring all stakeholders work towards a unified goal. Additionally, transforming vast amounts of data into actionable information for decision-makers remains a significant challenge. Addressing these gaps requires a concerted effort to secure sustainable funding, foster multi-stakeholder partnerships for comprehensive planning, and leverage technology to make data more accessible and actionable for those managing water resources.

*Highlighted commitments at or near completion*

Title	#SDGActionID	Entity	Location	Examples of progress
<b>Measure water consumption (evapotranspiration) and water productivity from space</b>	#SDG Action 51089	eLEAF	Global	Recently completed the core of the commitment by delivering global data for monitoring water productivity to the FAO. This data is open-access available through <a href="https://data.apps.fao.org/wapor/">https://data.apps.fao.org/wapor/</a>

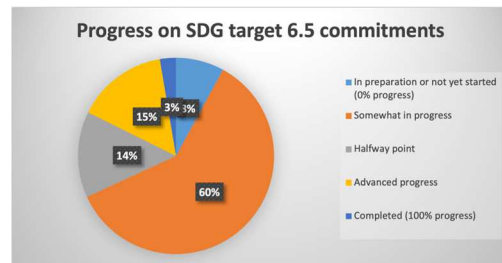
## SDG target 6.5 – Implement integrated water resources management

221. The mapping of the voluntary commitments showed that 369 out of the 837 commitments address SDG target 6.5. In the survey, 168 of the respondents stated that their commitment addressed the target, 46 per cent of the original commitments for SDG target 6.5.

### Summary of results

- Overall progress

222. The responses show that the commitments that were focused on SDG target 6.5 have the same level of progress as the average for the entire Water Action Agenda. Over 80 percent has not crossed the halfway point.

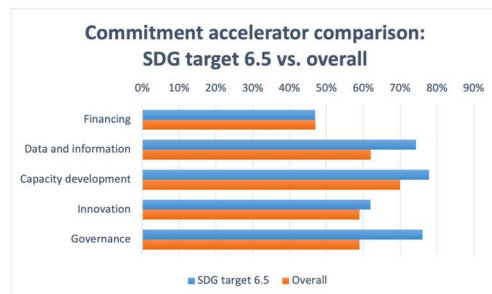


- Key     stakeholders

223. Of the 13 groups of stakeholders that were identified as part of the survey for who was most involved in the commitments, SDG target 6.5 showed higher than average levels of involvement from business and industry, education and academia, local authorities and scientific and technology communities. On the other hand, SDG target 6.5 saw less engagement than the average with children and youth and volunteers.

- Global Acceleration Framework accelerators

224. The GAF accelerators' relevance in the SDG target 6.5 commitments showed that data and information, capacity development and governance were all significantly higher than the average in comparison to the Water Action Agenda commitments as a whole, and innovation coming out slightly more relevant. Financing was equal to the average.



### Challenges

225. Compared to the commitments in general, SDG target 6.5 has relatively the same level of challenges except in terms of finance, which is lower than the average, 61 per cent compared to 66 per cent, but still well over half the respondents responded that this was a significant challenge.



226. Securing consistent financial support to implement IWRM remains a primary concern. The complexity

of navigating bureaucratic processes poses significant hurdles. Achieving buy-in from partners and stakeholders is also crucial, but often difficult.

227. The success of IWRM initiatives often hinges on the political environment, requiring consistent political will and high-level support, which are not always guaranteed. Moreover, IWRM efforts are impeded by a shortage of expertise necessary. Coordinating among various levels of government and achieving an integrated approach to risk management and climate change adaptation present organizational challenges. The lack of institutional strength in some communities, coupled with insufficient legal and regulatory frameworks related to water and sanitation, complicates efforts to implement IWRM. Data collection is another cornerstone of IWRM that is often undermined by inadequate funding for both the activities and the human resources required.
228. Transboundary water cooperation faces several overarching challenges, including an underappreciation of the importance of legal and institutional frameworks for sustainable water management, leading to difficulties in applying theoretical knowledge to practical projects. Legal differences between nations and bureaucratic processes add complexity to water governance. Engaging multiple stakeholders is often impeded by their focused agendas and organizational barriers, and there's often a lack of experts. Climate change impacts on water flows present cross-border sharing issues, and political instability, lack of trust, and financial constraints hamper long-term strategic planning and execution.
229. Efforts to foster cooperation and knowledge sharing, especially among youth and experts from diverse regions, are further strained by funding limitations and the slow nature of building consensus and trust across borders.
230. The pursuit of transboundary water cooperation and IWRM is thus entangled in a web of financial, legal, institutional and socio-political challenges that require innovative solutions, comprehensive stakeholder engagement and sustained political will to navigate effectively.

**Examples of the challenges faced for SDG target 6.5 as reported by commitment holders:**

(1) The integration of water into national economic policies and an integrated approach to resource management, where decisions on land (including urbanization), water, and energy resources are made in tandem and cognizant of the likely impacts on biodiversity loss and climate change, and vice versa.

(2) Political environment and commitment by central governments as well as risk-perception of investors towards transboundary and cross-sectoral investments.

***Areas to address***

231. Key areas where additional efforts could significantly impact IWRM implementation and transboundary water cooperation include enhancing the alignment of national policies with

IWRM principles to ensure cohesive and sustainable water management across borders, strengthening the legal and institutional frameworks to support more effective transboundary water cooperation, and improving the integration of local community needs and traditional knowledge into water governance structures. Another potential gap is the need for more targeted investments in capacity building and technical support to enable the practical application of scientific research and innovative technologies in water management. Additionally, there's a noticeable need for creating more robust mechanisms for financial support that cater specifically to transboundary water projects, which often face unique challenges and complexities. Strengthening the engagement and collaboration between different sectors and stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society and international organizations, could also fill existing gaps in both IWRM and transboundary water cooperation efforts. Finally, enhancing data sharing, transparency and communication between countries sharing water resources could address gaps in understanding and cooperation that hinder effective water management.



*Highlighted commitments at or near completion*

Title	#SDG Action ID	Entity	Location	Examples of progress
<b>Dialogue and Communities of Practice for Transboundary Water Cooperation</b>	#SDG Action 51553	Global Water Partnership Central America	Central America	Advanced progress on the publication of indicators of human rights to water and sanitation in the Platform of the National System for the Evaluation of the Level of Compliance with Human Rights of the Government of Mexico
<b>Support to the promotion and strengthening of transboundary water cooperation globally, for the environment, development, health, peace and stability</b>	#SDG Action 52091	Government of France	Global	Advanced progress on supporting the development and reinforcement of the capacities of transboundary basin organization in Africa, continuing support to the UN Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Water and International Lakes, developing scientific cooperation, in favor of the enhancing of knowledge on water resources in the context of climate change, to support transboundary water cooperation and committing to the Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition.
<b>Water and Engineering</b>	#SDG Action 50641	World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO)	Global	The commitment was realized with the publication of the report, “Engineering, Groundwater, and Integrated Water Resources Management.” The publication, which was drafted by the WFEO Committee on Water (CW), provides a comprehensive perspective of groundwater in the context of integrated water resources management and in the framework of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
<b>Identifying additional groundwater resources in</b>	#SDG Action 50817	Ministry of Energy and Water	Somalia	The "Identifying additional groundwater resources in Somalia by using oil data" desk study has concluded. The Somali authorities are

Somalia by using oil data		Resources of Somalia		reviewing the reports and once approved, the Somali government, together with donors and financial institutions will continue the next phase which will be drilling pilot boreholes and developing capacity.
<b>SDG6 Digital Water Management Initiative - from Catchment to City to Waste</b>	#SDG Action 51353	Nedamco Africa		Advanced progress on the initiative that aims to improve the water needs of millions of people and will be based on digitally verifiable outcomes focused on reduction of non-revenue water, increase of water quality, increased access to water, and higher availability of water. In a “first-ever”, leveraging the latest available technologies, the solution will measure, report, and verify outcomes of water management, starting in Addis Ababa in a sub-set of the city, using digital twins in a fully digital and transparent manner.

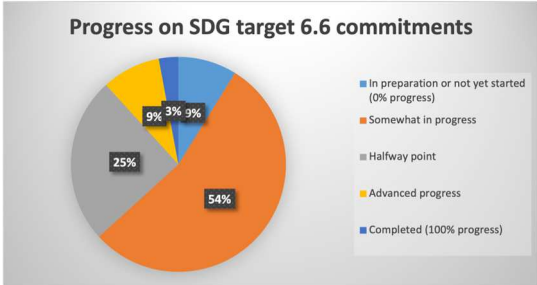
**SDG target 6.6 – Protect and restore water-related ecosystems**

232. The mapping of the voluntary commitments showed that 313 out of the 837 commitments address SDG target 6.6. In the survey, 135 of the respondents stated that their commitment addressed the target, 43 per cent of the original commitments for SDG target 6.6.

*Summary of results*

- Overall progress

233. The responses show that the commitments that were focused on SDG target 6.6 have are somewhat lower on those that are somewhat in progress and quite higher on those that are at the halfway point in comparison with the average of the Water Action Agenda commitments indicating this target is further along than other targets.

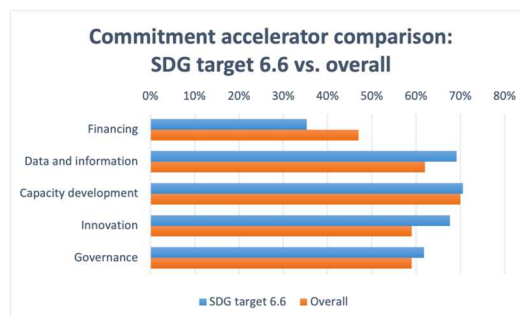


- Key      stakeholders

234. Of the 13 groups of stakeholders that were identified as part of the survey for who was most involved in the commitments, SDG target 6.6 showed higher than average levels of involvement from, education and academia, children and youth, Indigenous Peoples, the science and technology community and business and industry. All other stakeholders were at the average of the commitments in the Water Action Agenda.

- Global Acceleration Framework accelerators

235. The GAF accelerators' relevance in the SDG target 6.6 commitments of the Water Action Agenda showed that data and information and innovation were the most associated accelerators with the commitments to protect and restore freshwater ecosystems. Both capacity development and governance were slightly higher than the average while financing was significantly lower.



### Challenges

236. Compared to the commitments in general, SDG target 6.6 has relatively the same level of challenges except in terms of enabling environment, which was considerably higher than the average at 54 per cent of all respondents compared to 39 per cent for the Water Action Agenda as a whole. Financial impediments were still ranked as the primary challenge.



237. Protecting and restoring freshwater ecosystems encounters several key challenges. Securing consistent funding is a crucial issue, with financial delays impacting initiatives aimed at ecosystem restoration. Establishing supportive international policies is also a significant challenge, which often hinders effective ecosystem management. There's a need to scale up technology and innovation sustainably to meet the demands of ecosystem protection. Raising awareness among businesses about the importance of water to climate change and biodiversity is vital but remains insufficient. Community engagement is fundamental, yet initiatives often struggle due to funding shortages. Staffing limitations and capacity constraints affect the ability to monitor and manage ecosystems effectively. Fragmentation within the water sector complicates the implementation of ecosystem protection plans, while developing cooperative policies requires extensive intergovernmental collaboration and coordination. These challenges underscore the complex nature of ecosystem protection efforts, highlighting the need for financial, educational and policy-based support.

**Examples of the challenges faced for SDG target 6.6 as reported by commitment holders:**

- (1) The main issue is the willingness of some government agencies to engage in activities that consider policy, guidance and management approaches that recognize the rights of wetlands.
- (2) Capacity and means to follow-up with the governments commitments to protect the rainforests to guarantee water supply at a continental level, and to persuade real articulated cooperation amongst countries.

*Areas to address*

238. To tackle the challenges in freshwater ecosystem restoration, strategic funding initiatives are essential to secure reliable financing. Policy reforms must be advocated to facilitate supportive regulations for ecosystem management. Strengthening local community actions and providing focused training can enhance ecosystem stewardship. Awareness campaigns and corporate incentives can increase business engagement in protecting and restoring freshwater ecosystems. Finally, clear delineation of roles within the water sector and enhanced intergovernmental cooperation are vital for cohesive ecosystem management efforts.

*Highlighted commitments at or near completion*

Title	#SDG Action ID	Entity	Location	Examples of progress
<b>Freshwater Challenge</b>	#SDG Action 51667	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)	Global	Advanced progress has been made with 44 countries now members of the Freshwater Challenge, new supporting organizations and backing from Indigenous Peoples and businesses. The Freshwater Challenge has achieved more than expected by the end of 2023. However, there is still considerable work to be done to develop the overall blueprint, support countries to identify priority rivers and wetlands, and secure the funds to protect and restore freshwater ecosystems.

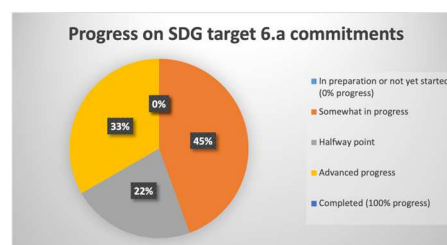
## SDG target 6.a – Expand water and sanitation support to developing countries

239. The mapping of the voluntary commitments showed that 305 out of the 837 commitments address SDG target 6.1. While the survey showed that 133 of the respondents stated that their commitment addressed the target 6.a, the reality is that only nine commitments that were reported on are truly contributions to the target, which demonstrates a misunderstanding as to what SDG target 6.a contains: “Amount of water- and sanitation-related official development assistance (ODA) that is part of a government-coordinated spending plan.” However, the nine commitments that were reported on reflect more than a 50 per cent response rate for SDG target 6.a. Given the low number of commitments analyzed, the below most likely does not reflect wider trends in ODA.

### *Summary of results*

- Overall progress

240. The responses show that the commitments that were made focused on SDG target 6.a have progressed further than the average for the Water Action Agenda. Those that are at the halfway point and show advanced progress are well above average. None are at the in preparation or not yet started stages, which is what is wanted for commitments to overseas development assistance. Also, none have been 100 per cent completed, because these are mostly longer-term commitments.

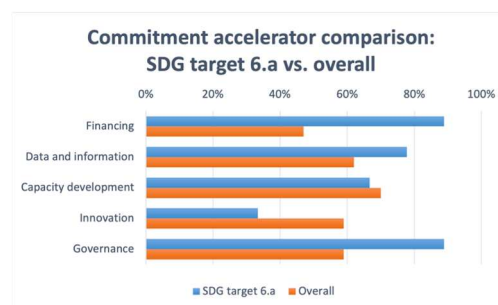


- Key  stakeholders

241. Of the 13 groups of stakeholders that were identified as part of the survey for who was most involved in the commitments, SDG target 6.a showed higher than average levels of involvement from farmers, local authorities and women. But, lower than average engagement from children and youth, education and academia, the scientific and technology community and volunteers.

- Global Acceleration Framework accelerators

242. The GAF accelerators’ relevance to the SDG target 6.a commitments reflects the purpose of ODA, as financing comes out very strongly. Governance is not far behind and data and information is also strong. Capacity development falling behind the average is a surprise, but not so much with regards to innovation.



## Challenges

243. Compared to the commitments in general, the enabling environment is what most find challenging, with over 50 per cent of the respondents stating this and almost 20 percentage points more than the average for the Water Action Agenda. Financial issues, while below average, is still considered a major challenge. In-kind contribution delays were higher than average with the other categories on par with the other commitments.



244. The survey responses to the challenges of implementing the commitments related to SDG target 6.a reflect the issues encountered across all commitments and the achievement of SDG 6 in general. These include inefficiencies in translating policies into practical actions, bridging the gap between knowledge and its implementation and addressing community needs through government actions within a complex multilevel governance framework. Financial constraints are also a major hurdle, with disparities in access to affordable financing exacerbating the situation. Furthermore, there is a notable lack of institutional strength within some communities and public institutions, compounded by insufficient legal and regulatory frameworks concerning water and sanitation. The difficulty in recruiting experienced staff, particularly for projects in remote and rural areas, and challenges in managing water sources across different jurisdictions further complicate efforts. Political instability and the difficulty of scaling up initiatives beyond pilot phases due to funding shortages remain pressing concerns.

### Examples of the challenges faced for SDG target 6.a as reported by commitment holders:

- (1) Political stability and difficulties scaling up beyond pilot phase in the light of lack of funding.
- (2) Lack of institutional strength in some of the communities and public institutions the fund is engaged with, and the lack of legal and regulatory frameworks related to water and sanitation. There are also difficulties to find experienced and skilled staff, especially when working in remote rural areas; and difficulties related to the management of water sources when depending on different authorities, regions or countries.

### Areas to address

245. To increase ODA for water and sanitation, donor countries and organizations need to recognize the critical link between water, sanitation and socio-economic development. Advocacy and awareness campaigns can highlight this connection, emphasizing the return on investment that water and sanitation projects deliver in terms of public health, gender equality and economic productivity. Engaging with policymakers to prioritize water and sanitation within ODA portfolios can also play a pivotal role. It's important to demonstrate the effectiveness of ODA in water and sanitation through transparent, measurable outcomes

showcasing successful case studies and leveraging them to build the case for increased funding. Additionally, fostering partnerships between governments, NGOs and the private sector can attract more funding by pooling resources and sharing expertise. Innovative financing mechanisms such as blended finance, where public funds are used to mobilize private capital investment, can also be explored to increase the total investment in this critical sector. Establishing dedicated funds or financial instruments that specifically target water and sanitation projects could further incentivize donor contributions.

***Highlighted commitments at or near completion***

Title	#SDG Action ID	Entity	Location	Examples of progress
<b>Safe water supply to 1.35 M people in rural Ethiopia and Nepal</b>	#SDG Action 51139	Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland	Ethiopia/ Nepal	Advanced progress bilateral projects COWASH IV in Ethiopia and SUSWA on receiving receive safe water supply in selected areas. The projects is also working extensively in sanitation and hygiene, and gender and social inclusion aspects are strongly inbuilt into the projects execution.

**SDG target 6.b – Support local engagement in water and sanitation management**

246. The mapping of the voluntary commitments showed that 372 out of the 837 commitments address SDG target 6.b. In the survey, 169 of the respondents stated that their commitment addressed the target, but much like SDG target 6.a, there is a misunderstanding as to what the target entails. In examining closely the commitments, there were actually less than a half-dozen in the Water Action Agenda that address SDG target 6.b, whose indicator is the “proportion of local administrative units with established and operational policies and procedures for participation of local communities in water and sanitation management.”

***Summary of results***

- Overall progress

247. Only one of the commitment holders that was identified as contributing to SDG target 6.b responded to the survey, which was reported as having somewhat progressed in its implementation. Financial issues were identified as a primary challenge as well as the coordination at different levels of government.

**Example of the challenges faced for SDG target 6.b as reported by commitment holders:**

- (1) Coordination of national, regional and local levels of government.



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### *Areas to address*

248. The SDG 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023 reported that only 25 per cent of countries report high participation by communities in planning and management for rural drinking-water and water resources management and that only roughly 16 per cent of countries had over 75 per cent of the financial resources to support this participation.<sup>19</sup>
249. To significantly increase the proportion of local administrative units with established and operational policies for community participation in water and sanitation management, a multifaceted approach is important to strengthen community engagement through the creation of inclusive platforms and educational programs can empower local communities to actively participate in water and sanitation projects. This includes developing inclusive policies and legal frameworks that mandate and facilitate community involvement, alongside providing targeted capacity-building programs for both communities and local government officials. Enhancing the technical and managerial capabilities of these stakeholders ensures the sustainable management of water resources and sanitation services.
250. Secondly, securing sustainable financing and ensuring transparent resource allocation are critical for supporting projects that prioritize community participation. Establishing robust monitoring, evaluation and feedback mechanisms will also enable continuous improvement of water and sanitation management by incorporating community insights and feedback. Moreover, forging multi-stakeholder partnerships can leverage diverse expertise and resources, while international collaboration can offer additional support and knowledge sharing. These concerted efforts across different levels of governance and society are pivotal in advancing towards achieving SDG target 6.b, ensuring equitable and sustainable access to water and sanitation for all.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.unwater.org/publications/sdg-6-synthesis-report-2023>



# Mapping and Progress of the UN 2023 Water Conference Water Action Agenda

## IV. Moving forward with the Water Action Agenda

251. The Water Action Agenda is an ambitious set of commitments pledged by governments and organizations at every level in every corner of the planet. With only a year having passed since the UN 2023 Water Conference at the time of writing of this document, much is left to be done to realize both the Water Action Agenda and the realization of SDG 6. The following section will review ways forward with the Water Action Agenda through different lenses.

### a. SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework: How to accelerate

252. The SDG Global Acceleration Framework (GAF) provides the structure through which progress can be achieved towards SDG 6. The following actions, organized by the “accelerators” of the GAF, can assist with the implementation of SDG 6 vis-a-vis the commitments in the Water Action Agenda moving forward.

#### *Finance*

253. Strategic approaches to finance are essential for providing universal access to safe drinking water, enhancing sanitation and treating wastewater. By mobilizing large-scale finance from both public and private sectors, particularly for low- and middle-income countries, projects should aim to ensure that everyone has access to drinking water and sanitation services. Investments should be made in innovative solutions and infrastructure upgrades, emphasizing sustainable and efficient water management systems. These efforts should include the modernization of wastewater treatment facilities and the development of financial strategies for transboundary water management, underpinning the commitment to creating resilient water systems that can withstand the challenges posed by climate change and population growth.

#### *Data and information*

254. The advancement of water management heavily relies on the integration of technology and data analytics. Through the development and application of data indices, monitoring platforms, and sophisticated web-based systems, stakeholders should be empowered with evidence-based tools for decision-making. This data-driven approach is crucial for improving water supply, sanitation and efficiency, as well as for protecting ecosystems. It enables the identification of water quality issues, facilitates efficient water use, and supports the sustainable management of water resources, ensuring that actions are informed and targeted.

### ***Capacity development***

255. Enhancing the skills and capabilities of individuals and institutions is fundamental to the sustainable management of water resources. Through training in technical, financial, managerial and leadership skills, stakeholders should be equipped to address the complexities of water and sanitation management effectively. Capacity development effort should focus on promoting inclusive strategies that involve communities, local organizations and water and sanitation professionals, ensuring that water and sanitation management practices are sustainable, equitable and responsive to local needs.

### ***Innovation***

256. Innovation plays a pivotal role in addressing water- and sanitation-related challenges, with a focus on developing new technologies, institutional approaches and sustainable practices. From rainwater harvesting and solar water farms to waterless toilets and advanced wastewater treatment technologies, innovative solutions should be implemented to enhance water access, sanitation and ecosystem protection. These initiatives not only aim to improve water quality and efficiency but also promote a circular economy and climate resilience in water management.

### ***Governance***

257. Effective governance is crucial for ensuring the sustainable management of water resources. By fostering collaboration among stakeholders, establishing robust legal and institutional frameworks, especially in transboundary settings, and promoting multisectoral collaboration, governance initiatives aim to enhance accountability, regulatory harmonization and community participation. These should be directed towards achieving equitable access to water and sanitation, improving water quality, and protecting water-related ecosystems, underlining the importance of coordinated action and shared responsibility.

258. Collectively, these efforts highlight the comprehensive and multifaceted approach required to achieving SDG 6 and other water- and sanitation-related goals and targets, underscoring the interconnectedness of finance, data, capacity development, innovation and governance in ensuring sustainable, equitable and efficient water management for all.

### **b. Key takeaways from the Water Action Agenda and its progress**

259. The Water Action Agenda and its progress to date have given provided some takeaways as to the agenda's nature, characteristics and where the initiative is headed:

#### **Global participation and geographic distribution**

- There is broad engagement from many countries, indicating a global recognition of the importance of water- and sanitation-related issues
- There is notable participation from low-income countries, highlighting the agenda's global inclusiveness

- Regions such as Africa, Asia and Latin America prominently featured, showing a geographic spread of commitments

### **Stakeholder involvement**

- The Water Action Agenda has diverse stakeholder engagement, including governments, NGOs, the private sector, academic institutions and local communities
- There is an emphasis on inclusive participation, ensuring that various voices and perspectives are represented
- Partnerships have been formed between different stakeholders, facilitating knowledge sharing and collaboration

### **Thematic focuses**

- Commitments are largely centered on improving water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and integrated water resources management (IWRM)
- There is significant attention given to climate change adaptation, reflecting the urgent need to address water-related climate impacts
- Initiatives targeting water efficiency, pollution reduction and ecosystem protection, aiming for holistic water management approaches are also prevalent

### **Challenges encountered**

- Financial constraints have been identified as a major hurdle, affecting the scale and speed of implementing commitments
- Lack of expertise and technical knowledge are hindering progress in certain regions and areas of work
- There are also issues related to cooperation and coordination among stakeholders, impacting project efficiency and effectiveness

#### **c. Key takeaways from the process and ideas for moving forward**

- There are many bright ideas and good initiatives that can be found in the Water Action Agenda, but they lack the finances or access to donors to be able to implement and/or upscale their actions.
- If a process of commitments is going to be carried out again, start earlier and engage more with each commitment-holder.
- Potentially re-think how a commitment is defined. Instead of individual organizational commitments, determine a target commitment that all organization types can contribute to, like filling a water glass, through a verifiable process. For example, “x” (very large) number of liters of water conserved. Capture the actions that were taken to achieve this target.

- Many national governments did not make commitments. Compared to the whole, very few local authorities. How to engage and stimulate these governments to make commitments should be reconsidered. Since these processes often take significant time, this reinforces the idea of starting earlier .
- Additional quality assurance should be put in place to mitigate the following:
  - Many of the “commitments” started before the Water Action Agenda existed (up to 40 per cent)
  - Many of the “commitments” were organizations’ regular activities
  - Advantageous commitments: actions that were already going to happen whether the Water Action Agenda existed or not
- An improved design of the commitment and progress submission process with expert advice on survey development and monitoring and evaluation would improve the content and reporting on of commitments
- Are commitments needed from the international water community that is already committed to advancing the sustainable management of water and sanitation?
- A re-think of the target audience could be more impactful, especially with regards to targeting non-water actors and local authorities
- SDG 6 targets are still not well understood even by the international water community, especially 6.a and 6.b. The commitment collecting process can help with this understanding

#### **d. Concluding statement**

260. As the mapping and progress report of the Water Action Agenda indicates, it's evident that the journey towards achieving the sustainable management of water and sanitation is both ambitious and complex. The report highlights varying levels of progress across commitments, with the majority in their nascent or intermediate stages. This phase of development is crucial, laying the foundation for more significant achievements as the world approaches the end of the 2030 Agenda. However, it also underscores an urgent need for enhanced resources, enabling environments and increased capacity. Particularly, the acknowledgment of increased funding and investment as essential components to meet the agenda's lofty objectives cannot be overstated. Financial support is essential to fuel innovative solutions, accelerate existing initiatives and bridge the gap in managing water and sanitation in a sustainable manner, especially to achieve universal access to water and sanitation.

261. Where the Water Action currently stands requires an intensified effort in international cooperation and knowledge exchange. The global nature of water challenges necessitates a unified approach, transcending borders and sectors to share successes, learn from setbacks and collectively advance towards sustainable water and sanitation management. The importance of scaling up successful initiative and the adoption of adaptive management practices that can respond to the dynamic nature of water-related challenges is clear. These strategies are not just about expanding what works but also about being agile and responsive to changing conditions and new insights. Together, these components form a comprehensive approach to tackling the water crisis, emphasizing collaboration, innovation and resilience as key drivers of progress.

The Water Action Agenda sets forth a vision that, with collective action and sustained commitment, can provide progress towards the achievement of SDG 6.