

Joint Statement from the International Water Stewardship Community

Strengthening Public-Private Collaboration to Accelerate Action on Water

UNITED NATIONS 2023 WATER CONFERENCE

*We, organisations of the global corporate water stewardship community,
come together alongside UN 2023 Water Conference,
to advocate for joint action to strengthen public-private collaboration on water.*

We call on global governments to support the business community to increase action on water through six solutions for policy action.

We commit to engaging our networks of private sector leaders to align our agendas to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6, and water security for all by 2030.

Key Messages

- Stronger public-private sector alignment and collaboration is needed on water, as water security risks intensify due to climate change.
- The private sector is committing to take bolder action on water and asks for government support to align incentives and policy frameworks to un-lock business action.
- Government action can accelerate some of the most promising solutions for public-private collaboration on water.
- This joint statement outlines six key solution areas where business action can have the biggest impact, when supported by aligned policy frameworks, and public-private capacity building – **6 solutions for SDG6**.

SIX (6) KEY SOLUTIONS

FOR GOVERNMENT SUPPORT TO UN-LOCK INCREASED CORPORATE ACTION

Since the adoption of the SDGs in 2015, global businesses have collectively invested billions of USD in water security solutions for improving water quality; more efficient use and increasing replenishment of water withdrawals; and enabling water, sanitation and hygiene access to under serviced populations - across global operations, supply chains and in communities where they operate.

Progress is being made, but more can be done when governments and the private sector work together to accelerate impact.

Government actions and policies that support long term water security goals are fundamental to enabling business to co-invest safely within agreed frameworks (The Fundamentals).

With the fundamental policy frameworks in place, the private sector can co-invest alongside governments in key areas that will unlock exponential improvements in water quantity, quality and access and that secure resilient water resources for the future, thus boosting progress towards achievement of SDG 6 (The Un-locks for Exponential Improvements).

THE FUNDAMENTALS	THE UN-LOCKS FOR EXPONENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure Strong Foundations for Sustainable Water Management 2. Enable Mechanisms that Better Value and Manage Water 3. Create Open Access to Accurate Data 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Mobilize Frameworks that Drive Innovation 5. Scale-up Funding Mechanisms & Capacity Development 6. Harness the Power of Collective Action



THE FUNDAMENTALS

Fundamental government actions include:

1. Ensure a Strong Foundation for Sustainable Water Management
 - **Determine location and time-specific water balance by basin** - to properly assess the quantity of water available currently and projected for the future, together with determining the total use by users in that basin, including the amount needed for environmental and social safeguards.
 - **Set caps on water allocation for use** - based on both long-term precipitation records (considering climate impacts) and projected water availability and setting aside first the amount needed to maintain basic human needs and environmental function and improving allocation mechanisms so that they are equitable and sustainable.
 - **Prioritize equitable access to water and sanitation as a human right** - (aiming to achieve SDG 6.1 and 6.2) while actively improving access for vulnerable communities by ensuring investments and policies are in place.
 - **Issue commitments and investments, assigning commensurate budgets, to protect water quality** - (SDG 6.3) from both point and non-point sources. Invest in the expansion and long-term operation, maintenance, and treatment of wastewater, fecal sludge, stormwater and urban runoff including stronger efforts to tackle novel substances such as PFAS and pharmaceuticals.

- [Implement and coordinate nature-related commitments](#) - made across Multi-lateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) like Ramsar COP14, CBD CoP15 and COP27 to protect, restore manage, and remove threats to freshwater ecosystems and their watersheds.

2. Enable Mechanisms that Better Value and Manage Water

- [Incentivize corporate water stewardship](#) – to accelerate credible, verified corporate action on water including the strengthening of trade policy levers through international conventions and protocols; and support sustainability-related trade mechanisms (e.g., certifications and standards) that promote water stewardship.
- [Support investments to transition to climate-smart, water resilient and nature-positive agriculture](#) – Redirect current subsidies in the agricultural sector to support investments that enable the future success of farmers and farming communities through the adoption of climate-smart, water resilient and nature positive practices. These investments can be aligned with current commitments to finance climate mitigation and adaptation efforts.
- [Reform water policy on water pricing for industry and agriculture](#) - to incentivize water saving, while providing safeguards for human access and environmental functions. Introduce efficient mechanisms for assessing water risks and impacts, and the removal of environmentally harmful subsidies.
- [Support global policy and frameworks on the valuation of water](#) - to enable, and ultimately mandate, the valuation of water as a natural asset to be recognized and managed alongside traditional financial assets as one mechanism that enables the private sector to better value water.

3. Create Open Access to Accurate Data:

- [Strengthen monitoring systems by establishing centralized open water data and information platforms](#) - to make accessible high quality local data covering all aspects (quantity, quality, river flow, groundwater, river connectivity, pollution levels, freshwater habitat extent and possibly eDNA) for use by all parties at local and national levels and in alignment with global platforms.
- [Incentivize comprehensive water disclosure by companies and financial institutions](#) - covering impacts and dependencies on water, resulting water risk, actions being taken to mitigate risk and opportunities to further water stewardship. Disclosures should include details on water use (withdrawn and consumed), pollution, ecosystem protection efforts, governance of water-related issues, and public policy engagements to further water outcomes.
- [Evaluate progress towards SDG 6](#) - Involve the business community in efforts to evaluate progress on water resources management. Identify significant challenges and opportunities that result in shared action plans.
- [Strengthen the accountability of all water users](#) - through transparent monitoring and reporting of their performance, enabling responsive mechanisms for all voices to be heard, and effective development refinement, and enforcement of water-related laws to ensure a level playing field.



THE UN-LOCKS FOR EXPONENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

Key government actions to un-lock exponential improvements and enable water resilience include:

4. Mobilize Frameworks that Drive Innovation

- [Support innovation in water technologies](#) - (including circular water management and nature-based solutions), financial schemes, data collection and dissemination, operating procedures, production processes and services
- [Support the digitization of water infrastructure and services](#) - to optimize water use efficiencies, operations and maintenance), replenishment and reliable access to water, sanitation and hygiene services to support all communities and ecosystems.
- [Support local entrepreneurship ecosystems](#) - Develop education and capacity development programs for entrepreneurship to support the growth of entrepreneurship ecosystems for more diverse and inclusive water services.

5. Scale-up Funding Mechanisms & Capacity Development

- [Review public investment policy and guidance](#) - to require consideration of natural infrastructure and natural areas in water infrastructure investment decisions.
- [Incentivize the increase of financial flows to water security solutions](#) - by establishing blended financing mechanisms and supporting the growth of diverse investment opportunities that leverage the capital markets - that enable more diverse investors to participate while also protecting the water services of low and middle-income countries.
- [Establish investments in ecosystem service markets](#) - (SDG 6.6) with provisions, guidelines, and criteria to give certainty to the private sector that their funds will be used adequately and in support of the attainment of water security.

6. Harness the Power of Collective Action

- [Encourage collective actions that compound individual private sector contributions in basins through government support](#) – via ministerial participation, multi-sectorial collaboration policies and allocation of funds to support implementation of improvement actions
- [Establish collective funding mechanisms](#) - that act as a channel towards scalability and sustainability. These funds can help channel investments in numerous areas from natural conservation or restoration to water access, sanitation, and hygiene while strengthening water governance by bringing together relevant stakeholders - and provide sound scientific knowledge to facilitate the decision-making process.
- [Encourage the removal of departmental barriers to promote coordination across sectors](#) – such as, agricultural, financial, energy, planning, private and NGO actors. UN agencies can be particularly helpful when such boundaries include national divides (I.e., transboundary basins).