

Marrakech Partnership



Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action

Event Outcome Water Action Event:

"The power of water: the unexplored potential for climate resilience"

**UNFCCC COP 27
Sharm El Sheikh**

**14 November 2022
10:00-12:00 EET**

Organised by SIWI, WRI, IWMI and High-Level Climate Champions Contributions from various organisations including: APCO, Forest Trends, Taproot Earth, and Water for climate community including TNC, INBO, FWP, FDCO, AGWA, CDP and WWF

SECTION 1 - ACTION EVENT

Key Messages:

The Water Action event’s aim was to raise the profile and importance of water targeted action by communicating the necessity for water to be at the forefront of climate negotiations and policymaking. This manifested in a number of ways and was intrinsically linked to the comprehensive [Water Action Pathway](#). This Pathway, built from the best available science, articulates the water-related actions stakeholders must take between now and 2040 to deliver the goals of the Paris Agreement. The event shared knowledge, gaps to meet the water actions in the pathway and ideas of how to contribute to transforming systems to strengthen water security as a foundation for a climate-resilient future with a cross-sectoral lens. More specifically, these were the key messages that were communicated:

- **Bringing non-traditional water voices and non-state actors to a common stage is paramount to meeting the sustainable development goals (SDGs).** Through fireside chats, ted talk style speeches and panel discussions, it was evident that multi-stakeholder engagement/collaboration is more important than ever especially due to water spanning across sectors impacting businesses, governments and individuals alike. Challenges faced in aligning water action with climate mitigation and adaptation actions is part due to fragmented nature of global water governance which when overcome can create synergies and avoid negative trade-offs. The event showcased high-potential water-related mitigation and adaptation opportunities across the sectors and biomes.
- **Nature Based Solutions (NbS) are making way across sectors but strengthened collaboration is needed to further drive this.** NbS offer multiple benefits in many cases, thus offering potential for all the affected legislation and policies to be implemented more efficiently. For example, wetland and floodplain restoration offers solutions for reducing flood risk that can be very cost-efficient thanks to their relatively low per unit investment and maintenance costs. In addition, they provide a number of indirect benefits such as biodiversity preservation, climate change adaptation and groundwater recharge. Despite this, water-related NbS remain relatively poorly represented, but COP27 showed increased interest.
- **The existing financial gap can be closed by building up a business case for water as a driver for meeting the SDGs.** The potential for private and public finance for driving water solutions were discussed along with the current barriers to funding and examples of solutions to overcome this such as the Water Fund. Non-state actors called for national and regional representatives to take more ambitious, inclusive and holistic water action. The solutions within the water community, offered the opportunity to reflect ambition in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Outcomes:

1. Demonstrate implementation and showcase concrete examples of action

The event presented recent signals of change in water for climate across the globe. By showcasing concrete examples of action, the aim was clear – inspire more ambitious water for climate action. Some inspiring solutions shared included:

- **Mr. Fred Kihara** the Africa Water Funds Director at The Nature Conservancy spoke on the [Nature 4 Water Facility](#), a collaborative initiative with Pegasys. The main objective of the Facility is to provide technical assistance to local clients developing

watershed investment programs that employ Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for water security, biodiversity, climate, and livelihood outcomes. The initiative aims to execute **40+ watershed** investment programs and will open-source its tools and learnings to scale NbS within the broader water sector.

- **Ala'a Kolkaila** an economist and sustainability expert who is a visiting fellow at MIT Sloan School of management highlighted the key objectives the [Water resilience for Economic Resilience](#) initiative is aiming to achieve. More specifically, through a range of activities the objective is to improve knowledge that economic resilience needs water resilience at its core. The heart of this initiative is relying on and extending in-country expertise for a stronger enabling environment to respond to unpredictable climate impacts and to balance the many, often competing demands for water resources.

2. Contribute to the COP27 outcomes on progress in implementation of mitigation/resilience and finance goals

The water action event heard from a host of state and non-state actors speak on the progress that has been made and what is still needed to meet the Water Action Pathway.

Mr Daniel Strechay, Director of sustainability, communications and engagements at Mars Inc. spoke about how corporations have a role to play in a water secure future. Mars is identifying opportunities in the supply chain to address water impacts. Their main business segments are playing apart in sustainable outcomes by implementing the most effective activities in their production processes to reduce energy and water use while maintaining the quality of their products.

Ms. Cate Lamb, Head of Water at CDP – emphasized that focus should be on the power of finance to unlock the power of water. CDP has estimated that failure to act on water insecurity is five times more expensive than the cost of avoidance. Financial institutions are keystone actors and are allowing bad practices to continue by investing in corporations that further exacerbate water scarcity. There is an opportunity for these institutions to become water ambassadors by requiring corporations to report on their water risks and making water smart investments. She posited that there is a legislative opportunity that requires science-based targets on water which can further incentivize these actors to act.

Mr. Alisher Mamadzhonov, Climate Policy and Governance Specialist, Green Climate Fund (GCF), explained how GCF is looking at water as a cross-cutting matter to find solution on food and energy issues. *The Water Security Sector Guide*, a framework developed by GCF, is intended to contribute to a paradigm shift in projects. This would be accomplished either through the demand-side through better water management, water efficiency and/or finding solutions through supply-issues through IWRM and resource management. The guidelines can help attract private capital by providing data and offer guidelines for transformational planning that considers water in the mix.

Julie Mulonga, Director of Eastern Africa at Wetlands International, pointed to how retention of water in landscapes is an important consideration when it comes to progressing the implementation of resilience efforts for SDG 6. Whatever happens upstream will also contribute to downstream issues. Therefore, issues need to be examined not only longitudinally but also latterly, looking holistically and ensuring issues are assessed and understood across the landscape to preserve and unlock ecosystem services. Julie highlighted the importance of incorporating wetlands as part of a solution. Wetlands act as sponges and hot beds for biodiversity, and also offer a lifeline during extreme weather events. Investment in wetlands is therefore hugely important in climate adaptation.

Dario Soto Abril, ES/CEO at GWP, pointed to the return on investment to society through nature-based solutions. For instance, GWP is working with the *The Continental Africa Water Investment Programme (AIP)*, a pan-African programme transforming the financial outlook for climate-resilient water and sanitation investments on the continent. The goal of the AIP is to mobilise USD 30bn in investments by 2030 across Africa, while creating 5 million both indirect and direct jobs. This project is promoting investments in water to be included in the NDCs to achieve SDG 6. Primary focus is on green infrastructure, including civil society through capacity building jobs, working cross-sectoral, and highlighting the importance in integrating land and water. This comprehensive approach allows stakeholders to capture the revenue and reinvest in other projects.

Bianca Dager Jervis, Co-founder and CEO of Premios Verdes, further mentioned that water has strong voice in the global agenda, but that a shift is needed to cover the economics of water. Ms. Dager Jervis explained that Nature-based solutions bring in the true cost of resources. Here governance plays an instrumental role, not only by being responsible for policy for water use, but through water awareness. Water rate and payment for water needs long-term thinking and partnerships. Ms. Dager Jervis pointed to the water community to draw their attention to *SDG 17 – partnerships for the goals* as an important aspect in how the economics of water should be reconsidered.

3. Target near-term implementation and action to accelerate progress

The event showcased several examples of concrete action for near-term implementation that have been rooted in holistic and collaborative approaches:

Mathieu Tolian, Deputy Director Sustainable Development at Veolia, presented opportunities to tackle the compounding crisis on energy and climate from the perspective of Veolia, a waste and water management company. Veolia is looking increasingly towards new technology and data to build a robust water supply system. As part of the work Veolia completed for Commonwealth Bank in Sydney and they managed to reduce water consumption by 92%. This was achieved by using non-conventional solutions such as collecting rainwater and recycling the building's wastewater in a closed circuit. Mr. Tolian stressed that this type of infrastructure improvements is important but unfortunately there is a lack of investment in water and sanitation infrastructure and circa USD 35 billion per year is needed to achieve SDG 6.1 and 6.2. Currently, less than half of this amount has been reached.

Furthermore, **Mrs. Coletha Ruhanya**, Deputy Executive Secretary for Lake Victoria Basin Commission, presented integrated approaches for rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems and protection of river basins. By working with capacity building through conservation agriculture, sustainability can create jobs through the employment of circular economy principles. For instance, teaching communities to handle compost manure to help sustainable farming and fertilizing land, can not only lead to involvement from the local community but can also unlock conservation benefits. Thus, highlighting that holistic measures to overcoming problems can also be part of the solution.

Ms. Agnes Yobterik, OGW is the Director for Programs, Special Projects and Strategic Initiatives at the Ministry of Environment and Forestry in Kenya, spoke about the governmental mandate for conservation through national action. *The Lake Victoria Management Project* is an integrated program, initiated by the regional acknowledgement of the Lake as an important transboundary resource, but threatened with mayor environmental challenges. Accelerated action have been reached by harmonized regional policies, strategies and plans with a component for national adaptable implementation. For instance, agreements on effluent discharge standards have guided policy in the region and helped tackle effects of deforestation in the watershed which has increased sediment loading and water release. Lessons learned have included the use of small grants programs for local communities ensuring people are at the forefront of implementing action that prioritize longer term sustainability benefits. The approach has been upscaled in Kenya for models of harvesting of water and further Water Funds.

Ruth Mathews, Senior Manager / Coordinator, Action Platform for Source-to Sea Management (S2S Platform) at Stockholm International Water Institute, explained the Source-to-Sea approach which seeks to promote a holistic perspective to put water at the center of climate action. Ecosystems from land, wetlands to coast and sea are connected, as well as the economic and social institutions build upon them are one. Impacts and demands exist both up and downstream thus successful actions should bring together stakeholders from different sectors to build knowledge and a shared goal. Isolated approaches are not fit for purpose and a Source-to-Sea approach can take us to the necessary collaborative state.

4. Contribution towards achieving the goals/milestones set in the Climate Action Pathways, 2030 Breakthroughs and Adaptation and Resilience Outcome Targets

Cassilde Breniere the Deputy head of Executive Direction for sustainable development solutions at Agence Française de Développement (AFD). Cassilde spoke about the rationale behind AFD's prior commitment, how it has made a difference for AFD's operations, and any other related comments as part of the first four minutes of the talk. Also heard from Andrea Erickson from TNC who recognized AFD's leadership in promoting biodiversity in its operations, and challenged other IFIs to make similarly ambitious commitments to align and further contribute to reaching the Sharm El Sheikh Adaptation agenda, specifically: "*By 2025: financial institutions contribute to halting land conversion by eliminating commodity-driven deforestation from portfolios and tap into nature-based solutions investment opportunities of USD 354 billion/year needed by 2030.*"

5. Highlight the importance and elevate efforts of resilience and adaptation

Dr. Jyotsna Puri, the Associate Vice-President within the Strategy and Knowledge Department (SKD) at IFAD, connected science and policy by putting a spotlight on the urgency for adaptation measures in agriculture to combat its effects on freshwater and biodiversity. Continuing at this trajectory, IFAD's systematic review estimates that 700 million people will experience drought for periods of 6 months or more, double the current numbers. Dr. Puri presented *Integrated Water Resource Management Framework*, showcasing how to overcome siloed approaches. IFAD presented resilience and adaptation measures that can be adopted on the supply side of food production by tackling how water loss occurs. Solutions can be found by increased funding for storage facilities as well as water management capacity training. Increased diversification of crops is another aspect that can

build groundwater recharge in drought risk areas. Dr. Puri also mentioned different funding mechanisms, such as Water Funds, with payments for ecosystem services helping different water users collaborate in building resilience and ultimately reducing the uncertainty in water access.

6. Strengthen collaboration with all stakeholders, including the national governments and non-Party stakeholders

The event promoted ways water can be a medium for inclusion and highlighted the importance of scaling localized community efforts to the forefront of climate change.

Colette Pichon Battle, the Vision and Initiatives Partner for Taproot Earth, presented the work she has done working with various indigenous communities and the consequences of systemic discrimination to the access of water. Even in the Global North, there is a rise of issues including but not limited to; privatization of water, lack of investment and industrial water use is leading to pollution and drought. Domestic systems are being tested and are not resilient enough for climate disaster or even basic safety underscoring the humanitarian implications. Not only do the ecological impacts need addressing, but social impacts, through concerted water justice. Specifically, actions that are rooted in equity and led by the most impacted and marginalised communities.

Togonon Severin Togo, the Founder and Principal coordinator of his own Environmental Education and Youth Empowerment enforced the vision of inclusion underscoring his own initiatives which are focused on empowering young people through environmental education and creativity. He stressed the importance of rethinking how youth can be engaged and inspired to participate in advancing the water agenda on their own terms.

Mina Guli, founder and CEO of Thirst Foundation, connected these efforts with her Blue Run campaign for water advocacy. She honed in on the need for raising awareness, moving away from blaming lack of political will and focusing on fierce collaboration using science-based approaches that are locally led to reach win-wins.

7. Showcase concrete examples of accountability and/or progress tracking (when applicable." as well.

At COP26, the Fair Water Footprint was launched with 28 signatories. The declaration, which commits its signatories to zero water pollution and sustainable water use by 2030, represented a breakthrough moment for water. Progress has been made with inspirational action underway by Peru, Malawi, Madagascar, Finland, Panama, the UK, business, investors and civil-society across the coalition. The event heard from Ms. Terhi Lehtonen, the State Secretary at Ministry of Environment and Climate Change for Finland. She spoke about the tools and guidance that are underway to support plans to deliver on five key commitments for Fair Water Footprints.

SECTION 2 – STOCKTAKE ON ACTION

Overview of progress and implementation in 2022

Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) – to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all – is alarmingly off track. At the current rate of progress, the world will not reach the SDG 6 targets and progress needs to be accelerated p to four times There is a confluence of challenges, including crises of food security, water security, particularly in water scarce regions, energy security, climate change and biodiversity loss, pandemic impacts, economic pressures, natural disasters, and political conflicts. Climate

change is exacerbating these with rising sea levels and the melting of the cryosphere due to the atmosphere passing one degree of warming above pre-industrial levels. All this is causing unprecedented flooding as seen in Pakistan, heatwaves, droughts, and storms will only progressively worsen as warming inches towards 1.5 degrees and beyond. According to [Reuters](#), in 2022 alone, natural disasters caused \$313 billion economic loss.

Despite the challenges, there has been noteworthy progress. For instance, Egypt, as hosts of COP27, were committed to putting Adaptation, Nature and most critically Water, as strategic priorities for the next phase of climate negotiations, acknowledging the sector's importance in achieving both the Paris Agreement and the SDGs. It is for this reason that they launched the key initiative Action for Water Adaptation and Resilience ([AWARE](#)) address water security in the face of climate change.

In addition, at COP27, Dr. Malin Lundberg Ingemarsson and Professor Johan Rockstrom presented a report titled [**"The essential drop to reach Net-Zero: Unpacking Freshwater's Role in Climate Change Mitigation"**](#) – a joint project, involving SIWI, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), the Stockholm Resilience Centre (SRC), the German development agency GIZ, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The research highlighted the role of water in climate mitigation. A key message from the research, is if not planned carefully, negative impacts of climate action on freshwater resources might threaten water security and even increase future adaptation and mitigation burdens.

SECTION 3 – ACTION DURING 2023-2025

Water touches every aspect of development and it links with nearly every Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). It drives economic growth, supports healthy ecosystems, and is essential and fundamental for life itself but it needs involvement from other sectors not just the water community. In the next biennium, the following main objectives are crucial:

- In March, the UN 2023 Water Conference - a Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action will convene. It is expected to help raise attention to water and catalyze action and build partnerships to achieve international water goals. The conference serves as a platform for announcements of new commitments to drive action. State and non-state actors alike across various sectors should support the UN 2023 Water Conference through participation, submission of commitments to aid and accelerate the progress on SDG 6. Further to this, collaborative efforts post conference should be focused on sustaining and scaling up implementation.
- Advance the political ownership of water to the achievement of the Paris Agreement through commitments and action planning. In alignment with the Water Action Pathway, all nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and national adaptation plans (NAPs) should be accompanied by a specific water plan and budget that addresses the climate-water interactions across all sectors, including by not limited to, agriculture, biodiversity, and infrastructure.
- Lean on successes and learnings across governments, private sector and NGOs to ensure cross sector collaboration to meet the water targets in Sharm El Sheikh Adaptation Agenda and COP15 in particular Target 2 - Restore 30% degraded ecosystems globally (on land and sea) by 2030 and Target 3 - Conserve and manage 30% areas (terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine) by 2030.

Given what is needed, the water thematic group will continue to collaborate with each other to build on the growing narrative of including water at the heart of climate change. To do so,

the group will also collaborate with other thematic groups to take all sectors and state and non-state actors into account, with a focus on resilience and adaptation. Further to this, the group will feed into upcoming summits such as the SDG Summit, the Summit for the Future, UNFCCC COP processes and the Sendai Framework and continue to elevate the message that water is not only impacted by climate change but can play a role as a viable solution.