

10TH WORLD WATER FORUM

MAY 18-25, 2024



THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT

REMINDS THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF ITS COMMITMENTS, AND CALLS FOR URGENT ACTION TO TACKLE THE WATER CRISIS!

The pressing need to address the global water crisis has never been more evident. Despite continuous advocacy and calls for action, the primary demands of **the Butterfly Effect – a civil society coalition bringing under one umbrella +150 ONG/CSO worldwide** – remain unaddressed, even as the crisis escalates. As we approach significant global processes like the 10th World Water Forum, Bali and the upcoming 2026 and 2028 UN Conferences on Water, it is imperative for States and the international community to recognize the gravity of the situation and act swiftly. The global water crisis demands immediate attention as the 21st century will either be “blue” or won’t be. The stakes are high, and the time for meaningful action is now!

The Butterfly Effect coalition reiterates five critical political demands to the States and the international community:

STRONGER POLITICAL WILL

To enhance political will, we urge action at both national and international levels. States must prioritize water within public policies, enshrining the human rights to water and sanitation in legislation and regulations while enhancing transparency and accountability through improved reporting mechanisms to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6 by 2030. Additionally, we call on the international community to declare the global water crisis at the UN, and recognize water as a common good, necessitating democratic and collective management to mitigate the impact of irresponsible human activities.

ENHANCE WATER GOVERNANCE

To bolster water governance, comprehensive measures are imperative to address challenges within the water-sanitation-hygiene (WASH) sector. Governance must prioritize integrity, equity, and transparency, engaging citizens and stakeholders across various sectors. Recognizing the interconnectedness of water with sanitation, climate, health, food, and other critical domains, governance frameworks should be robust and integrated.

We call on each state to adopt strong legislative frameworks and national strategies, develop water-related risk management plans, and promote integrated water resources management at the basin or local level. Collaboration among relevant ministries is essential to align policies and address ecological and social crises.

Recognizing the crucial role of local authorities and communities, efforts should focus on capacity building.

Additionally, establishing accessible data collection and monitoring systems, regulating all actors, and ensuring legal protection for human rights and environmental defenders are paramount for effective governance.

CITIZEN AND CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT

To foster active citizen participation and engagement, systemic changes are essential to overcome existing obstacles. Lack of political will and insufficient institutional frameworks often impede citizen involvement in water-related policies. Additionally, individuals and civil society organizations face challenges due to limited resources and coordination mechanisms. We urge each state to incorporate provisions for citizen participation in legal and administrative frameworks, ensuring inclusive and informed decision-making processes.

Furthermore, we demand all stakeholders to respect the principle of “Leave no one behind”, ensuring universal access to safe drinking water, adequate sanitation facilities, and hygiene for all, particularly focusing on marginalized and vulnerable populations.

Establishing tools for effective civil society participation, including information sharing and dialogue spaces, is crucial. States should support civil society organizations by providing resources and facilitating coordination and mobilization efforts. Furthermore, measures to ensure equitable representation of women, youth, and indigenous people in decision-making bodies are indispensable. Investing in capacity building and professional training for these groups is essential for meaningful participation.

At the international level, recognition of the right of participation of NGOs and local actors in the development of international water and sanitation policies is imperative.

TRANSPARENT FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS

The WASH sector faces significant underfunding, requiring a substantial increase in investments to achieve universal water and sanitation coverage by 2030. Existing funds often fail to reach the most vulnerable populations and neglect sanitation and hygiene.

To address this, we urge each state to allocate a predefined percentage of GDP to the WASH sector annually and implement legislation prohibiting future cuts. Additionally, states should prioritize reaching marginalized populations by identifying them thoroughly and allocating targeted funding and subsidies. Transparency and anti-corruption measures are crucial to ensure integrity in budget management, while increased funding for climate change adaptation and adherence to the polluter pays principle are necessary.

A RENEWED MULTILATERAL FRAMEWORK

To address the absence of binding international water policies, we advocate for a revamped multilateral framework. Currently, the UN lacks a dedicated body for water management, despite its significance for geopolitics and peace. States should prioritize water in diplomacy, engage in high-level conferences, ratify transboundary water cooperation conventions, and establish regional agreements for information access and public participation. Water should consistently feature in international conferences on health, food, and climate change, and be integrated into national adaptation plans. There's a need for a robust international response to water-related humanitarian disasters, increased funding for WASH in humanitarian plans, and condemnation of water as a weapon of war. Urgent political leadership and multilateral cooperation are vital.

The Butterfly Effect NGO Coalition calls for:

- Swiftly appointing a Special Envoy for Water to the UN Secretary-General, supported by an advisory board representing all major UN groups.
- Passing a UNGA resolution establishing regular high-level intergovernmental meetings to prioritize water issues and expedite progress toward SDG6.

THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT AT THE 10TH WORLD WATER FORUM

The World Water Forum stands out as the foremost international gathering for discussing water and sanitation issues. It provides a unique platform for diverse stakeholders to connect, exchange ideas, and advocate for water-related issues on the global agenda. Ensuring inclusive participation, especially from civil society, is essential to effectively implement the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and guarantee equitable access to WASH services.

Civil society plays a crucial role in these discussions, advocating for marginalized communities and promoting social cohesion and participatory democracy. Despite facing challenges such as shrinking civic space and authoritarian regimes, civil society movements continue to push for change and defend democratic values worldwide.

However, we are discouraged by the insufficient support for civil society participation by the organizers of the 10th World Water Forum. Despite the vital role civil society plays, there is a noticeable lack of facilitation and encouragement for their involvement in the forum's proceedings (high registration fees that prevent most of the CSOs to join the event ; lack of an open call for sponsorship to support attendance; lack of anticipation and transparency in the existence of and access to financial support)

As we confront environmental, political, and social uncertainties, civil society's voice becomes increasingly vital in driving positive transformation. The Butterfly Effect remains committed to empowering civil society and fostering collaboration across borders and sectors to build a sustainable and equitable world.

In addressing the drafting of the Ministerial Declaration, we express dismay at the apparent lack of innovative thinking and, in certain instances, regression observed in critical facets of water, sanitation, and hygiene governance. This is particularly evident concerning the human rights dimensions associated with these essential domains.

We emphasize the importance of robust, transparent monitoring and evaluation of all commitments made during the several editions of the World Water Forum, encouraging connections between regional, thematic, and political processes. We support the Dakar Declaration and hope for continuity between commitments made in Dakar and those in Bali, as well as robust follow-up at future forums. Moreover, the Forum in Bali should contribute for upcoming United Nations Conferences on water scheduled for 2026 and 2028 and ensure comprehensive follow-up on previous commitments. To achieve sustainable development goals, greater synergies between international water sector events and the World Water Forum are essential for aligned efforts.

MESSAGES'S ON THE THEMES OF THE FORUM

Overall general theme : Water for shared prosperity

Civil society representatives advocate for "Water for shared prosperity" with a focus on preserving, conserving and restoring natural resources. We promote inclusive water management approaches that prioritize community needs while safeguarding ecosystems. This includes equitable access, transparent governance, and sustainable practices to ensure water's role in fostering prosperity for all.

1. Water Security and Prosperity:

We emphasize the critical importance of securing water resources for all stakeholders, while advocating for inclusive water management strategies that ensure resilience against water-related risks. Implementation plans at all levels are essential to effectively address water-related risks and build resilience in the face of challenges.

We emphasize the importance of practicing sobriety, changing consumption habits, and reducing water usage to promote sustainability. These actions are vital for minimizing our environmental impact and conserving resources

2. Water for humans and nature:

We acknowledge the vital link between water and ecosystems, advocating for holistic water management that serves both human and non human communities. This involves sustainable water practices ensuring equitable access and ecosystem preservation, grounded in a human rights-based approach. Recognizing the humanitarian crises exacerbated by water scarcity, civil society demands transparent governance focusing on long-term sustainability and conservation. By promoting ancestral techniques, we aim for a balanced and resilient water relationship for generations to come.

3. Disaster Risk Reduction and Management:

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Water Management are essential for building resilience against natural disasters and climate change. Civil society stresses the importance of thorough risk assessments, integrated water resource management, early warning systems, and anticipatory action. We advocate for resilient water infrastructure and community engagement in decision-making. Strengthening policy frameworks and institutional capacities at all levels is also emphasized. Overall, we promote collaborative approaches that prioritize community well-being and ecosystem preservation.

4. Governance, Cooperation, and Hydro-Diplomacy:

Effective water management requires transparent governance and cooperation at all levels – local, regional, national, basin, transboundary, supranational and international.

Urgent collaboration is needed to address conflicts over water and prevent its weaponization. By leveraging water as a means of cooperation rather than conflict, we believe in fostering peaceful relations and advancing sustainable development goals. Overall, we advocate for strengthened governance structures and enhanced cooperation mechanisms to ensure the equitable and sustainable management of water resources for all.

5. Sustainable Water Finance:

Sustainable water finance is crucial for ensuring equitable access to clean water and safe sanitation but the model of full cost recovery is no longer an option. Civil society supports increased financing, prioritizing marginalized communities and sustainable practices respectful with the environment, mobilizing domestic and international funds, and promoting fair and transparent tariffs in accordance with the Human right to water and sanitation criteria of affordability. Emphasis is placed on allocating resources for context-adequate infrastructure, pollution control with an emphasis in institutions that profit with environmental degradation, and climate adaptation and restoration, with a call for accountability and transparency in how and why the budget is allocated. A holistic approach balancing societal, environmental, and future generations needs is required.

6. Knowledge and Innovation:

Advocating for investment in research, education, and innovative solutions, emphasizing knowledge-sharing, capacity-building, and the integration of traditional knowledge for sustainable water management.

URGENT ACTION ON WATER BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

is all the more necessary as crises and conflicts multiply and the effects of climate change on water resources are increasingly felt

The Butterfly Effect NGO coalition vehemently condemns the use of water as a weapon in conflicts, which further compounds the suffering of already vulnerable populations. We express grave concern over the escalating trend of water being weaponized and emphasize that access to safe drinking water and sanitation is an inalienable human right, as recognized by the United Nations (A/RES/64/292). Denying access to water is a violation of international humanitarian law and constitutes a war crime under the Geneva Conventions. Additionally, we recall that Security Council Resolution 2417 condemns the use of famine as a weapon of war, thereby recognizing the close link between food security, water, peace, and energy.

In light of the increasing use of water as a tool of warfare, our focus must be on fostering cooperation and peace. The surge in water-related violence across Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa underscores the urgent need to de-escalate tensions between nations.

Additionally, it is imperative to protect and preserve natural resources, particularly water, given the growing conflicts and the worsening impacts of climate change. Promoting peace and cooperation becomes even more critical as more people suffer from the effects of climate change.

We are unwavering in our commitment to advocate for the global right to water, recognizing it as fundamental for dignified life and enduring peace. We firmly believe in the transformative power of water as a catalyst for peace, dialogue, and solidarity.

The international community bears a significant responsibility in facilitating the implementation of individual and collective decisions to accelerate efforts by 2030.

Strong international political commitment to water issues and the preservation of this vital resource is imperative.

The stakes are high, and the time for meaningful action is now.

THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT ADVOCACY INITIATIVE

The Butterfly Effect, comprising +150 local and international NGOs/CSOs, initiated an extensive consultation of its members in 2021, engaging over 180 organization representatives. This effort culminated in a policy paper presented at the 9th World Water Forum in Dakar in 2022. Recognizing the importance of maintaining continuity amidst a flurry of water-related events and declarations, civil society bears a unique responsibility to ensure coherence between outcomes of UN Conferences on Water and World Water Forums to accelerate actions to solve the water crisis. The aim is to amplify civil society's voice and experience effectively. This position paper outlines the primary political demands identified by our network for the consideration of the international community.

The Butterfly Effect is coordinated by the International Secretariat for Water



The Butterfly Effect steering committee members



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