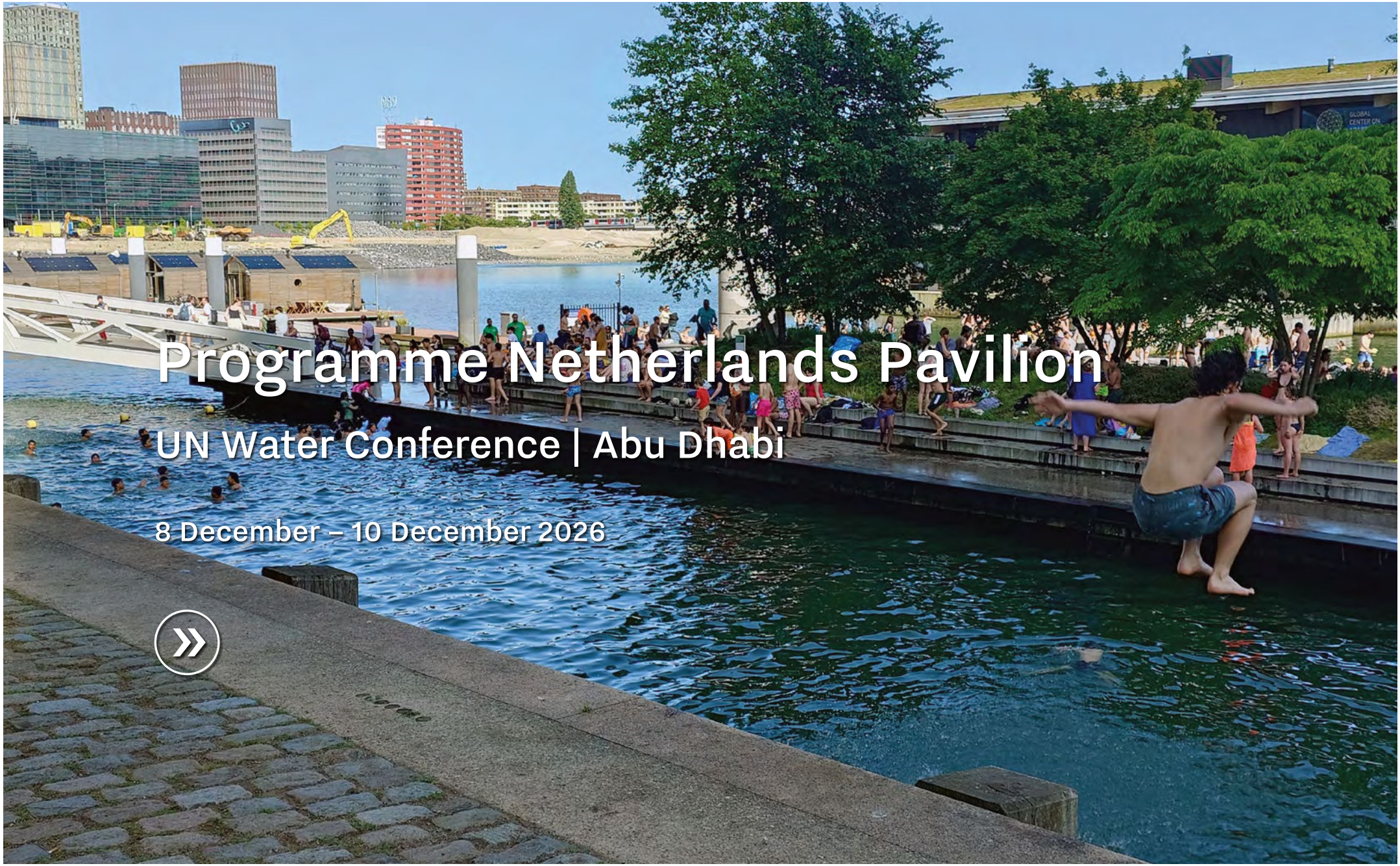


Programme Netherlands Pavilion

UN Water Conference | Abu Dhabi

8 December – 10 December 2026

Netherlands

UNITED NATIONS
WATER CONFERENCE
ABU DHABI 2026

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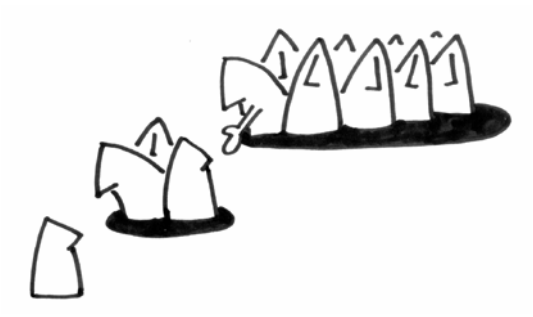
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Photography: Melle van Dijk | Landscape architecture: OKRA

Tuesday 8 December

09:30 - 10:00



Women' organisations role(s) in water management

The role of women and their organizations is still very underestimated - the focus is still very much on them as victims and they are actually major actors, given the chance. We aim to have a discussion with the audience on 3 major issues: their role in local mobilization, their role in finance and their role in education.

10:15 - 10:45

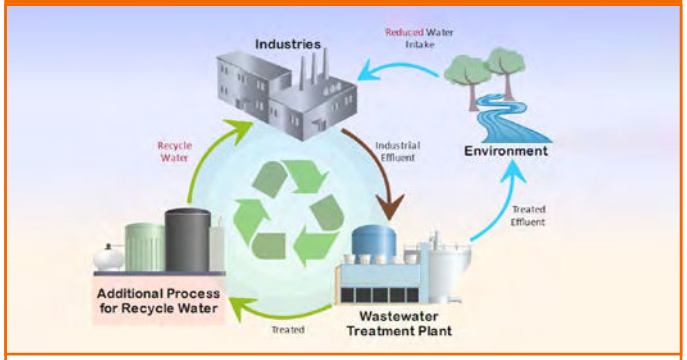


Financing SDG 6 at scale through locally led delivery

Most water and climate finance never reaches the people who manage water every day. Decisions are made far from the communities concerned, and the result is infrastructure that is built, neglected and repaired at high cost. Where local actors control decisions and budgets, money goes to the most urgent needs and investments keep working.

This session asks a simple question: how do we get water finance to the lowest appropriate level, and keep it there at scale? Experiences from community organisations in South Asia and Africa, including cases from the Reversing the Flow programme, open the discussion. Funders, practitioners and knowledge institutes then look together at what stands in the way, from eligibility rules and risk management to reporting requirements, and what it would take to change them.

11:00 - 11:30



Water ReUse: Accelerating Safe Effluent Reuse for Drought Adaptation

As water scarcity and droughts become increasingly common, treated wastewater offers a reliable and underused opportunity to strengthen water security, support agriculture and build climate resilience. Yet despite its potential, large-scale water reuse remains the exception rather than the norm.

In this interactive 30-minute session, experts and practitioners from Spain, the Netherlands, South Africa and Ethiopia will share practical experiences with water reuse and discuss the key barriers that continue to hinder wider adoption. Topics include policy and regulation, water quality standards, public acceptance, environmental safeguards, financing and governance.

The session will move beyond problem analysis and focus on concrete, actionable pathways for scaling up safe effluent reuse as a drought adaptation strategy. Participants will gain insights into successful approaches from different contexts and engage in an open discussion on what is needed to accelerate implementation worldwide.

Bring your questions, share your experiences and join the conversation on how circular water solutions can contribute to a more water-secure future.

Tuesday 8 December

11:45 - 12:15

MoU Signing between UN-Habitat and Deltares

Building on several years of growing collaboration between UN-Habitat and Deltares in advancing sustainable urban development and urban resilience through water-focused initiatives, the event will mark the signature of a strategic MoU to guide future cooperation.

13:00 - 13:30



Water as Leverage City Champion Challenge Award Ceremony

During the Water as Leverage City Champion Challenge Award Ceremony two members of the Jury will reveil and award the two prizewinners of the 2026 edition. The two prizewinners will shortly present their projects and the jury will present a short overview of all projects that were handed in for the second edition of the WaL City Champion Challenge. We try to invite the Water Envoy of the Netherlands and the director of Un Habitat to reflect on importance of WaL for urban resilience and the harvest of this edition.

13:45 - 14:15

From New York to Abu Dhabi and Beyond – From Regional Experience to Global Decision-Making

What do regional examples teach us about water management, and what should these lessons mean for international policymaking and cooperation?

Topics include:

- The legacy of the UN 2023 Water Conference, the follow-up to the UN Water Action Agenda, and the 30-30-30 ambition.
- Concrete regional examples and the impact of water management in practice.
- What these examples teach us about effective approaches, key challenges, and the conditions needed to achieve results.
- How these lessons can inform international policy choices, priorities, and cooperation.
- The role of the Youth Envoy in connecting regional lessons and experiences with the international water dialogue.

Tuesday 8 December

14:30 - 15:00



Catchment Partnerships for Sustainable Nature-based Solutions

Healthy catchments are the foundation of water security, climate resilience, and biodiversity. This interactive Netherlands Pavilion session explores how catchment partnerships between different authorities, communities and other water users can translate Nature-based Solutions (NbS) into practical, scalable action.

Drawing on experiences in Ghana and the Philippines, participants will hear how investments in watershed restoration, ecosystem protection, and community engagement can improve water security, strengthen climate resilience, reduce operational costs, and create shared benefits for upstream and downstream communities.

Through a discussion with practitioners from utilities and basin authorities and international organisations leading the work on NbS, the session will explore successful partnership models, financing approaches, and capacity-building strategies for scaling integrated catchment management.

Participants will leave with practical insights and new connections to accelerate Nature-based Solutions that deliver benefits for water, people, and nature, while advancing progress towards SDG 6 and climate-resilient development.

15:45 - 16:15



Early Warning & Early Action: Bridging the gap between data and communities

Nearly 75% of recent disasters are water-related, threatening lives and livelihoods worldwide. The Water at the Heart of Climate Action (WHCA) program tackles this challenge by uniting UN weather and disaster risk agencies (UNDRR, WMO, and SOFF) with the vast Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteer network.

Operating across five Nile Basin countries—Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda—WHCA bridges global climate technology with grassroots action. Working across the entire early warning value chain, from data collection and impact-based forecasting to local preparedness, the program turns early warnings into early action. The model offers a scalable blueprint designed to be replicated in other river basins globally.

In this session, WHCA partners will take participants on a journey across different examples of weather- and risk informed climate resilience activities. Attendees will explore how locally led solutions—such as climate-smart farming, radical terracing against landslides, and community flood response—protect vulnerable populations before hazards become disasters, offering practical takeaways for scaling this approach worldwide.

16:30 - 17:00



Putting People at the Center of Water Infrastructure Sustainability

Partners for Water, WaterWorX and Blue Deal developed recommendations outlining how governments, utilities, programmes and IFIs can better align to enable sustainable water infrastructure.

The Build -Neglect-Rebuild (BNR) cycle disproportionately harms people, particularly vulnerable communities. Breaking this cycle directly supports the “Water for People” pillar by:

- Ensuring reliable and safe water services
- Protecting public health
- Safeguarding affordability and equitable access
- Strengthening institutional accountability
- Prioritizing long-term resilience over short-term infrastructure visibility

Breaking the BNR cycle also contributes to “Water for Progress” by:

- Improving asset longevity and value for money
- Reducing long-term public expenditure
- Increasing investor confidence
- Strengthening climate adaptation capacity
- Supporting sustainable urbanization and inclusive economic growth

True progress is not only about constructing new infrastructure, but also about sustainably managing and maintaining what is already built.

The session aims to refine and align cross-sector recommendations to break the BNR cycle and develop a unified message to the UNWC 2026.

17:15 - 17:45



Delivering Just Water Partnerships for equitable and sustainable outcomes

Water security, universal access to water and sanitation, and climate resilience are closely interconnected, yet the institutions, policies and financing arrangements needed to deliver them often remain fragmented.

Originally proposed by the Global Commission on the Economics of Water at the 2023 UN Water Conference, Just Water Partnerships (JWPs) are envisioned as the platforms where equitable and sustainable financing priorities for the country can be agreed.

Three years later at the 2026 UN Water Conference, a lot of movement has happened. A global multistakeholder consultation process was conducted by WaterAid and IWMI in 2025, culminating in a set of Principles for Just Water Partnerships (JWPs) that were launched at COP30.

In 2026, Brazil and Ghana completed rapid diagnostic assessments identifying institutional and financing challenges and potential pathways towards the adoption of JWP Principles to guide governance and financing processes. A comparative global assessment also generated lessons on the conditions needed for effective multistakeholder partnerships.

Bringing these experiences together, our session will explore how evidence, political leadership and country-led partnerships can help translate the JWP Principles into practical action, strengthen institutional coordination and direct investment towards universal access, equity and climate resilience.

Tuesday 8 December

18:00 - 18:30

The water revolution

We only tend to notice water when it is no longer there.

Reliable access to clean water, sanitation and wastewater treatment is one of the great achievements of modern society. But that reliability also comes with a risk: we have grown used to water always being available, while increasing pressure on water systems means this can no longer be taken for granted.

How can we safeguard what works today, while rethinking the way we use water tomorrow? Join this session to explore what needs to change.

Organisation:
PureBlue Water



Photo: Antoine Thevenet | Landscape architecture: OKRA

Wednesday 9 December

09:30 - 10:00

Designing a Resilient Water System through Innovation

Panel discussion, moderated by Desolenator, on the theme of Designing a Resilient Water Future through Innovation. We will cover how startups can leapfrog legacy technologies by offering decentralised solutions, the role of digitisation & AI in efficiently managing water, and how corporates can partner with innovators to deploy projects

10:15 - 10:45

Youth for Water - From Participation to Implementation

How do we ensure that youth participation moves beyond inspiring examples and leads to sustainable implementation and concrete action after the conference?

Topics include:

- The key insights and commitments participants take away from the session, and what these mean for their own work and practice.
- How the outcomes will be documented and shared with relevant organisations and partners after the conference.
- Which follow-up actions are realistic, who can take responsibility for them, and what cooperation or support will be needed.
- How participants can stay connected, report back on progress, and ensure that young people play an active role in the follow-up.

11:00 - 11:30



Laundry Transformation Initiative – Everything is on the line @ netherlandspavilion

Globally, laundry is one of the most overlooked uses of water. Around 4 billion people wash clothes by hand, and in some households, mostly women spend up to 15 hours a week on laundry. This contributes to water pollution through detergents and microplastics. In this 30-minute Netherlands Pavilion session, TWMP, ADB, RVO, and GOPA MetaMeta will showcase how innovative laundry solutions can improve water management, reduce pollution, save time, advance gender equality, and support livelihoods. Drawing on ADB's Laundry Transformation Initiative and TWMP's global field experience, the session will highlight pathways to water-efficient, affordable, repairable, and low-pollution laundry services.

Wednesday 9 December

11:45 - 12:15



Swimmable Cities - A Global Movement Inspiring a New Wave of Water Leadership

Inspired by the Paris Olympics and clean-up of the River Seine, a global alliance of diverse actors across 40 countries have united around a common vision of safe, healthy and swimmable waterways worldwide. With its Charter combining communities' Right to Swim and the Rights of Nature, and its Community of Practice supporting implementation acro five continents, the global Swimmable Cities initiative supports cities to improve liveability, social equity and climate resilience.

Join us and discover the catalytic power of 'swimmability' and its supporting water literacy, multi-sectoral partnerships and investment, as well as innovative models of transboundary cooperation between municipalities, water authorities and Indigenous communities.

More information: www.swimmablecities.org/

13:00 - 13:30

Local water action in cities: Discover this year's Water as Leverage Challenge Winners

The event will feature the winners of the 2nd Water as Leverage City Champion Challenge, organised under the Water as Leverage programme, an initiative of the Government of the Netherlands implemented with support from UN-Habitat and Deltares. The programme brings together city leaders, communities, utilities, designers, and financiers to co-create scalable solutions that strengthen urban water resilience. Focused on innovative, inclusive, and locally driven approaches at the building, block, and neighbourhood scales, the 2nd edition of the Challenge attracted 39 submissions from 25 countries. The event will celebrate the two winning initiatives from India and South Africa. The winners will present their approaches and share lessons learned in developing locally led responses to pressing water and climate risks. Beyond highlighting the winning initiatives, the event will provide an interactive platform for knowledge exchange. Participants will be able to discover the Water as Leverage approach, engage with practitioners and experts, and explore innovative strategies to advance urban water resilience in cities and communities worldwide.

13:45 - 14:15

From Policy to Action: Launching the Global Water Policy Landscape and Index

How well do national water policies address the interconnected challenges of water security, climate resilience, ecosystems, equity and economic development?

This side event will introduce the Global Water Policy Landscape and Index, a new proof-of-concept developed by the International Water Management Institute and partners. Using artificial intelligence, the initiative analyses water policies, strategies and laws from 183 countries through a single, comparable framework. Rather than ranking countries' water-governance performance, the Index reveals what governments have formally committed to on paper, identifies recurring policy gaps and strengths, and supports discussion about why approaches differ across national and regional contexts.

The session aims to bring together policymakers, researchers and development partners to discuss how global policy intelligence can support better policy design, international learning and the translation of commitments into implementation. Participantsn will also explore how the Index can be refined collaboratively and used to strengthen accountable, inclusive and climate-resilient water governance ahead of 2030.

Wednesday 9 December

14:30 - 15:00



Peer-to-peer water partner-ships: investing in institutional capacity for water security

The water sector increasingly recognises that infrastructure and finance alone are not enough to achieve water security. Strong institutions, skilled professionals and effective governance are essential to turn investments into lasting impact. Yet fewer than 30% of countries report having adequate workforce capacity, while institutional weaknesses continue to limit progress towards SDG 6.

This interactive Netherlands Pavilion session will showcase work on peer-to-peer water partnerships as a practical and scalable solution for institutional strengthening. Building on successful initiatives such as WaterWorX, Blue Deal, the EU Water Operators Partnerships programme and other international platforms, the initiative aims to connect and strengthen more than 100 partnerships between water utilities, river basin organisations and water authorities worldwide by 2030.

Through a dynamic standing discussion, participants will explore how peer-to-peer cooperation strengthens governance, operational performance, financial sustainability, innovation and workforce development, while increasing the effectiveness of water investments. The session will invite partners to help shape a global coalition that puts institutional capacity at the heart of accelerating progress on SDG 6.

15:45 - 16:15



Sponge landscapes for climate resilience in a transboundary context

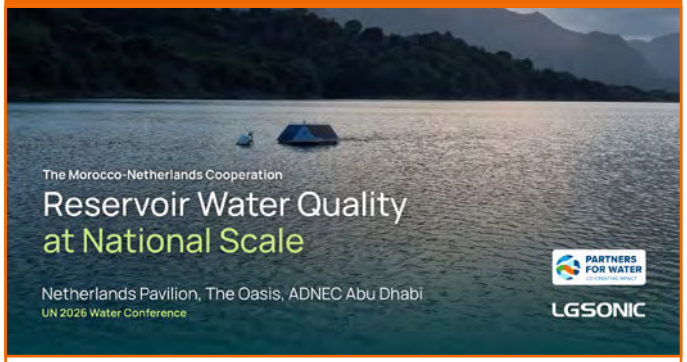
Climate change is increasing the frequency of droughts, floods and extreme rainfall, while water challenges increasingly cross administrative and national borders. How can countries work together to retain more water in the landscape and build resilience across entire river basins?

Join this interactive 30-minute session for a lively discussion on the role of sponge landscapes in strengthening climate resilience. Drawing on practical experiences from the Netherlands, Flanders (Belgium) and eSwatini, the session will explore how landscape-based approaches can help retain, store and gradually release water, reducing vulnerability to both droughts and floods.

Speakers will highlight real-world examples, discuss barriers to implementation, and share lessons on governance, stakeholder engagement and cross-border cooperation. Particular attention will be given to translating local successes into broader policy action.

The session will conclude with practical recommendations and actionable pathways for scaling up sponge landscape approaches in transboundary contexts. Questions, experiences and perspectives from the audience are warmly encouraged, making this a unique opportunity for dialogue between policymakers, water managers and climate adaptation practitioners.

16:30 - 17:00



Reservoir Water Quality at National Scale: The Morocco-Netherlands Cooperation

Algal blooms increasingly threaten drinking water reservoirs as droughts and heat intensify. Under DRIVE-financed Morocco-Netherlands cooperation, LG Sonic provides Morocco's Ministry of Equipment and Water with real-time monitoring, bloom prediction and chemical-free control for major reservoirs, backed by a ten-year commitment to building national capacity. This session shares what it takes for water innovation to be adopted at national scale: how public authorities, development finance and technology providers share the work, why local capacity decides whether technology is used, and how the model can be replicated in other water-stressed countries.

Wednesday 9 December

17:15 - 17:45

Titel

Omschrijving



Photo: Niels Rietveld

Thursday 10 December

09:30 - 10:00

ALLIANCE FOR WATER STEWARDSHIP

Water Stewardship as a way forward

About AWS:
The Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) is a global, multi-stakeholder membership alliance and international standard for responsible water use focused on igniting and nurturing global and local leadership in credible water stewardship. It convenes and catalyses action on water stewardship, uniting 240+ members from business, civil society and the public sector. AWS is recognised as a global leader in championing credible water stewardship as a collective, inclusive approach to protecting a resource that we do not own but that we all depend on.

About the event:
The Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) is convening a session at UN Water to explore how standards, norms, regulations and protocols can strengthen water governance and accelerate progress towards SDG 6. 'Levelling the playing field for good water management' brings together public and private sector leaders, to examine how voluntary sustainability standards, such as the AWS Standard, can complement regulation, promote globally recognised best practice, and improve transparency and accountability. Through practical examples and multi-stakeholder dialogue, participants will identify opportunities for greater alignment, coordinated action and stronger public-private collaboration beyond the conference.

10:15 - 10:45



Launch of the publication "MY Neighbourhood for coastal and delta cities" - A guideline for designing water-sensitive neighbourhoods and communities

The event will spotlight a new publication by UN-Habitat, Deltares and Fondation Jacques Rougerie, "MY Neighbourhood for Coastal and Delta Cities", which provides practical guidance for creating more compact, connected, inclusive, vibrant, and resilient neighbourhoods in water-sensitive urban environments. Drawing on lessons learned from coastal and delta cities worldwide, including experiences and case studies supported through the International Panel on Deltas and Coastal Areas (IPDC), the publication highlights practical approaches to integrating water resilience, climate adaptation, biodiversity conservation, and inclusive urban development.

11:00 - 11:30



Water for People, with People

Water for People can only be realized when listening to the voices, needs, knowledge and priorities of the people, depending on water for their livelihoods. When working according to the principles of Locally Led Adaptation and Development, the local communities, women, farmers, fisherfolks, are not mere beneficiaries: they are the agents of local actions and solutions.

For water commitments to be turned into change for the people most affected by the challenges of poverty, exclusion, climate change and conflicts, the people's voices need to be heard and considered.

Water for People is the first mentioned Interactive Dialogue, and for good reason. It serves as a base for all other dialogues. By connecting all Interactive Dialogues, we can optimize the synergies between People, Planet, Prosperity, Transboundary Cooperation, Multilateral processes, and the Investments needed. Only this way we can assure that finance and services reach all people in need, including those most marginalized.

Based on examples from the work of Oxfam and partners we will present how we work across these 6 topics, with the people, on (global-local) financing, on their riverscapes, on their prosperity, from local to transboundary level.

Thursday 10 December

11:45 - 12:15

Connecting Climate, Water and Food: Regional Perspectives on Inclusive and Resilient Futures

This interactive session will explore the interconnected challenges of climate change, water security and food systems, and opportunities for more integrated, inclusive and cooperative responses. Drawing on diverse regional experiences and expertise from the Netherlands-supported Women in Water Diplomacy Network delegation to the UN Water Conference 2026, speakers will highlight practical experiences and lessons in strengthening climate resilience, sustainable water management, food security and cross-sectoral cooperation. Particular attention will be given to the role of women's leadership and inclusive decision-making in advancing locally grounded solutions and informing regional and international policy and practice.

13:00 - 13:30

13:45 - 14:15

Water Diplomacy Connections: Meet, Exchange, Inspire

Join the Women in Water Diplomacy Network for a dynamic, interactive networking session designed to spark new connections and strengthen relationships across the global water diplomacy community.

Through a series of short, facilitated "speed dating" exchanges, participants will share experiences, perspectives and personal reflections on water diplomacy, including the diverse cultural traditions and practices that shape relationships with water across regions and communities. Open to water professionals, decision-makers, partners and newcomers alike, the session offers an informal and welcoming opportunity to meet new colleagues, exchange ideas and build connections that extend beyond the UN Water Conference.

Thursday 10 December

14:30 - 15:00

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