



Government of the Netherlands

## Water at the Heart of Climate Action

UAE, Tajikistan, and the Netherlands championed progress by mobilizing global support at COP28.

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### **The COP28 UAE Presidency, and its water champions Tajikistan and the Netherlands, raised ambition for an ambitious water agenda at COP28, putting water at the heart of climate action.**

Inspired by the remarkable outcomes of the UN 2023 Water Conference and based on its call to include water in all the global thematic processes and high-level events, the United Arab Emirates invited the Republic of Tajikistan and the Kingdom of the Netherlands to bring the results from New York to Dubai, and champion the COP28 Water Agenda.

The three following priority themes were identified for water workstreams of COP 28: freshwater ecosystems; urban water resilience; and water-resilient food systems.

At COP28, water has made a steady headway in entrenching itself in the global climate agenda through the Global Stocktake and the Global Goal on Adaption. The presence of water has reached a new level, and its voice has become stronger. Simultaneously, the tripartite alliance of the Netherlands, Tajikistan, and the UAE has emerged as a powerful force championing water and climate action.

This collaborative effort underscores the universal significance of climate change emphasizing the urgent need for global water action in propelling climate adaptation and mitigation forward.

Humanity has put the global water cycle out of balance, leading to threats to freshwater sources, erratic rainfall, and severe consequences for agriculture and food security. Water is the main vector through which climate change impacts societies and ecosystems. Droughts, floods, and changing precipitation patterns pose risks to biodiversity, water security, and basic human needs, disproportionately affecting vulnerable communities.

While 90 percent of climate mitigation measures are energy related, 90 percent of adaptation action is water related. Therefore, effective climate adaptation requires a comprehensive and integrated approach to water. Water is also critical to climate mitigation, as water availability is a prerequisite for mitigation solutions. By recognizing the role of water in strategies, policy, and decision-making, not only the challenges posed by changing climate conditions are addressed but also leveraging the role of water in limiting the impact of climate change on various sectors. Therefore, the water transition extends beyond the water sector, encompassing critical aspects of climate adaptation. The 130 water-related events organized outside the Water Pavilion is a testament to this, seeking for cross-sectoral synergies.

The trilateral collaboration ensured that significant steps were taken towards integrating water into climate action and fostering international collaboration.



## The Water Agenda at COP 28

Water bringing together heads of state and government and MDBs to mobilize high-level political and financial commitment for water action as climate action, (2) Water for Climate Pavilion which united more than 60 partners to unify the voice of the international community to further promote water action as climate solutions, and (3) the Food, Agriculture and Water Day consisting of flagship Presidency-led events including the first ever Ministerial Round tables on water-resilient food systems and freshwater ecosystems. These breakthrough dialogues united water and climate leaders and champions towards taking pledges, amplifying water's voice, pushing for water security and risk reduction as critical climate solutions, and tackling water-resiliency in the face of climate change. In addition, water-related Presidency-led events featured across the COP28 two-week thematic programming, including on Finance, Energy and Multi-level and Urbanization days. Through collaboration and concrete actions, COP28 laid a promising path towards a more resilient future where water and climate challenges are tackled head-on.

## Pledges and Commitments on Water at COP28

**Outcomes of the World Climate Action Summit: Bold Financial Commitments for Global Impact**  
**Pledge for Global Impact.** Key announcements include substantial financial commitments including the UAE's financial pledge of \$150 million in new funding for water scarcity solutions, as well as the collective commitment of Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs). Eight MDBs have jointly pledged to double the number of people benefiting from technical and financial support for water action for climate adaptation within three years. These commitments underscore a collective dedication to address water-related challenges and emphasize the importance of financial resources in building a water-secure future for all.

**Country Commitments to the Freshwater Challenge: A Global Movement Begins.** The COP28 Presidency championed the Freshwater Challenge, the largest freshwater restoration initiative, launched at the UN2023 Water Conference. Thirty-seven new members, including the UAE, the Netherlands and Tajikistan joined during the COP, and commitments related to the protection and restoration of freshwater ecosystems were presented by countries in the ministerial which took place on Food, Agriculture and Water Day.

This ministerial also saw commitments by non-state actors, particularly the private sector. More than 90 companies with operations in more than 140 countries have committed to three related platforms - the Water Resilience Coalition, the United Nations Global Compact's Forward Faster Water Resilience Target launched in September during the UN General Assembly, and the Business Leaders' Open Call for Water Action launched by multiple partners in March during the historic UN Water Conference - to scale the private sector's role in building water resilience across 100 identified water-stressed basins by 2030.

The Freshwater Challenge is a country-driven initiative that aims at leveraging the support needed to bring 300,000 km of rivers and 350 million hectares of wetlands under restoration by 2030. These figures equal 30 percent of degraded freshwater ecosystems.



**Launch of the Partnership on Water-Resilient Food Systems : A Nexus Approach to Sustainability.**

Recognizing the interconnectedness of water and food security, COP28 held the first-ever ministerial on building water-resilient food systems, co-convened by the UAE and Brazil, and bringing together over 20 ministers. One of the outcomes of this ministerial is the launch of the partnership on water-resilient food systems, consisting of leading international organizations, and will be hosted under the UNFCCC Climate-Resilient Food Systems Alliance. This partnership will support countries and non-state actors with national climate planning as well as the implementation of commitments related to the integrated water and food systems management. This collaborative effort aims to develop integrated solutions that enhance agricultural practices, ensure water efficiency, and promote sustainable food systems on a global scale.

**The One Water Summit: A Gathering of Visionaries.** COP28 witnessed the launch by French President Emmanuel Macron of the One Water Summit, a platform bringing together leaders, experts, and advocates to exchange ideas, strategies, and innovations in water management. It is complementary to the outcomes of the UN 2023 Water Conference, the World Water Forum, and the next UN 2026 Water Conference. The One Water Summit serves as a catalyst for transformative action, implementation of commitments and fostering a shared commitment to addressing water challenges comprehensively. It will be hosted during the United Nations General Assembly in 2024 on heads of state level.

**Report by FAO and Partners: In-Depth Insights for Informed Action.** The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and its partners released a comprehensive report providing valuable insights into water and food systems. These reports serve as crucial resources for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners, offering informed perspectives to guide effective action in the realm of water and climate resilience.

**A pivotal accomplishment is the inclusion of water resilience in the negotiated text on the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) and the Global Stocktake (GST)** acknowledging the importance to protecting, conserving, and restoring water-related ecosystems in delivering climate adaptation benefits and co-benefits while ensuring social and environmental safeguards. It also urges Parties and invites non-Party stakeholders to increase their ambition and enhance action in support to significantly reducing climate-induced water scarcity and enhancing climate resilience to water-related hazards towards climate-resilient water supply, climate-resilient sanitation and access to safe and affordable potable water for all.

**High Level Round Table on Urban Water Resilience.** Building on the outcomes of the UN 2023 Water Conference, COP28 hosted the first high-level roundtable on multilevel urban water resilience. The goal was to support a substantive dialogue and engagement between local and national governments. The event brought together ministers, mayors, key partners such as Resilient Cities Network, C40 and WRI, and other national government representatives, to highlight how cities can better support national climate planning. Representatives from Brazil, Colombia, Nigeria, Singapore, South Africa, and the Netherlands discussed how national governments can better support the implementation of climate action on the ground. A follow-up event will be held during the second quarter 2024, ensuring continuity and progress.



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**Launch of the Sharm El Sheikh Adaptation Agenda Working Group.** Following a high-level round table on urban water resilience during the COP28, the Working Group was launched to foster multilevel collaboration and coordinated action between local, regional, and national levels of governments and stakeholders in order to effectively address water resilience in urban areas.

**Urban Water Catalyst Initiative Pilot Phase Launch: Transforming Urban Water Management.** The pilot phase of the Urban Water Catalyst Initiative, a groundbreaking effort to address water challenges in urban areas, was launched. BMZ and the Government of the Netherlands also committed \$42 million for the Urban Water Catalyst Initiative. This initiative seeks to catalyze innovation, technology adoption, and sustainable practices in urban water management, creating resilient and water-secure cities.

The above achievements underscore the leadership of the COP28 Presidency (UAE) the Governments of the Netherlands and Tajikistan in elevating water as a central theme in global climate discussions. Their collaboration at Cop28 is an important inspiration for action and exemplifies the importance of diverse perspectives in addressing global water and climate challenges. Each country brings a unique set of experiences and solutions to the table, highlighting the need for bundling efforts and effective collaboration.

The joint efforts of this tripartite partnership send a resounding message to the international community – water resilience and climate adaptation is a shared responsibility that transcends borders and landscapes. At COP28, these nations called for increased international collaboration, technology transfer, and financial support to ensure that every nation, regardless of its geographical challenges, has the tools to build water and climate change resilient societies.