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Sustainable development

Summary report of the 2023 parliamentary hearing

Note by the President of the General Assembly

The present document contains the summary report of the 2023 parliamentary hearing, held in New York on 13 and 14 February 2023, which is circulated pursuant to General Assembly resolution 65/123.

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Water for people and the planet: Stop the waste, change the game, invest in the future

Summary report of the 2023 parliamentary hearing, jointly organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Office of the President of the General Assembly at United Nations Headquarters, 13 and 14 February 2023

I. Introduction

1. The 2023 parliamentary hearing at the United Nations was jointly organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Office of the President of the General Assembly. The theme of the hearing was “Water for people and the planet: stop the waste, change the game, invest in the future”. The hearing was held in the Trusteeship Council Chamber on 13 and 14 February 2023.

2. The hearing was attended by approximately 150 parliamentarians from 46 countries and included seven panel discussions featuring experts on water and sanitation issues, in preparation for the United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028, also referred to as the United Nations 2023 Water Conference, scheduled to be held in New York from 22 to 24 March. It also included a special briefing on the future of multilateralism and the role parliamentarians can play.

Opening session

3. The Permanent Observer of IPU to the United Nations, Paddy Torsney, welcomed the participants and led a moment of silence for the more than 30,000 victims of the recent earthquake in the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye, including Yakup Tas, a Member of the Turkish Parliament who died along with his family. Ms. Torsney also recognized the death of a former Member of the Afghan Parliament, Mursal Nabizada, who was murdered in her home earlier in 2023.

4. The President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session, Csaba Kőrösi, thanked the parliamentarians for bringing their constituents’ aspirations to the international community. He highlighted the parliamentarians’ power to legislate, budget and scrutinize the actions of Governments and their critical role as decision makers in national governance and water policies. He stated that, out of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, perhaps none was more urgent than Goal 6, which was focused on clean water and sanitation. Climate change was exacerbating the water crisis and, by the end of the decade, water demand was expected to exceed supply by 40 per cent. While the world had access to science, technology and money to bring much-needed change, political will was needed to act. Mr. Kőrösi stated that there was a need for a global water information system and that he wanted the work of the General Assembly to be data- and science-driven. He encouraged Member States to attend the United Nations 2023 Water Conference – the first on the topic since 1977 – with concrete proposals that would lead to action and transformation.

5. The President of IPU, Duarte Pacheco, stated that one in four people lacked access to safe drinking water and that almost 50 per cent of the global population did not have safe sanitation. Most natural disasters involved water, and about 1.2 billion people were at risk of being exposed to flooding. Water scarcity was the result of exploitation, pollution and climate change, and the challenges were only intensifying. Water security was also an issue as it could lead to conflict; cooperation and

multilateralism were therefore essential. Mr. Pacheco implored parliamentarians to help people realize their human rights to clean water and safe sanitation by connecting global and national policies, legislating and budgeting accordingly, and holding their Governments to account.

6. Participants took part in an interactive survey to gauge their initial views on topics such as water and sanitation as a public good; the link between climate change and access to water and sanitation; the responsibility of national and municipal governments to provide these services; and the importance of water compared with other priorities.

II. Panel discussions and special briefing

Panel 1
Sustainable Development Goal 6 as a linchpin of sustainable development

7. Water affects every human being and every ecosystem and is essential for supporting everything that people and Governments care about, such as good health and healthy communities, clean environments, affordable energy and economic prosperity. Sound water management practices can help to maintain peace, prevent conflict, battle the migration crisis and allow people to enjoy dignity and have better livelihoods.

8. Goal 6, on clean water and sanitation for all, is essential for achieving all 17 Goals. Compared with the Millennium Development Goals on water, Sustainable Development Goal 6 is bigger in scope, scale and ambition, as it concerns the entire water cycle; is aimed at the sustainable management of water and sanitation for all; and is focused on quality to ensure that water is safe to drink and that waste is properly disposed. It includes issues such as hygiene, transboundary water cooperation, water-related ecosystems and is connected to the other Sustainable Development Goals.

9. Participants identified the following major obstacles to achieving Goal 6:

(a) **Political will.** Panellists repeatedly stated that the lack of political will was the biggest challenge, as water was not treated as the priority that it was, and rarely made it on the political agenda. Some countries had made great strides in addressing water issues by securing political commitments from the highest levels, including India, Mexico, Senegal and Uruguay;

(b) **Governance.** Decisions affecting water were spread across departments, ministries and sectors, including agriculture, energy, health, education, public works and the environment. This led to fragmentation, but few countries had the policies, legal frameworks and the inter-ministerial coordination needed to manage water services efficiently and equitably. Examples of efforts to tackle the issue included those of China, which created a superagency to address the cross-nature of water, and Uruguay, which created a ministry of environment to coordinate work on water carried out by multiple ministries;

(c) **Lack of a global framework.** Participants stated there was a lack of coordination and a lack of standards at the global level. While various parts of the United Nations system dealt with water issues, there had been no comprehensive strategy or forum for discussion. In addition to prioritizing high-level involvement in the United Nations 2023 Water Conference, participants suggested naming a United Nations special rapporteur or envoy on water, and setting global standards on sustainable water use and conservation efforts;

(d) **Funding.** While every individual and business needed water, the water sector lagged behind others in financing. In addition, there had been a concerning trend in investments in sectors that adversely impacted water, such as those connected to extraction and pollution;

(e) **Data and information.** Water indicators should be shared among all actors to ensure the most efficient sharing of resources. Localized products should be used to inform local decision makers and water users. Data should be segregated by gender, socioeconomic status, geographic location and other factors; An example of a reliable database was Uganda's Water Supply Status, which provided a picture of the country's health when it came to water and sanitation services;

(f) **Climate change.** The rise in pollution, extreme weather events, such as droughts and floods, and other effects of climate change were having a negative impact on everything from water supplies to quality. Whether referring to floods in Pakistan, wildfires in the United States of America or the melting of glaciers in the Arctic, many participants spoke about the growing need to respond to disasters inflicted by climate change;

(g) **Public awareness.** Water might be the biggest crisis about which the general population was largely oblivious. Participants stated that there was an urgent need to educate the public about water and sanitation services, including safe practices, the link between water and health, the environment and climate change, and the growing importance of fair and responsible water use. A paradigm shift was needed in terms of how the public valued and handled water. A successful public awareness campaign on sanitation organized in India, for example, was focused on ending open defecation. It involved billions in funding, all levels of government and a whole-of-society approach.

10. The United Nations 2023 Water Conference will provide a once-in-a-generation opportunity to prioritize water on the global political agenda. Its Water Action Agenda will be inclusive, action-oriented and cross-sectoral. It is intended to be just the beginning, with work continuing at the high-level political forum on sustainable development, to be held in July 2023, the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, to be held in September, and the Summit of the Future, to be held in September 2024.

Recommendations

11. Regarding the United Nations 2023 Water Conference and related events, parliamentarians should consider the following recommendations:

(a) To ensure participation at the highest level: in order to generate political will and place water high on the international agenda, government officials from the highest levels should participate in these high-level meetings and be prepared to pass bold policies and action;

(b) To make commitments on all levels, ranging from municipal projects to global treaties. Parliamentarians should assess the existing frameworks of their countries, ratify relevant treaties and enshrine existing resolutions into their national constitutions, including on the basis of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly in 2010 and 2015, in which the Assembly explicitly recognized the rights to clean water and safe sanitation;

(c) To bring all actors together in efforts that include convening stakeholders from all fields – including agriculture, food and energy – to discuss demands on water resources and determine what structures need to be strengthened. Civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector should be engaged as well;

(d) To engage in multilateralism since water issues are by nature transboundary and affect everyone from island nations to landlocked countries. Member States must recommit to cooperation and multilateralism to tackle today's and tomorrow's growing crises.

Panel 2
Access to safe water and sanitation as a human right

12. Access to clean and safe water and sanitation services is a fundamental human right, but it has been unrealized for many people around the world. One in every four individuals – or 2 billion people – have no access to clean water. Nearly half the world's population is unable to safely manage sanitation services at home. This situation has vast humanitarian implications since waterborne diseases stemming from unsafe water, hygiene and sanitation practices remain top killers of children.

13. Governments have a legal responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil the rights to water and sanitation. States cannot arbitrarily disconnect water services without providing alternatives, and they must ensure that third parties do not interfere with people's enjoyment of these rights. Governments must work to progressively realize people's lives by using maximum available resources, continuously improving services and eliminating inequality. They must refrain from retrogressive policies and laws, and unjustified funding cuts that would negatively impact services.

Recommendations

14. In order to help people realize their rights to water and sanitation, parliamentarians should consider the following recommendations:

(a) To pass legislation that incorporates human rights obligations into national laws and focus on smart laws, which outline these rights explicitly and are clear and enforceable, including:

(i) To assess existing laws for any gaps and ensure that the human rights to water and sanitation is explicitly recognized. For example, according to an African study, although some constitutions recognize the right to water, only four countries include the right to sanitation;

(ii) To address the cross-sectoral nature of water and incorporate creative, solution-oriented thinking. For example, in Kenya, water was being used to extort sexual acts. Laws were therefore amended to help prevent such violations;

(b) To pass budgets that allocate maximum available resources for realizing these rights;

(c) To hold Governments accountable by ensuring that they deliver on their commitments and can verify that funding is properly allocated, using parliamentary tools, such as auditor general reports and other State data, and relying on convening powers and public hearings to prioritize the issue;

(d) To engage all levels of government and turn to bilateral and multilateral cooperation in order to effectively manage shared water systems and avoid conflict; and leverage water for peace;

(e) To reach out to vulnerable groups, including the poor and marginalized, girls and women, Indigenous communities and those in rural and remote areas; engage with civil society to reach these groups and to follow best practices for creating deeply participatory and inclusive systems; and use existing guidance and resources, such as the publication entitled *Water & Sanitation: Realizing Human Rights and Achieving Sustainable Development Goals – A Handbook for Parliamentarians*.

Panel 3
Climate change and water scarcity: building resilience to avoid the worst

15. Water scarcity is a growing problem, including in wealthy and historically water-rich countries. Ground water is diminishing at record levels, and what is left is often polluted. By as early as 2030, the United Nations estimates that 700 million people could be displaced because of water insecurity. Glaciers – which are a major or the only water source for many communities – are melting at a record pace, and pollution and extreme weather events are causing water contamination and supply problems. Traditional water infrastructure, often referred to as grey or built infrastructure, was created when climate change and environmental degradation were not the main drivers of water risk.

16. Grey water recycling should be a key element of building resilience and can be a valuable revenue source for communities. Many countries make it difficult to reuse grey water; parliamentarians should therefore work on regulations to tackle this obstacle.

17. Nature-based solutions or green infrastructure incorporate healthy ecosystems to boost the resilience, service and delivery of water services. For example, forests in watersheds can help to predict water supplies; protecting open spaces in cities can reduce water risk; and sustainable farming can boost water quality for downstream communities. Governments should turn to integrated green and grey infrastructure to boost resilience. Such strategies have been tested and have proved to be effective. The World Resources Institute has tracked about 150 projects involving nature-based solutions dealing with water scarcity in Latin America and nearly 200 in sub-Saharan Africa. The United Nations Environment Programme estimates that funding for nature-based solutions will need to double by 2025 in order to stay on track to meet biodiversity and climate targets.

Recommendations

18. To address the implementations of nature-based solutions, parliamentarians should consider the following recommendations:

(a) To legislate policies and pass budgets that fund nature-based solutions. In many countries, legal frameworks were created for grey infrastructure, making investment and innovation in such solutions difficult. Parliamentarians can change that; for example, Peruvian lawmakers passed a law requiring water utilities to dedicate a portion of their revenues to watershed conservation and adaptation, generating $10 million per year for nature-based solutions;

(b) To authorize and enable nature-based solutions, and ensure that projects involving such solutions are on equal footing with grey infrastructure. For example, in the Water Resources Development Act of 2022, the Government of the United States of America classified nature-based solutions as an integral component of water infrastructure, helping water authorities to finance and implement such solutions more easily;

(c) To support monitoring, research and innovation in respect of green-grey infrastructure. For example, by creating a research policy agenda that incorporates nature-based solutions, the European Union has funded significant work in this area.

19. Climate change has had a significant impact on the work of private and public water operators. Guaranteeing access to water during a crisis has become their priority, and climate resilience is now the focus of their master planning, investments and operations. Since maintaining water quality and quantity has become more

challenging, it is critical for water operators to assess the supply of and demand for the water they manage and to incorporate crisis management as part of routine operations. Operators must also comply with rapid changes in climate regulations and reporting requirements and build the skills, ecosystems and partnerships that allow them to handle growing crises. Efforts to provide transparency and build trust with the public are essential to ensuring ecosystems that are more flexible and resilient.

20. Data and information can lead to better water management practices. In the climate context, these can help with maximizing water use to preparing for extreme hydrological events. The Global Hydrological Status and Outlook System (HydroSOS) of the World Meteorological Organization is one such resource, as it uses ground-based and satellite data to monitor and predict global freshwater hydrological conditions.

Panel 4
Water conservation: the low-hanging fruit

21. The cheapest water is water that is not wasted, but an average of 30 per cent of municipal water is lost due to leaks and other losses. Industries like agriculture, meat production and textiles use huge amounts of water and rely on unsustainable practices. In the light of factors such as population growth and climate change, efforts to conserve water should range from the individual to the global level.

Recommendations

22. To conserve water, parliaments, Governments and others should consider the following recommendations:

(a) To enact an international agreement on the global hydrological cycle as a global commons. Despite the fact that the atmosphere and the oceans are already considered to be global commons, the water cycle that links them is not treated as such, even though everyone depends on it;

(b) To focus on the largest consumers of water, such as agriculture and industry. Between 80 and 90 per cent of global water consumption goes into food production, but about 50 per cent of irrigation systems are unsustainable;

(c) To stop the loss of fresh water into the oceans, which is a challenging, critical, standard;

(d) To implement incentives, subsidies, taxes, sanctions and other instruments to abolish unsustainable practices and promote sustainable practices and healthy ecosystems; consider a tax on unsustainable water use (similar to the carbon tax that many countries have); and use subsidies to create a more responsible and circular economy. In addition, the United Nations should re-evaluate how it calculates gross domestic product, which measures output in terms of the economy, but not in terms of environmental or other harms. For example:

(i) Indonesia passed a law that requires businesses that use State water sources to meet stringent requirements and pay conservation fees;

(ii) Consideration should be given to programmes that guarantee income for farmers for two to three years as they test and implement more sustainable practices;

(iii) Advocacy efforts should support sustainable practices, such as wind power, and be aimed at reducing industries that are harmful for water supplies, such as those that involve deforestation, fossil fuels and meat production;

(e) To protect water sources by granting them legal status For example, the Government of Ecuador has considered nature as a legal entity, and the Government of India has given the Ganges River a legal personality;

(f) To prioritize water sufficiency programmes over building new infrastructure. For example, water conservation efforts usually have a lower marginal cost than do efforts to build a reservoir;

(g) To adopt plumbing standards and green codes to make plumbing fixtures and water-use devices more efficient, for example:

(i) Through its Energy Policy Act of 1992, the Government of the United States set standards for showerheads, faucets and urinals. That legislation led to water savings equivalent to 20 years of the combined water needs of the three most populous cities in the country: New York, Los Angeles and Chicago.

(ii) The Government of Indonesia set plumbing standards for buildings in 2015, and the Government of Jordan adopted a green commercial building code in 2011, leading to savings from more efficient fixtures;

(h) To invest, once the standards have been implemented, in retrofitting products to meet those standards. For example, the municipal government of Los Angeles has been investing in retrofitting products since 1970, and now uses the same amount of water it did in 1978, even though its population has grown by 1.5 million;

(i) To reduce municipal leakage and intermittency in the water supply. The International Water Association has indicators for reducing water leaks that many countries have implemented;

(j) To price water so that the cost of delivering it is recovered, and to send customers a conservation signal. Proper pricing can encourage a reduction in water use;

(k) To take advantage of the fact that saving water also saves energy;

(l) To enact rules for making new housing developments water-neutral or water-positive. A combination of onsite water efficiency and recycling practices, and offsite retrofitting should be incorporated in their design;

(m) To educate the public on the wise use of water. People should know where water comes from and how to use it more efficiently. Organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) are prioritizing water education, and working to change people's attitudes and behaviour towards water through many approaches, including the Global Network of Water Museums. UNESCO efforts include formal and informal education, water education awareness campaigns and efforts to build scientific knowledge and institutional capacity.

Panel 5
Financing infrastructure for sanitation and water: the trillion-dollar challenge

23. Water systems are facing an unprecedented crisis but remain grossly underfunded. An additional $1.7 trillion – or three times the current investment – is needed to achieve Goal 6. There is a lack of public funding, and the public sector must set policies and regulations that will result in adequate services offered to citizens. Only about 1 per cent of commercial finance goes to water and sanitation, even though for every $1 invested, there is a net benefit of $4. A paradigm shift is needed to urgently prioritize water and fund water services accordingly. The cost of inaction should be put into perspective and communicated to the public.

24. Water underpins everything people do. Managing water requires a whole-of government and whole-of-society approach.

25. All aspects of water resource management should be assessed for effectiveness and efficiency, including whether water is clean and readily available and if it is being delivered to everyone, particularly the poor and marginalized. Appropriate conditions for water services must be clearly defined; countries with strong regulators typically provide reliable services. In addition to focusing on pipes and other infrastructure, strengthening institutions should be prioritized.

26. Governments must appreciate water as the valuable resource that it is, and price it accordingly. In some places, such as Ecuador, the human right to water is embedded in the Constitution, making pricing water impossible. Nonetheless, there are still ways to value water and related infrastructure and services.

27. Governments should also improve how water revenues and expenditures are captured. Current models and budgets are largely based on a yearly or short-term basis. Financing streams are too fragmented, and public and private sectors have to join forces in multiple ways as water underpins all of the Sustainable Development Goals. In the rare situations in which there is a minister of water, the budget is typically not related to health or environmental ministry budgets, even though investing in water also improves health and environmental outcomes.

28. While many countries finance water from their own sources, transboundary cooperation can benefit an entire region. Such agreements exist in many places, such as for the Sahel region, the Senegal River Basin and the Danube River.

29. Capital markets offer opportunities for investments in water; from 2007 to 2022, water and sanitation stocks were the best performing basket of public stocks. Similarly, water and sanitation accounted for the best performing infrastructure class.

30. The microfinancing of loans represents an area that has shown progress over the past decade, with about $3.5 billion to $4 billion deployed in the water and sanitation space. Such loans are intended to take into account the steep opportunity cost (e.g. in terms of time, health, lost education and work) for people who walk for as much as two hours a day to obtain water. Giving these individuals financial credit has had a profound effect on their lives.

31. The financial gap to achieve Goal 6 by 2030 requires a significant global investment. The private sector should work with public entities to provide sustainable water infrastructure and services. Sustainable goals and human rights principles must be embedded in such partnerships, and affordability guaranteed for the most vulnerable. There are also growing opportunities for corporations to help state actors, such as by providing smart leak detectors and other technology.

32. With regard to foreign aid, Member States should consider cancelling the water debt of recipient countries so they can reinvest that money into achieving their water and sanitation targets.

33. Participants discussed different ideas for holding businesses, States and individuals accountable for unfair water use. For example, customers who use water excessively should face much higher prices. In terms of polluters, the principle of prevention should be enshrined in legislation, instead of the practice of issuing fines once damage has already been done. As for strengthening institutions, the creation of water agencies was presented as an option.

Panel 6
Towards a more inclusive water policy: leaving no one behind

34. The most successful and efficient water policies are deeply participatory and include youth, women, Indigenous people and other community members and stakeholders. These groups should be involved with project planning and design, and their participation should be meaningful and long-lasting.

Recommendations

35. To create more inclusive processes, parliamentarians should consider the following recommendations:

(a) To set quotas for representation. The quotas should include non-state actors and contain guidance that allow participant input to be acknowledged and recorded. Best practices should be considered, such as the National Coastal Resilience Laboratory in Mexico, which has a robust framework for engaging people and for collecting and incorporating their feedback;

(b) To address the disproportionate impact water scarcity has on girls and women, many of whom spend hours each day fetching water, which means that they are unable to go to school or work. This situation creates a ripple effect, making them more susceptible to poverty, early marriage, pregnancy, sexual and other crimes, and even death;

(c) To use gender-sensitive budgeting to ensure equity and to segregate data by gender, age and other factors to help address gaps in service;

(d) To treat youth, women, Indigenous populations and other groups as equal actors, not victims. It is important to focus on relationship-building and ensure that interactions are not just one-way and extractive, but respectful of people's expertise and lived experiences. People should be asked not only what they need, but also what they know and what actions they want to propose;

(e) To make rules and procedures less bureaucratic so that everyone can understand them and participate in them;

(f) To include youth in all aspects of decision-making and programming, take them seriously, and help them to build confidence, the lack of which often prevents them from becoming engaged in decision-making processes. It is important to tap into existing youth networks, movements and organizations, such as the World Youth Parliament for Water, the UNESCO Global Youth Community of Practice and the Water Youth Network;

(g) To focus on whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches. Private sectors, civil society, non-governmental organizations and local communities should be engaged from the start, not as an afterthought. In France, for example, water parliaments include elected authorities, water users and representatives from environmental and agricultural groups;

(h) To conduct, when designing any legislation, regardless of the type of programme or sector, due diligence on the impact on water. It is necessary to ensure that ministry budgets include funding for sustainable water use, including in agriculture, education and industry;

(i) To focus on education – both formal and informal – which enables participation, makes people aware of their rights and builds capacity.

Panel 7
Transboundary waters: from competition to cooperation for peace

36. Many freshwater sources cross international borders, meaning that cooperation is essential for managing them, as well as maintaining peace and preventing conflict. While there are more than 800 treaties on transboundary waters and more than 120 basin organizations, focus should be on implementing existing instruments and on making sure that they are effective.

37. In arid areas, States are more likely to cooperate because of the benefits they derive from such of cooperating and because of the negative risks associated with the lack of water. Even in areas that have historically had more cooperation, tension has increased over the past decade due to climate change and the growing demand for water resources. It is important to remember, however, that not all conflict is negative, and some conflict can trigger dialogue.

38. Water diplomacy is a relatively new concept in public, academic and policy discourse. It moves beyond transboundary water management to encompass sharing of technology and data, joint flood monitoring, integrated basin planning and other forms of cooperation. It brings together diplomatic, security and other actors to ensure water issues are handled in a peaceful and cooperative matter. For water diplomacy to work, water must become a political priority; institutions should be strengthened from the basin to the global level; and governance systems must involve multiple stakeholders.

39. Gender-sensitive processes are a key component of water diplomacy, and more women should be involved in water management. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) found that while fewer than 10 per cent of negotiators in peace processes were women, negotiations that included women lasted longer and were more resilient. Women have also been shown to push for negotiations when momentum stalls or talks falter. Organizations such as the Women in Water Diplomacy Network in the Nile work to increase women's empowerment and participation in diplomatic processes.

Recommendations

40. To manage transboundary water services, parliamentarians should consider the following recommendations:

(a) To ensure that all relevant global conventions are signed and ratified, including the Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (1997) and the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (1992);

(b) To consider implementing integrated watershed management, engage all stakeholders in the process and learn from best practices. The Organization for the Development of the Senegal River represents an example of a developed and imaginative arrangement;

(c) To work on convincing constituents that benefits from long-term multilateral cooperation outweigh those of short-term lateral goals;

(d) To understand that water is increasingly becoming a security issue and could create conflict and lead to migration. Water services can be used as a weapon of war; and become a target of terrorist attacks and cybercrimes. It is important to ensure that proper security systems are in place and turn to multilateralism to coordinate cross-border issues;

(e) To ensure that women are included in decision-making on transboundary and other issues. With about 150 Member States supporting the appointment of a United Nations special envoy on water, a suggestion was made to ensure that the position, if created, would be filled by a woman;

(f) To look at water as an opportunity. It can be a great connector and convenor, bringing partners together and providing a basis for multilateralism. Investing in water can greatly improve quality of life, boost the economy and help to build a sustainable future for next generations.

Special briefing
The future of multilateralism: challenges and opportunities for the United Nations

41. Former President of Slovenia and member of the High-level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism, Danilo Türk, gave a briefing on efforts to revive multilateralism. The Advisory Board, which was created by the Secretary-General in April 2022, in the context of his report entitled “Our Common Agenda”, will deliver a report in April 2023 and is expected to focus on six areas for transforming global governance:

(a) Collective security, including reform of the Security Council, in order to make the body more representative and inclusive; and peacebuilding, including to have it focus not only on preventing conflict but also on making societies more resilient;

(b) Abundant and sustainable finance that delivers for all, including through reforms of international finance infrastructure and greater engagement of the private sector;

(c) Climate governance, with an emphasis on enabling green transitions, and strengthening environmental dimensions in decision-making;

(d) Digital transition, in order to ensure that the benefits of the digital age are enjoyed by all and that data is secure and protected;

(e) Current and emerging transnational risks, including artificial intelligence, outer space, trans-national organized crime, biohazards and viruses;

(f) Inclusive and accountable multilateralism, which includes stakeholders from all levels of society.

42. Mr. Türk encouraged parliamentarians to provide input on the report, urge their Governments to include parliamentarians in United Nations high-level meetings and seek change by exercising their parliamentary powers, including through committee hearings, public consultations and the passing of legislation and budgets.

III. Closing remarks

43. Mr. Pacheco thanked the panel experts, IPU staff and the Office of the President of the General Assembly and stressed that without the involvement of parliamentarians, progress on water would not be possible. No country was immune to water-related problems, and parliamentarians must pressure their Governments to put water at the forefront of their agenda. While water was a public good, there was room for private-sector involvement as long as certain conditions were met. In the light of intensifying pressures due to climate change, a paradigm shift was needed and the focus should be on building resilience, including through water conservation

and nature-based solutions. Parliamentarians played a vital role in translating global instruments into national policies and budgets, and integrating water and sanitation services into all levels of government and society.

44. The Under-Secretary-General for Policy, Guy Ryder stated that the world was at the halfway point of the 2030 Agenda, but not on track to realize the Sustainable Development Goals. This was a critical moment that demanded redoubling efforts to meet the Sustainable Development Goal targets – for the sake of all people and the planet. Upcoming convenings at the United Nations provided an opportunity to give water greater visibility on the international policy agenda. Parliamentarians must repeatedly and persistently bring their constituents' views to the United Nations and engage in the multilateral work that was essential for handling water's many cross-cutting areas.

Annex

List of speakers

Moderator: Fellow at the Alliance for Global Water Adaptation, Betsy Otto

Day one

Opening session

President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session, Csaba Kőrösi

President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Duarte Pacheco

Panel 1
Sustainable Development Goal 6 as a linchpin of sustainable development

Senior Water Expert and former Associate Director for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, United Nations Children's Fund, Kelly Ann Naylor

Chief Technical Advisor, UN-Water, Federico Properzi

Panel 2
Access to safe water and sanitation as a human right

First Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, and current Chief, Executive Office, Sanitation and Water for All, Caterina de Albuquerque

Executive Secretary, African Civil Society Network on Water and Sanitation, Sareen Malik

Panel 3
Climate change and water scarcity: building resilience to avoid the worst

Senior Associate, Natural Infrastructure, World Resources Institute, Suzanne Ozment

Chief Executive Officer, Veolia North America, Karine Rougé

Head, Hydrological and Water Resources Service Division, World Meteorological Organization, Hwirin Kim

Panel 4
Water conservation: the low-hanging fruit

Chief, Groundwater Sustainability and Water Cooperation, Division of Water Sciences, United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, Alice Aureli

Vice Chair, UN-Water, and Chief Science Advisor to the President of the General Assembly, Johannes Cullmann

Former Chief Executive Officer, Alliance for Water Efficiency, Mary Ann Dickinson

Day two

Panel 5
Financing infrastructure for sanitation and water services: the trillion-dollar challenge

Lead Water Specialist, World Bank, Sudipto Sarkar

President, Water Equity, Paul O'Connell

Senator (Canada), Rosa Galvez

Special Envoy for International Water Affairs for the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Henk Ovink

Panel 6
Towards a more inclusive water policy: leaving no one behind

Member, Steering Committee of the Women for Water Partnership, Lesha Witmer

Member, Young Hydrologic Society, Caitlyn Hall

Panel 7
Transboundary waters: from competition to cooperation for peace

Assistant Professor of International Environmental Policy, The Fletcher School, Tufts University, Melissa McCracken

Associate Professor of Water Law and Diplomacy, IHE Delft Institute for Water Education, Susanne Schmeier

Senior Advisor, Stockholm International Water Institute, Danielle Gaillard-Picher

Special briefing
The future of multilateralism: challenges and opportunities for the United Nations

Former President of Slovenia and member of the High-level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism, Danilo Türk

Closing session

President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Duarte Pacheco

Under-Secretary-General for Policy, United Nations, Guy Ryder