



European Union

# Water and Beyond

EU transformative approaches  
for international partnerships



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA  
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



European  
Commission



UNECE



WOMEN  
FOR WATER  
PARTNERSHIP

# Closing session

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## Closing session

14:30 - 16:00

327 participants signed up for this session

Introduction:

Facilitator: Chris Burns

Arnaud de Vanssay, Team Leader for Water, Environment, Sustainable Natural Resources Unit, Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), European Commission

Key takeaways from the event sessions– and next steps/ timeline

We did actually a consensus over these days for more partnerships and a consensus on the actual situation. But let's quote what we heard these days:

“Is it basic: security water and access water are necessary to achieve all the goals of SDG agenda.”

**Catarina de Albuquerque**

Water has been recognized as a human right.

“Access to water is together: Health, a Right and Dignity”

**MEP Chrysoula Zacharopoulou**

“Water is the strategy resource from our societies for the 21st century”

**Secretary of State Francisco André**

“Water is the only natural resource that has no substitute: the only substitute for water is water”

**State Secretary Stanislav Rascan**

“There is a cascading water crisis impacting our lives, economies and ecosystems: our DNA is broken”

**Philippe Mayaux**

“Water should be front and center of everyone's agenda, now and in the future. It is already fully part of the European Green Deal agenda.”

**Commissioner Lenarcic**

“Today is an opportunity to reaffirm the importance of water for people, for nature, for our economies and our stability”

**DDG Marjeta Jager (DG INTPA)**

- Water is a human right:
  - Now is the time to translate human rights and sanitation into laws.
  - Water is a question of dignity
  - EU guidelines on human rights
  - There is a need to accompany with Technical Assistance to implement the programs. The example of Nepal: the principle of participation!
- What is then the future of water:
  - In the question of transboundary management of water: let's use this force to strengthen green peace. The resources should be managed together to secure the resources.
- Regarding water and gender:
  - Mr. Anatelo from UNICEF: solid evidence that WASH for school for instance particularly for girls if they do not have access to proper sanitation. Guidelines on how WASH should be in the EU gender Action plan
- Sanitation: being part and integral part of the discussion
  - Mrs. Jennifer Willians: proposes another way of Faecal way alliance to move forward the sector
  - Instantly driven standard to move forward from the sector
- Water on the economy of jobs: It goes far beyond. Water and beyond
  - UNESCO says 78% of global workforces are related to water
  - Agriculture has a deeper link to water.
  - When we are consuming we are importing water to whatever we are doing. Water is an external link to another kind of action
  - There is a question mark. Where you will go with this virtual trade?
- The final Gap. How do you close that gap?
  - Mrs. Annelise for Suez group: Talked about a "partnership force"
  - Maturity level, diverse types of investment, before we can reach certain stages for different types of expenses
  - Blended finance is not the only financial option
  - Leonard from Ghana talked about budget support and Burkina Faso talked about different approaches and blended finance
  - We have institutions, NGO's, and financial institutions talking about these issues
  - One way is to work together with the private sector
  - Equity for small-medium enterprises, a number of other sources of funding, and climate finance

We are facing a cascading water crisis and climate solutions:

- Some suggestions are to link climate change to Water Management adaptation actions. The EC will present a new climate adaptation strategy in one month and that will underline the links that we need to have.

- Mrs. Silvia from ECLAC talked about the fact that 200 nature-based solutions for water resources and Mrs. Catalina explained that only 5% of climate funds are related to water, knowing that water is directly related to disasters.
- What Slovenia wants to do in its presidency?
  - Team Europe initiative wants to give the attention that it deserves to water
  - Slovenia will be straining for water to be a comprehensive matter across all facets in the EU Actions.
  - Partnerships are a catalyst to accomplish SDG 6
  - Water issues are complex

It is more than water!

Dialogue: How to promote water in international partnerships and in the EU current programming?

**Moderator:** Mr. Chris Burns

- Mr. Pedro Arrojo-Agudo, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation

- Introduction from the moderator: it was recognized that water is a human right 10 years ago, where are we now?

Yes, we have done a good job. Even the idea of making water a human right was difficult 10 years ago. We are on the way, the efforts even for accepting the idea of declaring water as a human right was rejected. We are in the fact, in the way to do it.

- Where do you see on the ground, the linking of human rights and water, working with partnerships?

The main question deals with responsibility, of course we can get alliances and partnerships but in order to go ahead with responsibility, we have to reflect on the role and assignee to water on the public health system. With the pandemic, the Public health system is profiting on the actual situation, the key issue, and the model of helping the one that has no access to health, the approach has to continue to be as the philosophy of the UN of leaving no one behind.

Today the challenge of facing the pandemic and the economic Green Deal is mobilizing a lot of funds.

- You seem optimistic that despite the crisis the Green Deal will push for cooperation and partnership
- One of the main challenges is to have clear rules. A global vulnerability is against the principle of “leaving no one behind”, so it is an obligation for this. It is a big consensus of this approach of helping the public health system so we are not thinking of the financial gap so it is logical to include water sanitation in the task of Public health systems. We are thinking of a huge amount of money, like if there is not gap, and it is not the case. But let’s include the water into the public health systems and sanitation obligations.
- **Ben Ampomah, Executive Secretary, Water Resources Commission, Ghana**
- Question from the moderator: what you heard on Day 2 in the panel discussion, do you think that there is a link between water and peace and that we should try new partnerships?

I am sure and convinced in terms of advantages that partnerships can bring with respect to International cooperation. We need to achieve the SDGs without any doubt. We need all these relationships, especially in Ghana. We need to build this kind of trust.

What about joining the Water Convention?

It is clear that we need to follow the standards, if you really want to find pragmatic solutions to address the issues of pollution, implementation, you need this kind of conventions that set the goals. According to us, we need this kind of tools that are set up during the convention.

Mrs. Celine Robert: we discussed a lot about bridging this financial gap, is there a potential to fill this financial gap?

I believe there is a challenge. We need to go on with our way on advocacy and this conference is a big contribution to this matter. Funding is available for other topics. The political will is very important, they need to decide to invest in the water sector. Keeping this in mind, we need to look at the difficulties in the sector.

There are many obstacles to private access to public funding. Poor governance is a barrier to public investment. We need to work on good governance, we need to have good strategic financial planning, and to know that the private sector invests in improving the public sector. In order to improve governance, we need grounds and subsidiaries that is why partnerships on the EU and organizations as mine is really important.

We need to improve the coordination of all the stakeholders in order to put forward complementary tools to be able to reply to funding.

One last important point: international donors and institutions as the EU are here to demonstrate that “development impacts contract”. The goal being stating that water funds are important initiatives. And international financing organizations should be part of this.

- Mrs. Chantal Marijnissen, Head of Unit Environment, Sustainable Natural Resources, Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), European Commission

- From the moderator: you heard all the discussions we had the last few days. Can you summarize up? What potential do you see in achieving this idea of water for all?

We are building an approach that we have developed in the last period; the team Europe approach. It is the way we are looking to the future programming we will be linking not only with the states but also with other stakeholders. Water is part of the Green Deal agenda so it is quite important and despite everything we said it is not small; we are talking of about 2.2 million euros. But the fact is that it is coming to the agenda, and the Green Cities agenda, and thanks to the member states on the regulation that they have and the fact that they included water and WASH on the definition of human rights this will help us to scale up this issue.

That is why we have this new financial instrument that we call the “EFST+” under the new financial regulations to provide guarantees that is also why we do blended finance. We are not satisfied with the blended finance but we will continue with this, we have also grounds.

- Is it a kind of risk-sharing? Indeed, that is the risky part of a portfolio of support for the private sector.

Another policy reform in countries that can be done is via Technical Assistance and this is a kind key role of the EU in facilitating investment.

- Providing a kind of expertise and capacity to make that happens?

Yes, we do work with member states a lot which means that more of the financial will be at country level and regional level and we will work with member states in financing programs of cooperation.

- Can you give a concrete example about it? Maybe Slovenia? Or another EU country?

We work at embassy level in the country and then we go out to talk about it. As the Minister of water, agriculture, electricity, the one that will lead is the one that has the right skills is not always the embassy. We also use our different skills sets, for instance, if Slovenia has knowledge on the water it will take the lead.

- Mrs. Celine Robert, do you have a concrete example of how the EU works with the partners?

Yes, we have quite a few examples on the French side, at AFD we make proposals to the EU, for example, the project in Cambodia, where we could bring the funds to a commercial bank and the EU brought the grounds, it was teamwork. Also, I can think about Senegal where we will work with public policy loans, we tried to work as much as possible with the strength of the several finance tools.

- Mr. Ben Ampomah, can you add something to this about the teamwork?

In Chad we are looking on a basic level, in terms of transboarding cooperation, we look at the level of the most vulnerable people in society and ensure that all these things actually go on.

- From the moderator: institutions, private sector, government, Team Europe, NGOs, are able to be in moderate contact with people on the table to dialogue. Do you have an example where you see NGOs playing an integral part in this process?

Yes, in Ghana where NGOs are playing a key role especially in the sanitation area. They are helping to achieve the sanitation goals, what we are doing is that we set up something we call “local keepers” which means bringing together the manufacturers, sanitation partner and artisans (carpenters, etc.) coming together as a team to ensure that from the beginning to the end the services are going to the population. Toilet facilities are one example of this collaboration.

- Moderator to Mr. Pedro Arrojo-Agudo, it is a question of filling the gap, right?

It is a complex issue and a democratic challenge. Of course, we need funds but not only. A practical reference is the water fund for Latin America, an initiative from Spain. Based on the principles of sustainable management. This fund has basic issues, having non-profit promoters based on the ground; the key issue for this kind of project is to be implemented by empowering local institutions, and populations participating especially in poor populations. So, this money is not only for the facilities but for people getting involved in.

- Moderator to Mr. Pedro Arrojo-Agudo: can you tell me a story?

For instance, in Northeast Brazil, where they say let’s go for a huge transfer for the San Francisco river, but people from the ground say, not let’s go for harvesting the rain. Thousands of people organized their own solution. The main issue is that there is building capacity, their capacity on the territory and they solved the problem for around 1 million families by themselves, in an extremely arid place in a climate change situation.

- How much hope you have that you can multiply this case?

To multiply this kind of experience we have to change our approach. The UN principles are led to this key issue of “leaving no one behind” it is for everyone, we talk about transparency, participation, democracy. We need to reinforce the UN, it is not a problem of business, it is global democracy as the core of the global democratic governance that we need more in front of global challenges like the one of COVID.



- US government is re-joining the climate course, and there is going to be biodiversity in China later this year.

- Mr. Chantal Marijnissen: DG Environment is going to take the lead. We are the outside staff of the event and we are taking an integrated approach. We propose the Green Deal and we have a project called "Nature Africa" that includes water bases. We want integration approaches to restore landscapes; we cannot do that without thinking about water.

- Chris: Who is really talking about water? That is why we are doing this conference. Do we have to move the goal of SDG again?

- Mrs. Chantal Marijnissen: We are doing it now. We learn a lot of lessons like working with workers operations when we work in sectors like water it should be fully integrated. We need to take integrated approaches to avoid investing money in less important things.

- Question to Mr. Pedro Arrojo-Agudo: This is linked to the UN, We are approaching the SDG time-limited, do you think that we will need to push again those goals that we are not achieving?

There are 5 measures to accelerate this situation, we are talking of SDG is a human rights. It is an obligation. I would like to make a comment regarding linking human rights, drinking water, and climate change, and climate change is linked to the water sector so that is why the ecological transition should be also an economical transition. That is why the Climate Adaptation Summit scheduled next week can be crucial in order to promote the EU.

- Mrs. Chantal Marijnissen: the UK has got to us because they are hosting the COP at the end of the year, they want to focus on the climate change summit, they want to talk about forests and of course water is also part of the conversation that we can engage. Under our financial regulations, we have a target to reach regarding climate changes: 40% of our finance has to be climate-compatible and it is applied to all sectors.

- Question to Celine Robert, what is the next step on the participation of your agency, in promoting water access?

I do not know if there will be a next step because this is a permanent process, we are talking together and working together, but for my agency, this budget agreement will be monitored for us. The next step is to keep going on a day by day basis in our working on the ground to find synergies and commentaries. The EU budget framework will be crucial if it gives access to all the sectors.

Yes, I guess your organization will be present at the Conference with the French Government to put forward solutions to promote new approaches.

This territorial approach is quite natural when you deal with water. I believe that we need to increase the visibility of water. Yes, it is not an easy task, we know that there are economic benefits when investing in water. There are benefits in several areas, we cannot protect biodiversity without sanitation.

We need to push the political commitment and we have all to do that.

- Chris comments: what are the nexuses with security and water security? I was in Somalia in the 90s and at this time, there was a conflict and also the conflict is related to water. In Syria, the conflict is also related to water.

And that is why institution as the French they are working on all those topics in an indirect way, but that is why we are encouraging the government to look at the full picture and work in cooperation in order to reach a better distribution of water to prevent geopolitical conflicts.

- Ben Ampomah: how urgent is it that we try to reach the SDGs, as soon as we can? What sense of urgency you see on the ground and what is the link if you do not have water security you do not have security?

Yes, water cooperation is necessary for peace. Water should be in the agenda and water governance is fundamental if you want to achieve the SDGs; we need to build partnerships and know how to support infrastructure to avoid conflicts, to improve water governance. We need to look at the issues of peacebuilding in the water sector targeting the vulnerable. But we need to improve the livelihoods of the people before achieving peace.

- Mrs. Chantal Marijnissen: can you inject some sense of urgency here, as well?

It is urgent, that is for sure, and as what Pedro Arrojo-Agudo was saying, we need to support this acceleration program of the UN. We are in the middle of the programming. It will take at least 6 months to be sure that we present a good proposal on water with Slovenia. That will help us to move forward. We know it is urgent, we have our procedures to follow and linking water to security is a good way. This integrative approach including water in our agenda will help us to reach our targets.

- The Great Green Wall, how important is it for the French agenda?

This is very important, a strong commitment has been made, I cannot tell you more about this because I am not involved in it, but it will be a great angle for us to talk of water because it is a link, we cannot separate them.

- Mrs. Chantal Marijnissen: INTPA is monitoring this closely, and this is local and it has a landscape approach around agriculture, forestry and it should be launched by local authorities and populations. And in countries, it is going to be an added value, i.e. in Ethiopia, Niger and other countries. These countries were in a stream famine in the 80s and now they have water and the landscape has changed. We hope we can do the same in other countries.

- Question from the moderator: there is a reason for hope? Do you have any goals for the following 5 years?

- Pedro Arrojo-Agudo: I have a lot of concerns, I am building my first thematic report before the first council in Geneva, and the first report will be an analysis in the context and be building the planning of my all mandate. I will be talking about the water crises in the water world (I presented it as a paradox: a crisis water in the blue planet) and the other one is that water enters into a trade in the future markets in Wall Street, because water is just a commodity just like petrol. As people said because water is a commodity and not petrol but it is not because water is a human right and petrol is not a human right. We are going to enter a speculation period of water as we had with the speculations with food.

I am sending a question on water, that maybe the EU can clarify, we need to precise the minimum vital amount of water for the most vulnerable people. We need to have laws and rules for this. This is a concrete question, and we cannot have concrete legislation.

We need to have and respect rules and laws in order to avoid the risk of stopping water. Colombia has done it, the supreme court has done it, and we need to do it, we have to do it in Europe, the Global South is not far from us, we have to talk about refugees, slams in big cities, and millions of climate migrants in the developing countries and I am preparing a lot of reports on this issue.

- Thanks to the entire panel and the interesting result on developing great ideas on the discussion of these last 4 days. Now we are going to the closing:

### Closing remarks

- Reflections by: Ana Novak, Development Cooperation Counsellor, Permanent Representation of Slovenia to the EU

Thanks to all for these 4 days of conferences. Thanks to Portugal also. I come from a country where water is really important. We often talk about it. Putting water as a priority for the Slovenian presidency was quite a natural decision, we will be building on the discussion and results. With the private sector, we will organize technical seminars.

The Slovenia presidency will be guided by the ambition to add water systematically and comprehensibly in the EU external action and including it by highlighting the 3 nexuses: humanitarian, development, and peace nexus.

We will do our must for a unified EU 27 position. Slovenia is aware they need to achieve Agenda 2030 to mainstream water. The new instruments and the new programming cycle including the Team Europe initiative will provide an excellent opportunity to do it so.

- Closing by: Carla Montesi, Director for Green Deal and Digital Agenda, Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), European Commission

Congratulations on your moderation. Thanks to all participants, speakers, organizers, everybody, I am very proud of all discussions. During this event we were able to count on the organization, on the government, and also thanks to the Portugal presidency. I also want to thank all partners that helped to organize and co-organize the event.

It is difficult to give a conclusion, but these 4 days were a real possibility to put on the table the critical importance of water for all, and water is a clear priority for all. We have been looking and talking of best practices, to the right approaches, to the innovation and all these debates will help us to define our future intervention.

So, clearly, it was a very useful discussion, I can add that clearly we all agreed that water is one of the most important global challenges and water is at the heart of the Green Deal, and

has a strong relation to security, climate change, sustainability, peace and security, pandemic crisis. So the link of all these policies is very important and when all these links are established it helps us to put on the table all these subjects in the different summits.

During these days we heard about financing, the gap, concrete initiatives at all levels (political, private, social level) regarding financing and solutions. Solutions are there. We talk also of challenges, which are numerous. I will mention only one: ensuring the consistency of our approach, we have to avoid the fact that different governments or stakeholders deal with this subject in their own way. The keyword is an integrated way to face all the challenges that we have in front of us. All we need to tackle and avoid is solo. We all agree that it is a clear necessity that we speed up our efforts, scaling up our efforts and the EU is engaged to do it. We need to have a more systematic approach and subsiding in interlinking all the approaches and biggest priorities. It is a must to assure at EU level and we want to mobilize all the actors in order to achieve it.

I want to mention the initiative that will link to our financing, we just sign a new contract with the FO about finance, the climate investing tool about 20 million for a project where it will be mobilized not only for technical assistance and governance but it is really very important to mobilize the private sector and all institutions. It will allow us to leverage up to 2 million euros to water. Water is not only a subject for governments but for the private sector.

The second project is the framework 9 million with the UN. We send a call for proposal for water operators, it is an important tool for improving the investment climate to water. These two contracts are important for this sector that is why she wants to mention them. EU wants to continue the collaboration with all the member states, the non-European stakeholders and institutions, and all want to improve the water sector. A last call to the member states, that we want to work on implementing it for the next 7 years for the SDGs and with the Team Europe initiative we will have opportunities to collaborate together with all the sectors. Today what we need is huge new initiatives that will have an impact on our partnership with the different countries in the world. If we work together we will be able to achieve all our goals. The last word about the sense of urgency: water is an important key element in our big challenges that we have all in front of us. This year is the year of all high-level summits, she mentioned some of them, and all these summits will have a comment subject: the water sector. So this is why it is important to tackle the water sector in an integrated way.

Let us continue to work together and pull an effort to put water in the heart of our goals and partnerships.

Many thanks for having contributed to these sessions and the seminar and thanks to all. I hope to see you very soon in all the debates we have in front of us

## Q & R :

- Niclas Gottmann - DG INTPA à Conférenciers et participants (2:48 PM)

Please find further information on all of the speakers in our Closing here: <https://waterandbeyond.b2match.io/page-3481>

- Niclas Gottmann - DG INTPA à Conférenciers et participants (2:54 PM)

You will be able to find everything related to 'Water and Beyond: EU transformative approaches for international partnerships' on our dedicated Capacity4Dev space. We have been, and will continue to, upload presentations and further background information of the sessions here: [https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/public-water\\_and\\_sanitation](https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/public-water_and_sanitation)

- Lars Skov Andersen à Conférenciers et participants (3:24 PM)

The China Europe Water Platform will be there with our focus area on Nature-based Solutions, Groundwater-based Rural Water Supply and Village-level wastewater treatment. Lars Andersen, CEWP / Danish Water Forum

- Sara Ahrari (Simavi, NL) à Conférenciers et participants (3:29 PM)

<https://www.cas2021.com/>

- Sara Ahrari (Simavi, NL) à Conférenciers et participants (3:29 PM)

25 and 26 January (next week)

- Lesha Witmer à Conférenciers et participants (3:37 PM)

this is the report Pedro was talking about: <https://www.unwater.org/un-water-launch-the-sdg-6-global-acceleration-framework/>

please give your input on the value of water on <https://www.worldwaterday.org/>

- Lars Skov Andersen à Conférenciers et participants (3:43 PM)

Village-level water supply should be owned by communities not authorities.

- Sonja Koepfel à Conférenciers et participants (3:49 PM)

UN-Water will publish a brief on the SDG6 progress in advance of the High-level event on water by the President of the General Assembly on 18 March 2021 and then the 2023 global water conference. For acceleration actions see also: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgactions/about>

- Sonja Koepfel à Conférenciers et participants (3:49 PM)

For information on the previously mentioned water conventions: <https://www.unwater.org/publications/the-united-nations-global-water-conventions-fostering-sustainable-development-and-peace/> and [www.unece.org/env/water](http://www.unece.org/env/water)

- Yael Mason à Conférenciers et participants (3:57 PM)

Thank you so much for organizing this very important event on a topic which is crucial to everyone, with so many interesting presentations, talks and discussion.