

THE WATER IMPERATIVE FOR CLIMATE ACTION

MESSAGE TO NATIONAL AND GLOBAL LEADERS ATTENDING COP 27

As governments and other leaders of the world are meeting these days at COP 27, you are dealing with an unprecedented confluence of challenges, including crises of food security, water security, particularly in water scarce regions, energy security, climate change and biodiversity loss, pandemic impacts, economic pressures, natural disasters, and conflicts.

Since climate change is already worsening many of the above conditions, there is no time to lose to reduce emissions and limit further impacts. In fact, as the atmosphere passes one degree of warming above pre-industrial levels, sea levels rise and the cryosphere melts, the effects of climate change are being felt as never before. Resultant flooding, heatwaves, droughts, storms and sea level rise worldwide will progressively worsen as warming continues towards 1.5 degrees and beyond.

Despite this outlook, there is room for optimism. The improved management of water resources can directly contribute to achieving wins on all these fronts, in three ways:

First, by reducing climate-induced disaster risks. Hydrometeorological monitoring and forecasting systems provide early warning of floods, droughts, and other hazards. Better management of wetlands, dams, and other water storages, with adequate safeguards, provides options for precautionary measures and emergency responses when such events happen. We call on you to prioritise early warning systems for floods, droughts and other water-related hazards as well as optimise water storages (green and grey infrastructure) in your disaster risk reduction strategies.

Second, by enhancing climate change resilience and security of your society. Well-managed water contributes to human rights and livelihoods, economic development, poverty reduction, job creation, public health, gender equality and maintenance of biodiversity. A supportive regulatory framework that fosters innovation including by the private sector and facilitates private-public cooperation on water can play a key role. In the case of transboundary water basins, cooperative water management fosters cross-border harmony and cooperation. Conserving and managing water-related ecosystems plays a critical role. We call on you to take into account current and future freshwater availability, in the context of rising demand, in allocating water to different sectors and meeting your societal and environmental priorities and your climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.

Third, by reducing emissions. Water is essential for lowering emissions and capturing carbon. Water is a necessary feedstock for hydrogen production and to grow plants for biofuels. Well planned hydropower can provide clean energy at many locations while balancing with other water needs and minimizing social and environmental impacts. Solar and wind power can be stabilised through water management. Well-managed effluents and other wastewater enables reuse and reduces emissions of methane and nitrous oxide, as does well-managed water in paddy fields and other irrigation systems, wetlands and reservoirs. Water service providers can also improve their water and energy efficiency, reduce their reliance on fossil fuels for their water treatment and distribution, and low emission pumping, desalination and water harvesting infrastructure can be promoted. We call on you to acknowledge the important contribution water can make to climate mitigation and adaptation and to emphasise this and the importance of protecting, conserving and restoring water and water-related ecosystems in the negotiated outcome document for COP27.

To achieve these benefits, your government will need effective policies, knowledge and tools to manage water for multiple objectives in the rapidly changing climate. Such policies must also be made inclusive to particularly include vulnerable populations such as women, youth and marginalised people, recognising their role as key stakeholders of water resources management. They need to follow a full-systems view and consider impacts across sectors. [Our Action Plan for an Integrated Water and Climate Agenda](#) proposes a global pathway for many key elements of this endeavour.

With these policies, knowledge and tools in place, your water investments can serve your government's broader climate objectives. Your Ministers can consider the contribution of water when they are developing climate strategies for their sectors.

While water has not been seen as part of the solution in previous COPs, water can be a problem-solver for your climate actions. You can challenge this forthcoming COP to recognise and validate the contribution improved water outcomes can make to achieving Paris Agreement goals.

There is no time to waste. Now is the time to get serious about water as an imperative for climate action.

Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, 8 November 2022



Mr. Emomali Rahmon
President, Republic of
Tajikistan



Mr. János Áder
Former President, Hungary



Mrs. Hilda Heine
Former President, Republic
of the Marshall Islands



Mr. Komi Sélom Klassou
Former Prime Minister,
Republic of Togo



Mr. Han Seung-soo
Former Prime Minister,
Republic of Korea



Mr. Hani Sewilam
Minister of Water Resources
and Irrigation, Egypt



**Mr. Carl-Hermann Gustav
Schlettwein**
President AMCOW; Minister,
Republic of Namibia



Mr. Mark Harbers
Minister of Infrastructure
and Water Management,
Kingdom of the
Netherlands



Mr. Abdelkébir Zahoud
Former State Secretary for
Water and Environment,
Kingdom of Morocco



Mrs. Hannele Pokka
Professor; Former Minister,
Republic of Finland



Mr. Gilbert F. Houngbo
Director-General, ILO



Mr. Petteri Taalas
Secretary-General, WMO



Mr. Howard Bamsey
Former Chair, Global
Water Partnership



Mr. Matthias Berninger
SVP Public Affairs &
Sustainability, BAYER



Mrs. Lindsey Blodgett
Former President, World
Youth Parliament for Water