

Launch of the Global Water Bankruptcy Report and Water Policy Roundtable ahead of the High-level Preparatory Meeting for the 2026 United Nations Water Conference

20 January 2026, 15:00 – 16:30 ET

Conference Room 8

United Nations Headquarters, New York

Concept Note

Water is foundational to sustainable development, human well-being, peaceful societies and planetary health. It underpins food and energy systems, public health, resilient livelihoods, ecosystem integrity and climate resilience. When water systems fail, the ripple effects undermine development progress, heighten vulnerabilities and erode human security. In a period marked by climate change, biodiversity loss, desertification, and widening inequalities, water insecurity has emerged as a systemic risk that increasingly constrains progress across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Despite longstanding recognition of water's centrality in global policy debates and its inclusion in Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6), water governance remains fragmented across sectors, scales and institutions. There is a growing need to rethink global water priorities in ways that are science-based and aligned with emerging hydrological realities.

At this critical juncture in the preparatory process for the **2026 UN Water Conference (2–4 December 2026)**, co-hosted by **Senegal and the United Arab Emirates**, and ahead of the **high-level preparatory meeting in Dakar, Senegal (26–27 January 2026)**, the United Nations system and Member States must accelerate efforts to align commitments, investments and partnerships with current water realities. This year's High-Level Political Forum will further assess progress on SDG 6 and explore pathways to accelerate implementation in advance of the 2026 Conference.

As the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH) marks 30 years of advancing science, policy and capacity development on water, environment and health, this milestone provides an important moment for reflection on the state of global water systems and the challenges ahead. In this context, UNU-INWEH's new flagship report, highlights how the sustained overdraft of water systems—drawing on both renewable flows and long-term natural storage beyond safe limits—has pushed many basins and aquifers into a post-crisis condition in which historical baselines are no longer attainable without transformative change.

This timely roundtable co-hosted by **UNU-INWEH and the Permanent Missions of Canada to the United Nations** provides an opportunity to reflect on key challenges and emerging opportunities presented in the report and ahead of upcoming milestone events, helping shape ambition, priorities and collective action for 2026, 2028 and beyond.

This Water Policy Roundtable, aims to:

- Present the key findings and policy implications of the UNU-INWEH report **Global Water Bankruptcy: Living Beyond Our Hydrological Means in the Post-Crisis Era**
- Discuss potential strategies for elevating water as a **global priority** and a **catalyst for cooperation**
- Facilitate an exchange of views on **emerging opportunities in the water policy space** and pathways to accelerate SDG 6 implementation within evolving policy and governance frameworks – as we approach the conclusion of the **Water Action Decade in 2028**
- Brief participants on the **upcoming Dakar preparatory meeting** and the status and ambitions of the **2026 and 2028 UN Water Conference** process, including priorities, opportunities for engagement and key policy considerations

Tentative Agenda

Moderator:	Dr. David Passarelli, Director of UNU Centre for Policy Research (UNU-CPR)
15:00 – 15:05	Opening and Welcome remark by the Permanent Mission of Canada to the New York - H. E. David Lametti, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations in New York
15:05 – 15:10	Briefing from co-Hosts of 2026 UN Water Conference - H.E. Coly Seck, Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations
15:10 – 15:15	<i>Remarks by special guest Honourable Terry Duguid, Member of Parliament and Chair of Standing Committee of Natural Resources, House of Commons of Canada</i>
15:15 – 15:25	Presentation of the UNU-INWEH Report Global Water Bankruptcy: Living Beyond Our Hydrological Means in the Post-Crisis Era - Prof. Kaveh Madani, Director of UNU-INWEH
15:25 – 15:35	Multilateralism and Water Processes <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Intervention by Ms. Ligia Noronha, Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the New York Office of UNEP○ Updates by UN-Water Representative – Ms. Leanne Burney

- 15:35 – 16:10 Member State Statements and Interventions [3 minutes]
- Tajikistan - H.E. Jonibek Hikmat, Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations in New York
- Zimbabwe – H.E. Taonga Mushayavanhu, Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe to the United Nations in New York
- Pakistan - Mr. Muhammad Usman Iqbal Jadoon, Ambassador / Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations in New York
- Switzerland – Mr. Oliver Hoehne, Deputy Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations in New York
- Others –
- 16:10 – 16:20 Other Partners [3 minutes]
- IUCN – Ms. Sofie Sandstrom Jaffe, Permanent Observer of IUCN to the UN
- Women in Water Diplomacy Network – Ms. Elizabeth A. Koch, Process Support Team Lead
- Water and Sanitation in Africa - Dr Nabhit Kapur, Permanent Representative for Water and Sanitation for Africa to United Nations
- 16:20 – 16:30 Closing Remarks by Dr. David Passarelli, Director of UNU-CPR