Despite some progress, billions still lack access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene. Water scarcity is worsening in many parts of the world due to conflicts and climate change. Water pollution poses a significant challenge to human health and the environment in many countries. Achieving universal coverage by 2030 will require a 6-fold increase in current global rates of progress on drinking water, a 5-fold increase for sanitation, and a 3-fold increase for hygiene.
The UN 2023 Water Conference co-hosted by the Governments of Tajikistan and the Kingdom of the Netherlands in March 2023 created a watershed moment to take action and scale up solutions to the global water crisis.

As a main outcome of the UN 2023 Water Conference, the Water Action Agenda is the collection of water-related voluntary commitments aimed at accelerate progress in the second half of the Water Action Decade (2018-2028) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015-2030). Launched by the Conference’s co-hosts during the Dushanbe Conference in June 2022, the Water Action Agenda encourages Member States and other stakeholders across all sectors, industries, and interests to make their voluntary commitments to address the global water challenges in a manner that is inclusive, cross-sectoral and action-oriented. While the voluntary commitments were gathered in the lead-up to the UN 2023 Water Conference and during the Conference itself, new commitments will continue to be added to the Water Action Agenda also after the Conference and up until the end of the Water Action Decade 2018-2028 and the 2030 Agenda.

SDG 6 Capacity Development Initiative is an inter-agency coordination platform on freshwater, sanitation, and hygiene-related capacity development work co-coordinated by UN DESA and UNESCO, with 35 institutional members. It enables the UN system and its multi-stakeholder partners to “deliver as one” in supporting countries to develop capacities to accelerate progress towards SDG 6.

In 2020, UN-Water’s offer to the UN Country Teams and Resident Coordinators was initiated in coordination with the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO) to better leverage the full capacities of the UN system in countries systematically and at scale in support of SDG 6. UN-Water Members and Partners have supported on topics including interagency coordination, the Common Country Analyses (CCAs), capacity development, innovation and integration of the human rights to water and sanitation.

UN-Water Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG 6 (IMI-SDG6) seeks to support countries in monitoring water- and sanitation-related issues within the framework of the 2030 Agenda and in compiling country data to report on global progress towards SDG 6. Through increasing availability and holistic analysis of high-quality data, the initiative aims to accelerate SDG implementation through better informed water and sanitation policies, regulations, planning and investment at all levels.

The UN-Water SDG 6 Data Portal brings all the United Nations’ water and sanitation information into one place, including visualization and analytical tools to support decision-makers, advisors, technical professionals, researchers and students.

The Water Resilience Coalition, an industry-driven, CEO-led initiative by UN Global Compact CEO Water Mandate, aims to elevate the mounting crisis of global water stress and its connection to climate change to the top of the corporate agenda and to preserve the world’s freshwater resources through collective action in water-stressed basins and through ambitious, quantifiable resilience goals.

To follow up on the UN 2023 Water Conference, UN-Water Members and Partners developed the SDG 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023. The Report provides a “blueprint” to accelerate progress on water and sanitation, including the implementation of Water Action Agenda commitments. It is a concise guide to delivering concrete results – offering actionable policy recommendations directed towards senior decision-makers in Member States, other stakeholders, and the UN System to get the world on track to achieve SDG 6 by 2030.