



High-Level Preparatory Meeting for the 2026 UN Water Conference in Dakar: High-Level Opening Panel: Accelerating the Implementation of SDG 6 – How can the 2026 UN Water Conference sustainably change the arc of progress?

People

Deadline: 26 Jan 2026

Type:	Side Event
Location:	Dakar, Senegal
Date:	26 Jan 2026
Duration:	1 Days
Programme Area:	Other
Website:	https://unitar.org/about/news-stories/news/unitar-advances-global-water-agenda-...
Price:	\$0.00
Event Focal Point Email:	ebru.sokullu@unitar.org
Partnership:	The World Bank Group, , IFAD, , UN Water members

BACKGROUND

The High-Level Preparatory Meeting for the 2026 United Nations Water Conference will take place as a critical milestone in the lead-up to the Conference, providing a strategic platform to align political priorities and operational pathways for advancing global water action. As water challenges intensify, particularly in vulnerable regions, the Meeting will contribute to shaping a coherent and action-oriented global agenda for SDG 6.

UNITAR, through its Global Water Academy, will engage in this process to advance capacity development as a central pillar for accelerating progress on water and sanitation. The Meeting will also serve as a key moment to strengthen linkages between policy, finance, and implementation mechanisms in preparation for the 2026 Conference.

EVENT OBJECTIVES

The Meeting will aim to:

- Take stock of global progress on integrated water resources management;
- Highlight the importance of cooperative frameworks for climate resilience and water security;
- Formulate concrete policy messages and partnerships to inform the outcomes of the 2026 United Nations Water Conference;
- Strengthen political alignment and multilateral cooperation across governments, UN entities, and stakeholders;
- Advance capacity development as a strategic enabler for achieving SDG 6;
- Promote investment readiness and the development of bankable water projects.

CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

The Meeting will be structured as a high-level, multi-track engagement comprising plenary sessions, interactive dialogues, and side events. It will convene senior government representatives, UN leadership, international organisations, financial institutions, and civil society actors.

Key components will include:

- A high-level opening panel to define the political vision and priorities for accelerating the implementation of SDG 6;
- A dedicated side event on operationalising impact through the SDG 6 Capacity

Development Initiative, showcasing country-level experiences;

- The launch of the UN Water Conference Academic Hub, aimed at strengthening the science-policy interface;
- A high-level interactive dialogue on “Investments in Water,” focusing on financing mechanisms, enabling conditions, and private sector engagement;
- Bilateral engagements and field visits to strengthen institutional partnerships and regional cooperation.

Across these components, key themes will include:

- Capacity development as a foundational driver of water governance and service delivery;
- Bridging gaps between scientific knowledge and policy decision-making;
- Addressing systemic barriers to water investment, including limited technical capacity and fragmented delivery systems;
- Strengthening investment frameworks through tariff reforms, de-risking instruments, and blended finance;
- Enhancing climate resilience and water security through cooperative approaches;
- Promoting inclusive participation, including youth engagement and representation from the Global South;
- Strengthening institutional partnerships and South-South cooperation.

METHODOLOGY

The Meeting will adopt a high-level, multi-stakeholder and solutions-oriented approach, combining political dialogue with technical and operational discussions.

The methodology will include:

- High-level panel discussions to frame strategic priorities and political commitments;
- Expert-led side events to showcase practical implementation models and country experiences;
- Interactive dialogues to facilitate exchange between policymakers, practitioners, and financial actors;
- Knowledge-sharing sessions to bridge science, policy, and practice through initiatives such as the Academic Hub;
- Rapporteur-led synthesis of discussions to capture key insights, emerging trends, and policy recommendations;
- Bilateral consultations and field engagements to strengthen partnerships and

contextual understanding.

This approach will prioritise actionable outcomes, cross-sectoral collaboration, and the integration of capacity development into all aspects of water governance and investment planning.

TARGETED AUDIENCE

The Meeting will bring together a high-level and diverse group of stakeholders, including:

- Government representatives and policymakers;
- United Nations agencies and senior leadership;
- International and regional organisations;
- Development finance institutions and private sector actors;
- Academic and research institutions;
- Civil society organisations and water networks;
- Youth representatives and professional associations in the water sector.

This broad stakeholder engagement will ensure that discussions reflect diverse perspectives and contribute to inclusive, evidence-based, and implementable outcomes for the 2026 United Nations Water Conference.