



**UN**  
**2023 WATER**  
**CONFERENCE**

NEW YORK  
22-24  
MARCH  
2023

SIDE EVENT

# Groundwater: An Invisible Cross-Sectoral Fundament for Implementation of the Water Action Agenda



24 March, 8:00-9:15



Trusteeship Room,  
UN HQs, New York

# PROGRAMME

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## Master of Ceremony - Opening remarks and introduction to the programme of the event

- **Ms Alice Aureli**, Chief, Groundwater Sustainability and Water Cooperation Section, Division of Water Sciences, UNESCO

**Rapporteurs: Ms Karen Villholth and Mr José Luis Martin Bordes**, UNESCO invited experts

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## High level statements from the side event lead organisers

- **Hon. Mr Carl H.G. Schlettwein**, Minister of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform of Namibia
- **Hon. Mr Mzwinila Kefentse**, Ministry of Lands and Water Affairs of Botswana
- **H.E. Mr Senzo Mchunu**, Minister of Water and Sanitation of South Africa

## “UN-Water Joint Message and Call for Action” and main findings from the Groundwater Summit

- **Ms Karen Villholth**

## Keynote presentation: Groundwater: An Invisible Cross-Sectoral Fundament for Implementation of the Water Action Agenda

- **Mr Neno Kukuric**, UNESCO invited expert

## Panel A – Data

### Strengthening Groundwater Monitoring: Data and Information in a Changing World

#### Introduction of the topic and facilitation of the debate

- **Ms Elisabeth Lictevout**, Director, IGRAC

#### Panellists

- **Mr Dominique Berod**, Head, Earth System Monitoring Division, WMO
  - **Mr Teodoro Estrela**, Director General of Water, Ministry of Ecological Transition of Spain
  - **Mr Joel Podgorski**, Senior Scientist, EAWAG and WWQA/FOG
  - **Ms Jodie Miller**, Section Head, Department of Nuclear Sciences and Applications, IAEA
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## **Panel B - Innovation**

### **Innovative Practices, New Technologies, Social engagement and Transformative Policies for Integrated Solutions for Groundwater**

#### **Introduction of the topic and facilitation of the debate**

- **Ms Jane Dottridge**, Secretary General, IAH

#### **Panellists**

- **Ms Myeonghwa Kang**, Deputy Director, Ministry of Environment of Republic of Korea
- **Mr Günter Liebel**, Secretary General, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management of the Republic of Austria
- **Mr Peter van der Keur**, EuroGeoSurveys

## **Panel C - Capacity Development**

### **Improving Groundwater Knowledge and Capacity at Local, National and International Level for sustainable development**

#### **Introduction of the topic and facilitation of the debate**

- **Elena López Gunn**, Director, ICATALIST

#### **Panellists**

- **Mr Gaetano Casale**, Manager Liaison Office, IHE Delft
- **Ms Miriam Haritz**, Deputy Director General, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection of Germany
- **Mr James Sauramba**, Executive Director, SADC-GMI

## **Panel D - Finance**

### **Informed Investments for Groundwater Monitoring and Solution Implementation**

#### **Introduction of the topic and facilitation of the debate**

- **Mr Neil Dhot**, Executive Director, Aquafed

#### **Panellists**

- **Mr François Bertone**, Senior Water Resources Management Specialist, World Bank
- **Ms Sasha Koo-Oshima**, Deputy Director, Land and Water Division, FAO
- **Ms Astrid Hillers**, Program Manager, International Waters, GEF

## Panel E - Governance

### Groundwater Governance: Fundamental for Collaboration across Sectors and Boundaries

#### Introduction of the topic and facilitation of the debate

- **Ms Sharon Megdal**, Director WRRRC, University of Arizona

#### Panellists

- **Mr Kazufumi Ohnishi**, Mayor of Kumamoto City, Japan,
- **H.E. Mr Fernando A. López**, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of El Salvador
- **Ms Mariet Verhoef-Cohen**, President, WfWP
- **Mr Håkan Tropp**, Programme Director Capacity Development, SIWI

## Groundwater Youth Network

- **Mr Mahmoud Radwan**, Representative Groundwater Youth Network

## Q&A- Interventions from the floor

Facilitator: **Ms Alice Aureli**

## Closing Remarks and Commitments

- **Ms Karen Villholth**
- **Mr Federico Properzi**, Chief Technical Advisor, UN-Water

## Organizing Partners

**Lead Organizer:** Namibia, Co-leads: Botswana, South Africa

**Other Member States:** Austria, Bahamas, El Salvador, Finland, Germany, Republic of Korea, Slovenia, Spain, St Kitts and Nevis, Switzerland, Uruguay, Uganda

**Partner organizations:** UN-Water, UNESCO, AMCOW, AQUAFED, BRGM, CeReGAS, Deltares, EAWAG, EuroGeoSurveys, WREG, FAO, GEF, GEUS, IAEA, IAH, ICATALIST, IGRAC, IHE Delft, IWRA, JWF, KIGAM Korea, New Mexico WRRRC, ORASECOM, OSS, SADC-GMI, SIWI, The Water Institute, UNDP, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCO GWYN, UNESCWA, UN-Habitat, University of Arizona WRRRC, WfWP, WMO, World Bank.

## Context

Groundwater is fundamental to life on earth. Yet, we still don't know sufficient about the state of aquifers globally and we keep depleting and polluting them. Our aquifers are our freshwater "bank", and in this metaphor we're robbing the bank and polluting and abusing the leftovers – undermining the key role groundwater plays in stabilizing water availability during climatic and human-induced adversities. And we're not aware and precognizant. This asks for more than a campaign and the science coming together, this needs a whole- of-society transformative approach with political will and scaled up action. For water, food, energy, and biodiversity security. For our economies and cities. For mitigating climate change and investing in resilience and adaptation. For security, peace, and prosperity at large.

Since groundwater is everywhere, but invisible, a much stronger groundwater cooperation across sectors and administrative boundaries is an imperative; no siloed attitude can be tolerated any more. Therefore, we suggest here a groundwater coordination platform in the framework of the UN-Water community to facilitate cooperation, knowledge generation and sharing, and raising awareness globally. Since we cannot manage what we don't measure, improving availability, quality, and open access and sharing of groundwater data and information will be an underlying objective of all specific actions assisted by the platform. This will bring groundwater monitoring in focus, "a neglected area", according to the SDG 6 progress assessment update of 2021. The platform will also contribute to increasing the number of transboundary aquifers covered by cooperation frameworks. Joining forces under a UN-Water groundwater coordination platform will increase visibility, synergy, and awareness of the importance of groundwater, which is necessary for improving the biophysical state of aquifers and the societal benefits of global groundwater resources.

## Useful Links

[Interactive Dialog 5: Water Action Decade – Concept Paper](#)

[SDG 6 Acceleration Framework](#)

[Water Action Agenda and Registering Commitments](#)

[UN-Water Joint Message on Groundwater](#)

[UNESCO 215 Executive Board Decision on Groundwater](#)

[Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition](#)

[Open Water Data Commitment and Campaign](#)