

Placing Water at the Heart of Climate Action through Locally-led Adaptation

Co-organized by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), and the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO)

Co-Sponsored by the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)

Thursday, 23 March 2023

2:00-3:15pm

CR 6, UNHQ | In person

Background:

According to UN Water, a quarter of today's global population – 2 billion people – use unsafe drinking water sources. Half of humanity – 3.6 billion people – live without safely managed sanitation. And three out of ten people – 2.3 billion – lack basic handwashing facilities at home. Furthermore, climate- and weather-related events are causing more frequent and intense floods and droughts, where almost three quarters of all recent disasters are water related and have resulted in economic damages of almost \$700 billion USD throughout the past 20 years. Climate change exacerbates already existing stress on water resources, disrupting the hydrological cycle and changing precipitation patterns. Water related disasters not only endanger the health of communities, because of a lack of safe drinking water and sanitation, but also affect food security and livelihoods as water is crucial for food production and income generating activities. **Climate, disaster and water-related risks are intertwined and their impacts are felt most severely by vulnerable communities.**

One key solution to reducing the impacts of water related risks, for vulnerable communities, is through the implementation of early warning systems, which are proven, effective, and feasible measures to save lives. Although efforts to increase the early warning system capacity of regional and national actors are ongoing, the scale needed to achieve real impact is not sufficient. Additionally, **early warning systems alone are not sufficient; they must be linked to preparedness, early action, and longer-term locally-led adaptation measures to save the most lives.**

Without urgent, coordinated and large-scale action to tackle water related climate extremes, we will fail to deliver the Water Action Agenda and the commitments in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the UNFCCC Paris Agreement, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.

At this high-level side event, we will bring together representatives from key governments, the UN system, the IFRC network, and stakeholders to engage in a discussion on **how to ensure that investment in climate resilience is accessible to local actors**, in line with the principles of locally led adaptation. Local communities are the frontline responders in reducing climate-related disaster risk and building their own resilience, and investment in

localization is needed if the root causes of vulnerability are to be reduced. This event will propose solutions and initiatives – namely the Global Climate Resilience Platform and the Water at the Heart of Climate Action partnership - for how to overcome barriers for greater investment in locally led climate action and provide an opportunity for participants to learn about new partnership approaches that aim to build stronger resilient communities better able to manage water related hazards.

What is Global Climate Resilience Platform?

IFRC recently launched its Global Climate Resilience Platform to increase the resilience of communities most vulnerable to the changing climate by raising at least CHF 1 billion in investment and support for locally led climate action. The new initiative aims to support 500 million people globally over five-years, focusing on early warning and anticipatory action, nature-based solutions, and safety nets and shock responsive social protection. This platform incentivizes greater coordination and aims to bridge the humanitarian-development divide, while focusing on supporting a scale-up in locally led actions across the IFRC network to address climate-related disasters.

What is Water at the Heart of Climate Action Partnership?

The government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands has been leading innovative solutions to the water crisis for decades. The “Water at the Heart of Climate Action” partnership brings together a unique collaboration between the IFRC network, Netherland Red Cross, UNDRR and WMO to embrace complexity and tackle water hazards from a community perspective in a unique integrated manner. The convening partners of this initiative will work together and with local communities to design and deliver scalable solutions with the goal of building stronger, more resilient communities that are able to address and manage water related risks through integrated global, national and local action.

Objectives:

This high-level side event will bring together key governments, the UN system, the IFRC network, and stakeholders:

- 1) call for significant and urgent investment in locally led climate adaptation measures now, to protect the lives and livelihoods of billions of people worldwide, especially those, who are most vulnerable to water related climate disasters;
- 2) raise awareness of the urgent need for and importance of breaking down silos and creating incentives for greater alignment of humanitarian, development, and climate investments across the water, climate and disaster risk reduction sectors;
- 3) highlight partnerships and initiatives that aim to build community resilience to water related hazards and demonstrate how the innovate approach of these initiatives can be scaled.

Programme:

Welcoming remarks by moderator (4 mins)

- Ms. Toni-Shae Freckleton, Chief, UN Disaster Risk Reduction - Liaison Office in New York (tbc)

Opening remarks (4 mins each)

- H.E. Ms. Liesje Schreinemacher, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Kingdom of the Netherlands

- Mr. Jagan Chapagain, Secretary General, IFRC

Setting the scene – Voice from the Ground (4 mins)

- Mr. Robert Kwesiga, Secretary-General, Uganda Red Cross

Spotlight on “Placing Water at the Heart of Climate Action” partnership (3 mins each)

- Ms. Loretta Hieber Girardet, Chief, Risk Knowledge, Monitoring and Capacity-Development Branch, UNDRR
- Dr. Stefan Uhlenbrook, Director of Hydrology, Water and Cryosphere, WMO
- Mr. Derk Segaar, Director of International Assistance, Netherlands Red Cross

Complementary interventions by UN Member States and stakeholders from the floor (3 mins each)

- H.E. Carlos Mesquita, Minister of Public Works, Housing and Water Resources, Mozambique
- Ms. Brenda Mallory, Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, United States
- TBC

Closing remarks (4 mins each)

- Mr. Petteri Taalas, Secretary-General, WMO
- Ms. Mami Mizutori, Assistant Secretary-General, UNDRR
- H.E. Mr. Fatumanava-o-Upolu III Dr Pa’olelei Luteru, Permanent Representative of Samoa to the UN and Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States

Final wrap-up and thank you (2 mins)

- Mr. Jagan Chapagain, Secretary General, IFRC