

Regional Water Action Agenda 2023

Latin America and the Caribbean

Preamble

The Regional Water Action Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean is the main result of the Regional Water Dialogues 2023, as an input "Towards the United Nations Water Conference". It constitutes a compilation of the main ideas, efforts and voluntary commitments on water, expressed during the event. The Action Agenda seeks to advance and accelerate the effective progress of the countries of the region during the second half of the Decade of Action for Water 2018-2028 and contribute to the achievement of the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In particular, the Regional Water Action Agenda outlines prioritization areas and necessary endeavors to accelerate the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal No. 6, "Ensure access to water and sanitation for all" in the region, with a vision and impact in the medium and long term.

The Regional Agenda is conceived as a living instrument that can be updated and reviewed in subsequent Regional Water Dialogue events. Likewise, it can continue to convey the work and research carried out by the Regional Expert Group on Water Resources in Latin America and the Caribbean and integrate new commitments from communities and countries of the region. For this reason, all stakeholders who work on water, governments, and organizations, are urged to continue their work, intensify their efforts, expand the scope of their commitments, and strengthen the elements embodied in this Agenda.

This Agenda was built by incorporating the main contributions of more than 30 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, including 200 onsite participants and more than 2,000 virtual participants during the Regional Water Dialogues organized by ECLAC in February 2023. Participants come from diverse sectors, including the public sector (high authorities such as the vice presidency of El Salvador, 21 ministers, deputy ministers and directors of water of the region), academia, private companies, international organizations, NGOs and civil society, where the participation of youth networks, indigenous communities' representatives, as well as middle and primary education students was of relevance. They all met to analyze and discuss water issues between February 1 and 3 at the Headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, in Santiago, Chile.

The action points of this agenda also result from the 2021 and 2022 Regional Water Dialogues, as well as from prior open consultations carried out by ECLAC with various stakeholders in the region. They are also aligned with the United Nations Water Valuation Principles and are as well contained in current regional agreements:

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- The SAMOA¹ Pathway, the internationally agreed-upon program of action for Small Island Developing States (SIDS).
- The Escazú Regional Agreement on access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- The Montevideo Strategy for implementing the Regional Gender Agenda within the framework of Sustainable Development by 2030, approved by the member states of ECLAC at the XIII Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

This Regional Agenda of Action for Water aligns and reinforces various treaties, agreements and strategies around water management, and constitutes a call to action to mobilize all the political, technical and financial resources available in and for Latin America and the Caribbean. In the Regional Water Dialogues, the need and opportunity to incorporate the voices of all stakeholders were expressed, especially those of rural communities, the voices of the territories and Afro-descendant, indigenous, women, children and youth groups. This Agenda collects, strengthens, and unifies the regional perspective and voice around articulated actions to overcome the water challenges of the coming years. Likewise, during the event diverse participants expressed the need to design and ensure a more binding mechanism in the short and middle term to monitor water commitments in the region.

During the 2023 Regional Water Dialogues, it became clear that the region needs to move forward with great force in the construction of a sustainable and inclusive water management transition, which is based on four pillars of simultaneous action:

- i) Guarantee the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation through a significant boost in investment in the sector, leaving no one behind.
- ii) Promote regulatory and normative changes to ensure equitable and affordable access and thus eradicate water poverty, with innovative instruments that include social rates.
- iii) Reverse the growing negative externalities associated with pollution, overexploitation, and socio-environmental conflicts by promoting control and regulation.
- iv) Go from linear to circular management to reduce pressure on water resources, establishing a trend of decoupling between extraction and GDP.

As a transversal principle, modern, democratic, and participatory water governance in countries and territories is distinguished as a critical element to achieving the actions that follow and achieve the goals

¹ Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway (SAMOA Pathway)

of SDG 6 in the region. Accordingly, the areas of action and main commitments derived from the Regional Water Dialogues are the following:

1. Water and Sustainable Development

- ✓ Promote democratic water governance through strengthening regional, subregional, national, and local institutions and technical capacities for decision-making.
- ✓ Make visible the role of water as a vector of sustainable and transversal development for achieving all the SDGs.
- ✓ Design and implement public policies based on new models of sustainable development, production and consumption that allow progress towards economic development and water security, with particular emphasis on rural and coastal areas.
- ✓ Promote water legislation and increase public-private investment to universalize the human right to drinking water and sanitation managed with socio-environmental justice.
- ✓ Incorporate the gender perspective and the active participation of water rights holders (right holders), such as local communities, youth, indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, vulnerable groups and ecosystems.

2. Water and Climate

- ✓ Strengthen the adoption of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) practices to increase resilience to climate change and mitigate the impact of disasters.
- ✓ Design, strengthen and implement early warning systems to reduce the risk of water-related disasters in coordination with the affected communities, focusing on the Caribbean subregion.
- ✓ Promote the articulation between the water, territorial and climate sectors through more significant innovation and adoption of technologies as a means of adaptation to new environmental and climatic conditions, incorporating strategies for mitigating Climate Change, which can integrate the ancestral knowledge of indigenous communities, as well as the perspectives of communities at higher risk and vulnerability due to climate change.

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These action points are contained in the Joint Declaration CODIA-CIMHET² of water and climate authorities from all the countries of the region in the framework of the High-Level Regional Seminar "Road to the 2023 Conference" (Dominican Republic, October 26, 2022). Likewise, it agrees with the United Nations Plan "Early Warning for All" adopted during COP 27.

3. Water, Financing and Health

- ✓ Promote new investments in water quantity, quality and continuity to universalize access to safely managed water and sanitation with special emphasis on rural areas, communities far from the centers and marginal urban areas, so the public, private and/or community water operators improve the current water systems and improve the technical capacities related to water quality.
- ✓ Design incentive and regulation policies that promote innovation and the use of technologies adapted to each context and territory, using principles of circularity and conservation, using ancestral knowledge of indigenous people, as well as Nature-based Solutions, with the aim to protect natural water sources.
- ✓ Establish public-private alliances (PPP) with various actors from civil society and local communities to access financing and promote a new culture and valuation of water and promote fair rate schemes.
- ✓ Identify and take advantage of available and innovative financial opportunities, such as blended finance structures, multilateral guarantees, credits, and funds, among others.

Some of these mentioned actions are contained in the Declaration of the VI Conference of LATINOSAN 2022 (Plurinational State of Bolivia, October 12 and 13, 2022), as well as investment principles with environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria and recommendations from the 9th World Water Forum in March 2022 (Senegal).

4. Water and Regional and Territorial Cooperation

Promote regional water security through integration models that involve territories and communities subject to rights.

- ✓ Develop and implement frameworks, public-private and public-community agreements that help guarantee the sustainable use of water resources in basins and transboundary water flows, through strengthening existing institutions and creating new institutions in which legal and economic instruments, as well as social participation, do not already exist

² Conference of Ibero-American Water Directors (CODIA) and Conference of Directors of the Ibero-American Meteorological and Hydrological Services (CIMHET)

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- ✓ Harmonize political processes for decision-making, monitoring and management of shared cross-border waters, recognizing the community management and indigenous people, in a dialogue framework, following the lessons learned from the experiences of integrated basin management in the region with a focus on building inclusive water alliances.
- ✓ Generate and share information for the proper management of transboundary aquifers and basins, promoting spaces for South-South and triangular cooperation.

Part of these actions are aligned with other agreements established by the member countries of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (OTCA), the Trifinio Plan and basins in the region that have agreements and coordination mechanisms, as well as the conclusions of the 2nd Transboundary Water Symposium, held in Bolivia in December 2022, and the principles of the United Nations Water Convention.

5. Water, energy, food and ecosystems

- ✓ Promote integrated water, soil and energy management and its relationship with ecosystems as heritage that feeds productive agricultural activities, energy generation and life in human settlements. Through watercourses, waste is returned to the nature. The integrated approach promotes common intersectoral goals reflected in policies, plans and projects which highlight that without water security there cannot be food security or food sovereignty.
- ✓ Innovate in the adequacy of multisectoral coordination instances at a local, national and regional level, as well as participatory and dialogue processes for decision-making and implementation of programs and projects.
- ✓ Protect and restore essential ecosystems for the water cycle, electricity generation, food security and nutrition, such as glaciers, moorlands, and wetlands, with adequate monitoring, strengthening and community management, strengthening water funds.
- ✓ Recover ancestral food production and water-use practices that are sustainable and aligned with nature-based solutions.

Some of these efforts are embodied in multiple instruments, such as the Andean Environmental Charter, which incorporates Integrated Water Resources Management that seeks to conserve biodiversity and contain illegal mining and its pollutant effects on basins. It is also worth noting the various strategies promoted by the Central American Integration System in terms of IWRM, sustainable agriculture and climate change. Likewise, during the last FAO Regional Conference (LARC37) the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean recognized the strategic role of water in guaranteeing the sustainable functioning of agri-food systems.

6. Network and Observatory for Water Sustainability – ROSA

- ✓ The countries, and the region as a whole, value ECLAC's initiative to build and strengthen capacities for evidence-based public water policies, which will have as a sustainable product a network of water stakeholders and a regional water observatory.
- ✓ It is essential to strengthen institutional and technical capacities to implement the pillars of the water transition, through new incentives and multi-stakeholder alliances, adopting the principles of the valuing water initiative and seeking to accelerate and realign the trajectories of the countries to achieve SDG 6.
- ✓ It is essential to promote the production of quantitative information in accordance with international statistical recommendations, and the exchange of information on water matters to strengthen water policies, plans and programs and monitor their progress.

7. Brainstorming Solutions for valuing water and accelerating the achievement of SDG 6

- ✓ Raise awareness, in all spaces, about the multiple values of water and ensure that learning on how to identify them for different communities and in its many uses, is shared between sectors, communities, cities and countries.
- ✓ Promote the Principles of Valuing Water as a tool to accelerate the progress necessary to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda. It is essential to disseminate them, encourage exchange, and share the progress and cooperation on these principles in the region.
- ✓ Explain the social, cultural, environmental, and economic values associated with water throughout its cycle, generating incentives and political and socioeconomic dynamics for its management with greater efficiency and sustainability.
- ✓ Strengthen the education of children, youth and elderly on the values of water to empower different communities to participate in the creation and implementation of these solutions and improve decision-making that impacts the quality and availability of water in the context of climate change, affecting with greater strength to vulnerable communities.

Santiago de Chile, February 3, 2023.