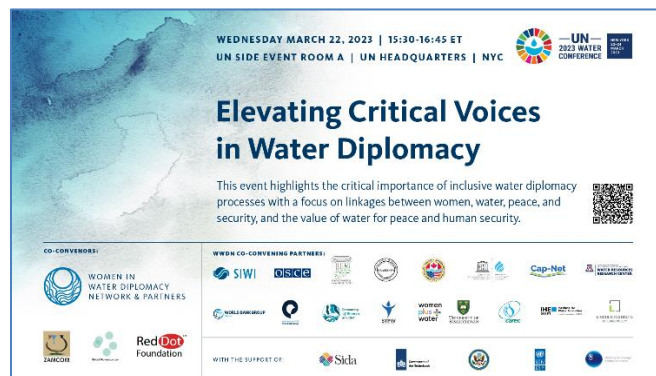




UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event Post Event Summary

Elevating Critical Voices in Water Diplomacy

March 22, 15:30, Conference Room A, UN Headquarters



Organized by:

The Women in Water Diplomacy Network and
the Red Dot Foundation, with partners:

The Zambezi Watercourse Commission (ZAMCOM), the Orange Senqu River Commission (ORASECOM); the Okavango Basin Commission (OKACOM); the International Joint Commission (IJC);); the Environmental Law Institute (ELI), the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), UNDP Cap-Net; UNESCO International Centre for Water Cooperation (ICWC); Central Asia Regional Environmental Center (CAREC); the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the World Bank Equal Aqua, The Environmental Peacebuilding Association (EnPax); the Sudanese Youth for Water Parliament; the Community of Women in Water – Latin America; Women Plus Water at the University of Saskatchewan; IHE Delft; Lincoln Institute of Land Policy; The University of Arizona Water Resources Research Center and the Global Diplomacy Lab Secretariat at the Federal Foreign Office of Germany

Background on the event:

This filled to capacity side event brought focus to the critical importance of inclusive water diplomacy processes and linkages between women, water, peace and security, and the value of water to peace and human security. The event began with warm welcomes from **Phera Ramoeli**, Executive Secretary, Permanent Okavango River Basin Water Commission (OKACOM). **Elizabeth A Koch** from the Environmental Law Institute and **Tais Reznikova** from the Regional Environmental Centre for Central

Asia (CAREC) followed with an introduction and overview of the **Women in Water Diplomacy Network**. A high-level panel of putting focus on the critical value of inclusive water diplomacy was introduced by **Ambassador Igli Hasani** and moderated by **Dr Saule Ospanova**, both of the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe and including expert panelists **Johanna Sumuvuori**, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland; **Tanya Trujillo**, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Interior, United States; **Yodit Balcha**, Women in Water Diplomacy Network Leadership Council, Ethiopia; **Commissioner Merrell-Ann Phare**, International Joint Commission, Canada, **Yogita Upadya Mumssen**, Practice Manager, Water Global Practice, World Bank; and **Dr Kathryn Bryk Friedman**, North American Arctic Policy Advisor, Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies. A short presentation from **Dr Irena Creed**, Vice-Principal Research & Innovation at University of Toronto Scarborough focused on 'Water intelligence: A prerequisite for addressing global water crises,' and the launch of a new book recognizing Women Water thought leaders from India to Canada by **ElsaMarie Dsilva**, Red Dot Foundation followed. The session concluded with a call to partnership and shared action to transform the status quo, elevate women experts and decision makers, and foster inclusive decision making in critical water and climate dialogues – with a shared reading of the '*A Rising Tide of support for women in water diplomacy*' Joint Statement read by: **Kerry Schneider**, Senior Program Manager, Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI); **Omair Ahmad**, Third Pole; **Aziza Sharofova Khamza kizi**, Women in Water Management Network, Uzbekistan; and **Viviane Kinyaga**, Orange-Senqu River Basin Commission and Women in Water Diplomacy Network Member, South Africa.

Water Action Agenda:

The event was co-convened by a broad consortium of partners led by the Women in Water Diplomacy Network with focus on the objectives of the Network's [Global Strategy 'A Path Forward for Women, Water, Peace and Security'](#). At the conclusion of the event, Women in Water Diplomacy Network members and supporters read aloud the Network's commitment to the UN Water Action Decade entitled '*A Rising Tide of Support for Women in Water Diplomacy*' developed by Network Members as part of the Global Strategy and available at <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/rising-tide-support-women-water-diplomacy>.

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- Research indicates that the inclusion of women in negotiation processes increases the likelihood of durable peace accords and sustained peace and prosperity following conflict.
- Women are disproportionately affected by armed conflicts, water insecurity and climate change yet they are greatly underrepresented as negotiators, witnesses, mediators, observers and signatories to peace accords.
- The persistent lack or absence of women's meaningful participation in peace and security dialogues must be a high concern for all seeking sustainable peace and development.
- The need for water related mediation is growing every day as water insecurity affects communities North and South. We must actively work to elevate a diversity of voices in decision making processes affecting all of society to enable us to deliver a more sustainable peace.
- The Women in Water Diplomacy Network and its partners are actively working to change the status quo around water and climate decision making processes and provide a tangible example of the critical importance of inclusive water diplomacy processes.

Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)

- Water diplomacy can help to prevent new conflicts from arising.
- It is important that women in all their diversity can equally and meaningfully participate at all levels of decision-making in themes of conflict resolution, peace and security.
- This requires targeted resources to overcome the persistent barriers to women's equal participation in water and climate decision making dialogues and institutions as well as the integration of gender perspectives in all aspects of water diplomacy.