

AGWA COMMITMENT TO THE WATER ACTION AGENDA

Theme: Water for Climate, Resilience, and Environment: Source to Sea, Biodiversity, Climate, Resilience and DRR (SDGs 6.5, 6.6, 7, 11.5, 13, 14, 15)

DESCRIPTION

AGWA is a network of individuals and organizations that works in both the technical and policy spheres of water and climate change. In both cases, AGWA crowdsources the best practices, recommendations, frameworks, analytical procedures, and policy recommendations through our network and beyond to ensure that our water resources can become climate resilient. Our success comes from the success of our members. One of the core beliefs at our founding in 2010 was that water is the medium of most negative climate impacts. What we have come to know from a decade of intense collaboration, north and south, is that water is also the medium for most climate resilience.

Two basic challenges for addressing climate change exist relative to the SDGs. First, even if we stopped all carbon emissions today, the climate would continue to evolve for many decades — if not longer. This means that any specific impact targets for 2030 will have a limited shelf life. Second, our ability to estimate with confidence how future climate will evolve, especially concerning the water cycle, is very limited. We believe these challenges force us to consider how to address the prospect of climatic transformation, which is when a region develops fundamentally new climatic, hydrological, and ecological characteristics.

Globally, we see transformation already well underway in high-latitude and high-altitude regions, such as when we lose a glacier and we see a grassland or even a forest emerge. But within a decade or two, we can expect that most regions of the planet will be well along the path of transformation.

The issue of transformation is one that has yet to be adequately addressed by the global water community; our traditional solutions based on optimization and hydrologic stationarity do not match the issues that climate change presents. It's easy to say we need to “fight” climate change. While we must urgently accelerate and complete our energy revolution, we must simultaneously learn to live with the expectation of ongoing change — to get ready, to prepare, and to ensure that we find ways to thrive and build prosperity. In other words, we must build our collective

resilience using new tools and approaches to live with complexity, change, and uncertainty.

Water resilience is the concept that we must act robustly and decisively for the impacts we can see with confidence, while we also plan for flexibility for the impacts we are less sure about or that we cannot predict with confidence. Water resilience does not assume that the past predicts the future. This approach applies to infrastructure as much as regulatory frameworks, protected areas, and global governance. Water resilience should be the key to locking in many SDG targets to ensure they remain relevant beyond 2030.

Our situation is serious, but we also have reasons to be hopeful. The concept of water resilience remains relatively new but is rapidly expanding. Many institutions are now working in this space, but many of the most important stakeholders are not necessarily found within the traditional water community.

How do we reach new audiences? **This is AGWA's principal commitment to the Water Action Agenda: to mobilize and engage a global water resilience community dedicated to transforming the ways we govern, manage, utilize, and thrive with water.**

EXPECTED IMPACT

Under this overarching commitment, AGWA has several Water Action Agenda items to contribute to water resilience, framed around the levers of the SDG6 Global Acceleration Framework. Specifically, we commit to expanding and deepening our work on optimized finance for water resilience, capacity development, innovation, and governance.

Capacity Development

First, the need for increasing capacity and training around water resilience is critical, especially for regions with advanced transformation. Much of the capacity work targets innovation in resilience. In 2018, culminating about seven or eight years of collaboration within and beyond the AGWA network, UNESCO published the [Climate Risk Informed Decision Analysis](#) or CRIDA approach. This is a climate risk reduction methodology that is tolerant of limited data, uses simple software, and helps technical decision-makers engage with stakeholders to develop shared resilience solutions. It has been used in at least 30 countries to date, and UNESCO training programs have reached thousands of students, often in their native languages — we began with English, but we quickly expanded to Spanish, French, and Arabic through online courses and written materials. We will include Chinese and Russian in 2024. Designed for the developing world, it has also been adopted by the state of California in the U.S. as well as the UNECE and approved for internal use by the World Bank. It is a global tool. Interestingly, in the majority of applications, nature-based solutions appear as critical components of water resilience and shared resilience planning. By 2030, UNESCO has pledged to support CRIDA's

implementation in all of its member countries and to translate the guidance and case studies into all official UN languages.

Related to both capacity building and governance, since 2018 AGWA has been collaborating with the UNFCCC to train national climate adaptation focal points in the basics of water-centric adaptation and resilience. Now called the [CASTT Adaptation Academy](#), we partner with IHE-Delft, the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Oregon State University, and Korea Environment Institute for three weeks of in-person intensive training. This work has already reached about 75 countries; by 2030 we commit to doubling that number to 150 countries.

Innovation

On the topic of water resilience innovation, AGWA has also been developing quite specific guidance approaches. Launching last August with groups such as the Pacific Institute, IWMI, and WRI, we have co-developed an approach called the [Water Resilience Assessment Framework](#) or WRAF. WRAF is intended to accelerate corporations and utilities into water resilience. WRAF is a very bold, innovative approach that should have a promising, long lifespan. We hope to see WRAF used in at least 10 countries by 2030.

Governance

In line with the SDG6 Global Acceleration Framework — which advocates a systems approaches to reducing policy and institutional fragmentation — AGWA believes that if water is the medium of resilience, water must also rise above being a sector and become a connector across sectors. Resilience is a shared property, and developing a level of systems awareness and thinking is central to governing for resilience.

With respect to resilient governance, AGWA has developed a program called the [Water Tracker for National Climate Planning](#), through which we have been working with about a dozen national governments for two years to help them actively navigate and see the water-climate risks and synergies across and within ministries. We understand these connections need to be choices, and in order for them to be resilient, those choices should consider the range of conditions that may stress those connections over time. The Water Tracker is a demand-driven process and serves as one of the most effective ways that countries can ensure coherent, effective NDCs and NAPs. Over the next five years, we will expand this initiative with a new set of global partners that will allow us to deepen our engagement with 50 countries in supporting water-resilient national climate planning.

Optimized Finance

At the UN Water Conference, we will also launch *Enabling Resilient Economies: A Blueprint for Catalyzing Prosperity and Structural Transformation Through Water Resilience*, a publication aimed at macroeconomists, finance ministries, and central bankers. We have long managed our national economies for efficiency and stability, but these concepts are profoundly threatened by climate change and other risks, as shown by recent shocks from covid, supply chain disruptions, and even unforeseen

political and social risk. Resilience is a new concept that can help us address a wide range of uncertainties, and water is central to how we manage resilience. In contrast, traditional static economic thinking the discounts uncertainty could make our economies more vulnerable to climate risks.

Our goal is to provide evidence and guidance to economists that shows how to operationalize resilience. This work is being developed in cooperation with a diverse array of entities, including the governments of The Netherlands, Spain, Germany, and the United Kingdom, along with the OECD, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, Deltares and Wetlands International. The global utility Veolia has joined our initiative as well.

PARTNERS

AGWA works with dozens of partners on these and other water resilience initiatives including governments such as The Netherlands, Spain, Germany, the UK, and Egypt; IFIs such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank; NGOs and research institutions such as Deltares, Global Resilience Partnership, Forest Trends, The Nature Conservancy, Alliance for Water Stewardship, and the International Water Management Institute; UN Conventions and Agencies like the UNFCCC, UNDRR, UNESCO, and UN Global Compact; as well as private entities such as Veolia, Microsoft, and Arup.

We believe that no one of us is smart enough, rich enough, or powerful enough to adapt in isolation. Indeed, becoming resilient together is in the true spirit of the SDGs and the UN Water Conference itself. We look forward to welcoming you!

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

You can find out more about all these initiatives and track their progress on our website: www.alliance4water.org

SDG GOALS & TARGETS

2.4, 6 (all), 9.1, 9.4, 11.5, 11.6, 13 (all), 15.1

REGION

Global

MORE INFORMATION

Ingrid Timboe, AGWA Policy Director
policy@alliance4water.org