



The Glasgow Declaration for Fair Water Footprints for Climate-Resilient, Inclusive, and Sustainable Development

A COP26 Initiative, November 2021

‘Water is the driving force of all nature’.

Leonardo da Vinci

- I. Statement of Resolve
- II. Commitments made by All
 - Action for a Fair Water Footprint by 2030
 - Participation, Inclusion, Transparency, and Accountability
 - Transformative Action
 - Scaling-up and Accelerating Water Stewardship
 - Shared Advocacy and Collective Action
- III. Additional Commitments made by each Constituency
 - Government Commitments
 - Business Commitments
 - Financial Institution Commitments
 - Civil Society Commitments
 - Research and External Support Agency Commitments

Appendix A. Glossary and Definitions

Appendix B. List of Participating Countries and Organisations

Appendix C. Evidence of Crisis

Appendix D. Roadmap for Action

I. Statement of Resolve

We, ministers, heads of government authorities, companies, financial institutions, civil society organisations, and external support agencies, met on 5 November 2021 and jointly:

1. Understand that access to safe drinking water,ⁱ sanitation,ⁱⁱ and a clean and healthy environmentⁱⁱⁱ are human rights, and that sustainable and equitable use of freshwater will play a principal role in our effective response to the climate emergency and is a fundamental requirement for the wellbeing of the planet and humanity.
2. Are deeply concerned by findings of the Sixth Assessment of the IPCC,^{iv} the Global Assessment on Biodiversity by IPBES,^v and the UN's High-Level Meeting on Water-Related Goals,^{vi} which provide unequivocal evidence of our accelerating and conjoined water, climate, and nature crises.
3. Recognise that the water footprints of consumer society, economic activity, and global trade bind us together through a shared obligation and opportunity to ensure sustainable and equitable water use for the benefit of current and future generations.
4. Acknowledge the need for collaboration, constructive engagement, technical and financial assistance, and mutual support which does not prejudice, harm, or divert support away from communities that are in the greatest need.
5. Are convinced of the need for immediate action to curtail the harmful impacts of unsustainable water use and pollution arising from agricultural and industrial activities.
6. Aim to harness our globalised supply chains, and the reach and influence of the private and financial sectors, as well as civil society, to support sustainable water management, climate change resilience and adaptation, and realisation of the UN's Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.^{vii}
7. **FORMALLY RESOLVE** to take transformative action for fair water footprints which will have durable benefits for our communities, ecosystems, and economies, and help to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6): Ensure availability and sustainable management of access to water and sanitation for all by 2030.

II. Commitments Made by All

Action for a Fair Water Footprint by 2030

8. We will ensure that the water footprints over which we have control and influence will be fair by 2030, so that business operations, services, and supply chains associated with significant water and climate-related risks will demonstrate:
 - a. **Zero water pollution:** No adverse impacts on the aquatic environment, other water users, or functions arising from wastewater discharges, diffuse pollution, contaminated run-off, or spillages.
 - b. **Sustainable withdrawal and equitable allocation of water:** Abstraction and use within the hydrological limits of sustainability, not compromising the human right to water, the needs of the environment, communities, or future generations.

- c. **Protection of nature:** Ecosystems and landscapes, and their services are protected, and sustainably managed, and nature-based and regenerative solutions are prioritised.
- d. **Access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene:** Universal access through adequate provision in the workplace and collective action to reach underserved communities.
- e. **Resilience to drought, floods, climate variability, and water conflict:** Effective plans, policies, governance, and investment in place to mitigate water, climate, and conflict risks, with legal compliance and secure water tenure for all.

Participation, Inclusion, Transparency, and Accountability

9. We will act with integrity, adhering to the principles of balanced participation, inclusion, transparency, and accountability, and will track and report performance against each.

Transformative Action

10. To give full effect to this Declaration we commit to:
- a. Develop and deliver an action plan, which will include baselines, milestones, and indicators of progress and impact.
 - b. Meet annually to report and review progress, make necessary adjustments, implement and abide by a mutual accountability and governance mechanism, and to build a community of learning, practice, and leadership.
 - c. Mobilise adequate resources, capacity, and leadership.
 - d. Proactively champion fair water footprints and recruit others to join a global effort.

Scaling-Up and Accelerating Water Stewardship

11. We commit to establishing a fair water footprint as the business norm by scaling-up and accelerating credible water stewardship at farms, factories, and facilities, across supply chains, cities, catchments, company operations, and investment portfolios.

Shared Advocacy and Collective Action

12. We commit to advocate for, contribute to, and engage in multi-stakeholder and governance initiatives to achieve fair water footprints and SDG 6 by 2030.

III. Additional Commitments made by each Constituency

13. Given the need for mutually re-enforcing activity to achieve fair water footprints by 2030, as members of each listed constituency we will:

14. Government

- a. Strengthen the capacity, investment mechanisms, leadership, inter- and intra-ministerial and cross-sectoral coordination, knowledge, and international collaboration required.

- b. Enhance water-related data collection and analysis and ensure that farms, factories, and facilities associated with significant water and climate-related risk are subject to effective regulation and enforcement, and publicly disclosed compliance monitoring.
- c. Review institutional and corporate governance frameworks, and international agreements, and institute appropriate policy, statutory, procedural, and market-based measures, including the strengthening of safeguarding, due diligence, disclosure, and responsible procurement by government, business, and financiers.
- d. Empower and enable citizens, civil society, women, young people, marginalised groups, and the media to fulfil their key roles, including communication, participation, convening, consumer choice, and accountability monitoring for fair water footprints.

15. **Business**

- a. Identify all sites and supply chains associated with significant water and climate-related risks, set meaningful targets, and plan, implement, and disclose credible actions.
- b. Strengthen communication, due diligence, and safeguarding throughout business operations to support progress, including via public grievance and redress mechanisms.
- c. Link senior-level remuneration to progress towards sustainable water management.

16. **Financial institutions**

- a. Transition investment portfolios and loan books to fair water footprints by ensuring that those financed identify all sites and supply chains associated with significant water and climate-related risks, set targets, and plan, implement, and disclose credible actions.
- b. Develop and deploy metrics and mechanisms to incentivise investment towards operations which have a fair water footprint, and away from unsustainable practices, including via strengthened due diligence, disclosure, and where appropriate, sanctions.
- c. Stimulate investment in companies, products, and services that support the achievement of fair water footprints and SDG 6 by 2030.

17. **Civil society organisations**

- a. Elevate the public and political profile of water, and advocate for fair water footprints, and the means through which they can be achieved.
- b. Work to ensure that the voices and perspectives of communities, citizens, and in particular women, youth, the marginalised, future generations, and the needs of nature are represented and responded to in action to deliver a fair water footprint.
- c. Provide objective reporting and oversight and hold other constituencies to account for fair water footprints, and strengthen participation and integrity in all related processes.

18. **Research, partnership initiatives, and external support agencies**

- a. Produce and share evidence, learning, and knowledge to monitor, evaluate, and support the transition to fair water footprints, and its outcomes and impacts.

- b. Collaborate to create, strengthen, and scale-up the incentives, information, tools, mechanisms, and action needed to transition to fair water footprints.
- c. Convene, challenge, communicate with, and seek alignment and complementary strategies to enable efficient delivery of a fair water footprint and SDG 6 by 2030.

Signatories:

Name and position, organisation, signature, date

Government

Business

Financial institutions

Civil society organisations

External support agencies

Appendix A. Glossary and Definitions

Accountability

The obligation of organisations and individuals to be answerable for all decisions made and actions taken by them, and to be responsible for honouring their commitments, without qualification or exception.¹ Further defined as the ability to review, explain, and report performance against rules, responsibilities, and obligations, and to react constructively to improve performance through sanctions, incentives, or corrective measures.²

Adaptation

In human systems, the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects, in order to moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. In natural systems, the process of adjustment to actual climate and its effects; human intervention may facilitate adjustment to expected climate.³

Advocacy

The organised attempt to change policy, practice, and attitudes by presenting evidence and arguments for how and why change is needed.⁴

Civil society

Non-state, not-for-profit, voluntary entities formed by people in the social sphere that are separate from the state and the market. Civil society organisations (CSOs) represent a wide range of interests and ties. They can include community-based organisations as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs).⁵ In the context of the Declaration, CSOs include NGOs with a primary charitable objective to advance social justice, poverty reduction, and environmental protection, and do not include business or for-profit associations, or partnership initiatives within which businesses have a governance or otherwise influential role.

Embedded water

The freshwater 'embodied' in a product or service in the virtual sense. It refers to the volume of water consumed or polluted whilst producing the product, measured over its full production chain. If a nation exports/imports such a product, it exports/imports embedded water in virtual form.⁶

Equitable

Characterised by fairness; that which is just and right, fair, or reasonable. Equitable water management requires as a minimum that basic needs are met and human rights are upheld, and also concerns issues of entitlement, access, and control, and the equitable distribution of the wide spectrum of benefits associated with water, and the complex interactions that determine who benefits and how. Water management will be understood to be equitable when it contributes to making the situation of persons within society more equitable, and upholds local conceptions of what is fair, just, and right.⁷ A practical definition, indicators, and proxies for equitable allocation

¹ United Nations General Assembly (2010) [Document A/RES/64/259](#).

² Hepworth, N.D., Brown, B.D. and Brewer, T. 2020. Accountability and advocacy interventions in the water sector: a review of global evidence. Part 1. Overview and Summary Results. Water Witness International, Edinburgh, UK.

³ IPCC (2012) 'Glossary of Terms', in C.B. Field, V. Barros, T.F. Stocker, D. Qin, D.J. Dokken, K.L. Ebi, M.D. Mastrandrea, K.J. Mach, G.-K. Plattner, S.K. Allen, M. Tignor, and P.M. Midgley (eds.), *Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation*, Cambridge University Press and New York NY: 555–64.

⁴ Open Society Foundations (2010) [Evidence, Messages, Change! An introductory Guide to Successful Advocacy](#), London: OSF.

⁵ [UNGP Reporting Framework](#) (2021).

⁶ Hoekstra, A.Y. (2020) *The water footprint of modern consumer society: second edition*, Routledge, London, UK

⁷ Peña. H. (2011) [Social Equity and Integrated Water Resources Management](#), Technical Committee Background Paper 15, Stockholm: Global Water Partnership.

will be refined for the purposes of the Declaration's implementation by the signatories, and are likely to include that which: (i) fulfils and does not impinge on human rights; (ii) aligns with the allocation policies and social development needs and priorities of a community or society; and (iii) is considered legitimate by those affected, as characterised by the absence of sustained objection, dispute, or claims of injustice.

External support agencies

In this context, external support agencies include important stakeholders whose engagement is necessary, even fundamental, but which cannot be easily categorised into government, business, or civil society, and which provide vital support or other services. They include universities, researchers, and thinktanks; multilateral donors, private foundations, and partnership initiatives; and public and community interest companies and consultants.

Due diligence

An ongoing risk management process that a reasonable and prudent company, organisation, or individual needs to follow in order to identify, prevent, mitigate, and account for how it addresses its adverse environmental and human rights impacts. It includes four key steps: assessing actual and potential human rights and environmental impacts; integrating and acting on the findings; tracking responses; and communicating about how impacts are addressed.⁸

Inclusion

The process of improving the terms of participation in society for people who are disadvantaged on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status, through enhanced opportunities, access to resources, voice, and respect for rights.⁹

Resilience

The ability of a system and its component parts to anticipate, absorb, accommodate, or recover from the effects of a hazardous event (or perturbation) in a timely and efficient manner, including through ensuring the preservation, restoration, or improvement of its essential basic structures and functions.¹⁰

Sustainable

Capable of being sustained into the future, being a method of harvesting or using a resource so that the resource is not depleted, or permanently damaged, and where unacceptable negative impacts are avoided.¹¹

Transparency

Characteristic of governments, companies, organisations, and individuals of being open in the clear disclosure of information, rules, plans, processes, and actions. As a principle, public officials, civil servants, the managers and directors of companies and organisations, and board trustees have a duty to act visibly, predictably, and understandably to promote participation and accountability and allow third parties to easily perceive what actions are being performed.¹²

Vulnerability

The propensity or predisposition to be adversely affected.¹³

⁸ [UNGP Reporting Framework](#) (2021).

⁹ United Nations (2016) [Leaving No One Behind: The Imperative of Inclusive Development. Report on the World Social Situation 2016](#), Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ST/ESA/362

¹⁰ After IPCC (2012), *ibid*.

¹¹ [Merriam-Webster website, Definition of Sustainable](#).

¹² [Transparency International website, Transparency](#).

¹³ After IPCC (2012), *ibid*.

Water and climate-related risk

A risk-based decision-making framework will support the signatories to efficiently target management action for fair water footprints towards the sites, supply chains, processes, and locations where the greatest societal benefits, or avoided harm will accrue. A credible approach will be developed with signatories and harmonised with existing mechanisms, easily available data and risk filters, water footprint accounting approaches, and risk-based regulation, and will include a robust and transparent analysis of hazards, vulnerability, and likelihood of occurrence. Focusing action on where significant or major risks exist for society or for a business operation will avoid unnecessary expenditure of limited resources on low or negligible risks, and so enable attainment of fair water footprints by 2030. For example, it will focus action where there is a high potential for pollution, and large volumetric abstractions, i.e. a significant water footprint, in sensitive locations such as those facing economic and physical water scarcity, regular or escalating flooding and drought events, basin closure or chronic pollution problems, under-provision of water, sanitation, and hygiene services, limited capacity, ecosystems at risk, or landscape degradation.

Water footprint

An indicator of freshwater use that looks at both direct and indirect water use of a consumer or producer. The water footprint of an individual, community, or business is defined as the total volume of freshwater used to produce the goods and services consumed by the individual or community or produced by the business. Water use is measured in terms of water volumes consumed (evaporated or incorporated into a product) and/or polluted per unit of time. A water footprint can be calculated for a particular product, for any well-defined group of consumers (e.g. an individual, family, village, city, province, state, or nation) or producers (e.g. a public organisation, private enterprise, or economic sector). The water footprint is a geographically explicit indicator, showing not only volumes of water use and pollution, but also the locations.¹⁴

Water stewardship

The use of water that is socially and culturally equitable, environmentally sustainable, and economically beneficial, achieved through a stakeholder-inclusive process that includes both site and catchment-based actions.¹⁵

Water tenure

The relationships, whether legally or customarily defined, between people, as individuals or groups, with respect to water resources. Secure and equitable frameworks governing water tenure are a fundamental component of sustainable and climate-resilient water management. Particularly for vulnerable populations and women, legally secure water tenure rights are essential to improving livelihoods, food security, and gender equality, and are important determinants of climate resilience.¹⁶

Zero water pollution

Further to the definition in 8a – ‘No adverse impacts on the aquatic environment, other water users, or functions arising from wastewater discharges, diffuse pollution, contaminated run-off, or spillages’ – it is important to emphasise that this does not mean a requirement for zero discharges to the aquatic environment, since there exists a capacity for waterbodies to receive properly treated

¹⁴ [Water Footprint Network, Glossary.](#)

¹⁵ Alliance for Water Stewardship (2019) [The AWS International Water Stewardship Standard.](#)

¹⁶ Environmental Law Institute, Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture of Germany, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) (2020) [Water Tenure Approaches for Securing Rights and Advancing Climate Resilience.](#)

wastewater and other discharges without the imposition of negative impacts. Meeting this requirement is likely to require demonstration of compliance with statutory standards and requirements, and no negative impact upon receiving waters.¹⁷

Appendix B. List of Participating Countries and Organisations

To follow

Appendix C. Evidence of Crises

- Continued global warming is projected to further intensify the global water cycle, including its variability, global monsoon precipitation, and the severity of wet and dry events.^{iv}
- Effects of climate change have increased the risks of disasters like droughts and floods, as well as serious food insecurity and malnutrition primarily impacting children and the most vulnerable.^{iv}
- Human activity is destroying natural freshwater and marine ecosystems, with inland waters, wetlands, and freshwater ecosystems showing the greatest and most rapidly accelerating rates of decline.^v
- Clean water and sanitation are the first line of defence for a successful Covid-19 response and recovery plans need to be resilient, green, and inclusive.^{vi}
- Progress towards water-related SDGs and targets is severely off-track and efforts need to quadruple if universal access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene are to be achieved.^{vi}
- The financial gap to reach SDG 6 to ‘Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by 2030’ will require a tripling of investment, or an additional US\$1.7 trillion, requiring a whole-of-society partnership between governments and diverse stakeholders, international cooperation, high-level political commitment, multi-stakeholder platforms, and people-centred solutions.^{vi}

Appendix D. Roadmap for Action

November 2021	March 2022	November 2022	March 2023	November – annually	November 2030
Founding signatories to Declaration at COP26 Additional signatories and learning partners who are not ready to sign but are keen to do so in the future recruited beyond COP26	Partnership governance, guidance and indicator framework agreed	Signatories submit action plans and baselines at the first fair water footprints global meeting based on technical guidance and Secretariat support	UN Water Conference champions signatories, highlights lessons, and launches second wave of recruitment to the Declaration and partnership	Annual review, lesson learning, and disclosure of achievements 2026–mid-term review	Celebration of achievements and global scaling

¹⁷ [NetRegs website, Causes of Water Pollution.](#)

ⁱ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 64/292.

ⁱⁱ Under United Nations Human Rights Commission Resolution 15/9.

ⁱⁱⁱ United Nations Human Rights Commission Resolution 48/13.

^{iv} IPCC (2021 forthcoming) 'Climate Change 2021. The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change', Cambridge University Press.

^v United Nations Human Rights Commission Resolution 48/13.

^{vi} IPCC (2021 forthcoming), 'Climate Change 2021. The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change', Cambridge University Press.

^{vii} Brondizio, E.S.; Settele, J.; Díaz, S. and Ngo, H.T. (eds) (2019) *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services of the Intergovernmental Science–Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*, Bonn: IPBES.

^{viii} United Nations (2021) 'Letter summary of the High-Level Meeting on the Implementation of the Water-Related Goals and Targets of the 2030 Agenda', New York.

^{ix} United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, unanimously endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council in 2011, Resolution 17/4, sets out three pillars: a state duty to protect, a corporate responsibility to respect, and access to effective remedy. It provides an overarching commitment to ensure that business should should 'do no harm' and 'do good' to advance delivery of the SDGs.