

# Newsletter

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EXCO, DAEJU, REPUBLIC OF KOREA



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## POLICY LEADERS AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS INAUGURATE THE IWRA XVII WORLD WATER CONGRESS IN KOREA

**Over 1300 experts, policy leaders and representatives from international organisations are attending the IWRA World Water Congress that kicked off in Daegu, Korea. The event will run for 5 consecutive days.**

Under the theme: *“Foundations for Global Water Security and Resilience: Knowledge, Technology and Policy”* and with a focus on resilience and the need to provide solutions to respond to raising challenges, the Opening Ceremony of the 17<sup>th</sup> World Water Congress of the International Water Resources Association (IWRA) counted with the presence of national authorities, experts from all continents and international organisations. These include the Ministry of Environment of Korea, and

representatives from FAO, IFAD, the World Bank, OECD, UNESCO, ESCAP, the World Water Council and the European Union, among others.

Introduced by IWRA President, **Mr. Gabriel Eckstein**, **Mr. Jeong Kee Hong**, Vice Minister of Environment of Korea, stressed the relevant momentum given by the recent CoP26 and the upcoming World Water Forum that will take place in Dakar in March 2022.

An aspect underlined by most invitees to the Opening was the level of expertise of the Congress. That was also emphasised by the President of K-Water, **Mr. Jaehyun Park**, who highlighted the uniqueness of the event in convening water experts from water, sanitation, hydrology, climate, and agriculture among other disciplines.



**« Water is above all, a political priority. Solutions are political and decisions are political, as responses and proposals should address the improvement of daily lives of people »** Loïc Fauchon,  
**President World Water Council**

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# WELCOME MESSAGE



## GABRIEL ECKSTEIN, PRESIDENT OF IWRA *Water and partnerships, the way forward*

The focus of the recent COP26 UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow hinged around three key areas: financing, mitigation and adaptation. But what about the role of water?

For us water *afficionados*, we felt a sense of disappointment when, in reading the concluding remarks by the UN Secretary General and the COP26 final communiqué, there was no reference to water at all. ([unfccc.int/news](https://unfccc.int/news))

But water, of course, is central to the three action areas that Governments signed up to at the conclusion of the Conference. Whether we are talking about climate-financing, flood mitigation or drought preparedness, the role and management of water is paramount. Water, in fact, is the face of climate change.

The [UN'S Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDG) echoes this. The SDG6, dedicated to water and sanitation, also aims to tighten policies with the goal of providing by 2030: universal access to clean water; a substantial increase in water-efficiency; and expanded international co-operation of

water management policies. Get the cooperation right, and then efforts to manage climate mitigation and adaptation will follow.

Implementing pathways for development and cooperation is one of the key themes of next weeks' World Water Congress ([www.worldwatercongress.com](http://www.worldwatercongress.com)), organized by the International Water Resources Association and taking place in South Korea's water hub, Daegu City.

Water governance matters. Collaborative and holistic thinking, policy and management are essential to combatting climate change, especially in the complex area of water, which is often poorly understood by policymakers.

Events such as COP26 and the [World Water Congress](#) encourage dialogue amongst stakeholders in the water sector. I had the good fortune to be in Glasgow and will also attend the event in Daegu.

It is imperative that such dialogue relating to water and climate change are grounded on relevant and timely data and information, which should

be shared broadly and used collaboratively. Aged infrastructure and outdated technology hinders the flow of water data around the world. In turn that compounds the challenge in knowing where best to invest public funds committed at COP26 to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

This stunted flow of information not only means that constructive opportunities are missed, but also creates the destructive potential for policy making, hindering progress. It's in these potential data vacuums that dialogue is most needed.

In our increasingly technological age, there is a fashionable argument that face-to-face events as the World Water Congress and climate change COP can or should be conducted online. It is a valid argument, especially given the carbon and water footprints of such events. Yet, creativity and innovative thinking is often better served by face-to-face meetings, rather than through a screen.

As President of the [International Water Resources Association](#), I am particularly proud to be participating in the upcoming World Water Congress in Daegu. This singular event comes hot on the heels of the COP and brings together key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Environment of Korea, the European Commission, and a wide range of water resource practitioners from around world.

Dialogue matters and partnerships are a product of dialogue. If we don't get the overarching partnerships right at the outset, the best management technology and tools in the world will not solve the looming crisis that climate change presents.

## EU COMMISSIONER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, OCEANS AND FISHERIES



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**“A threat to water is a threat to economic progress and to peace and security”**

**Virginijus Sinkevičius**, European Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries participated in the Opening of the 17<sup>th</sup> edition of the IWRA World Water Congress where he called to intensify efforts in building a bigger body of knowledge about water resilience.

“A threat to water is a threat to health -he said- It is a threat to economic progress to poverty or education and to peace and to security.” In his intervention he mentioned the transboundary nature of water, emphasising the need to “enhance cooperation across river-basins, countries and continents.”

“Biodiversity, food, energy and climate - they all come back to water. To understand the interconnections, we need more research and innovation. They will help develop the tools and rules we need and the solutions to deliver lasting change,” he stated.

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## TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION, AT THE CORE OF WATER MANAGEMENT

The need to put technology and innovation at the core of water resources management was especially underlined by **Gilbert F. Hougbo**, President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and also Chair of UN-Water who mentioned that *«the pandemic is teaching the humanity a lesson: we are all in the same storm but not on the same boat.»* Nature-based solutions and carbon reduction were identified as key paths to advance towards the progress around SDG6. Reinforcing that approach, **Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana**, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP, focused on building back better to address biological hazards.

The value of innovation but also the political dimension of water was especially referred by **Mr. Loic Fauchon**, President of the World Water Council. *« Water is above all, a political priority. Solutions are political and decisions are political, as responses and proposals should address the improvement of daily lives of people,»* he said.

## THE INTERFACE BETWEEN SCIENCE AND POLICY

The immense impact of water was addressed by **Ms. Aziza Akmouch**, Head of the Cities, Urban Policies and Sustainable Development division at the OECD, who mentioned that *«800 million people are at risk of floods»*, so addressing the water governance as well as the interface between science



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**Gilbert F. Hougbo,**  
**President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and Chair of UN-Water**

and water policy -at the core of IWRA- is essential to achieve SDG6.

Mitigation efforts together with renewable solutions were also identified as future paths by **Ms. Jennifer Sara**, Global Director for the World Bank Group’s Water Global Practice. *«The challenge is to turn knowledge into practice and implementation from country to another,»* she suggested, as well as the opening opportunities to enhance partnerships between the World Bank and the International Water Resources Association (IWRA). Closing the annual SDG financing gap of some \$2.5 trillion between current funding and what is required was referred by Ms. Sara as a key concern.

**« The challenge is to turn knowledge into practice and implementation from country to another »** **Jennifer Sara,**  
**Global Director for the World Bank Group’s Water Global Practice**



The selection of youth envoys has followed a global competition and finally five of those are presenting at the 17<sup>th</sup> edition of the World Water Congress held in Daegu.

## BRINGING THE YOUTH TO THE GLOBAL WATER DEBATES

One of the most innovative components of the 17<sup>th</sup> IWRA World Water Congress is the introduction of the World Water Envoys. Youth has been traditionally identified not only as key drivers and contributors to address climate change and water security but also as a highly vulnerable segment of our societies. These convert them in an essential partner and stakeholder in water resources management.

In 2019 took an important decision: to include the voices of young generations at IWRA activities and to provide them with a platform to showcase the issues they face when it comes to water security. This followed a global competition which led to over a hundred powerful submissions. Five of those were finally selected and are presented in

these days at the 17<sup>th</sup> edition of the World Water Congress held in Daegu.

The **World Water Envoys** follow the commitment of IWRA with geographic balance and they also represent a variety of water security challenges: from Zimbabwe, Georgina Mukwirimba, dealing with the economics of water supply in big cities; from India, Deepesh Jain, looking into the right to water and sanitation in slums; the Dominican Republic, @MariaAlmonte, focusing at urban river management and the threats of contamination and pollution; from the West Bank/Palestine, Bayan Khalaf, committed to study agrochemical pollution in rural areas; and, from Nepal, Pallavi Pokharel, working on groundwater pollution in the city of Kathmandu.

These amazing individuals are not only references and examples for their respective communities but also for the whole humanity that feels proud of their achievements and commitment.

### Get to know the World Water Envoys through three questions

**Why youth needs to be involved in water debates?**

*María Victoria Almonte: Water debates need to have other angles that respond to different segments or groups in our societies.*

*Pallavi Pokharel: When youth is involved in water debates, they get an idea about the problem of water insecurity (not only of their country but also in a global scale) early on. This allows them to seek and work on solutions and in turn understand the problem in a holistic manner. Youth have a stronger voice and can include an inclusive approach to problem solving, so they can actually urge other people in getting involved in working for fighting against such crises.*

*Bayan Khalaf: The inclusion of youth is vital in all water events and discussions, so they can enhance their skills and experience, in addition; they can share their ideas and opinions about various water topics.*

*Deepesh Jain: Young people can represent ideas and discourses of people of colour, low income areas, people who do not have binary gender or sexual orientation, people of forest or tribes.*



*Water affects everyone but a little differently. So we need different people to participate in debates, and youth can bring participation from different places.*

**Georgina Mukwirimba:** *It is important to involve the youth in issues that concern them not just as mere beneficiaries but also as future leaders. When we involve youth we are training them and equipping them with the skills to become the agents of change.*

### What are you learning through your role as envoys by IWRA?

**María Victoria Almonte:** *I learned about the importance of youth and about our responsibility in both current and future challenges. I hope that this Congress materialises in specific actions.*

**Pallavi Pokharel:** *As an envoy, I not only got to dig deeper into my community problem but also got to work on climate change task force: a working group on mountains and plains. This further helped me assess and report on the situation of vulnerable population to climate change disasters. I was mentored throughout by esteemed water experts who not only helped me in researching more about my community but also helped me in my career path. IWRA has been the most inspirational journey to me.*

**Bayan Khalaf:** *Being an world water Envoy is a great opportunity for me especially for knowledge exchange, networking, as well as, knowing more information about the situations of water in other countries around the world.*

**Deepesh Jain:** *I am getting a constant support and a platform to represent the problem I am facing the community and region I come from. Not just to present but also to understand it better and find solutions to solve the issue. It is an experience which will not just help me but may be also my community.*

**Georgina Mukwirimba:** *I have developed a deep and broad understanding/awareness of the issues relating to Water and sanitation in my city,*

*community, country and world eventually! As a graduate civil engineer, I always had a passion for Water engineering and through the envoys program I have gained a lot of skills. This is such an invaluable experience!*

### How do you see yourselves and your career evolving after the World Water Congress?

**María Victoria Almonte:** *I am hoping to acquire skills but also different points of view from different profiles and fields on how to develop my career.*

**Pallavi Pokharel:** *I wish to get help from experts to take necessary solutions back home. I am also looking forward to networking with experts who can guide me through my career path.*

**Bayan Khalaf:** *I believe that being part of WWCC 2021 would be a very good addition to my career since my specialization in both MSc and PhD is related to Water purification, so I can exchange my experience with other participants, additionally, enhancing my skillset and having a great networking with experts all over the world.*

**Deepesh Jain:** *I expect to meet leaders who have been shaping the water and sanitation initiatives around the world, and work with them in these 5 days to get some idea on how to work through the challenges we are facing. As a young water professional, I also expect to know about newer technologies and innovations happening in the WASH domain. I think I will be able to contribute to my community beyond my 'job' after WWCC. The ideas and solutions I will take home from Daegu will not only go back to my community, but also to all the other communities where I will work as a humanitarian worker or WASH professional.*

**Georgina Mukwirimba:** *I expect to broaden my professional/academic network and make the most out the connections I get here. I would also like to know ideas for the problems in my community, so that I learn about how others organise themselves in their different countries.*

**Deepesh Jain, India**

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**María Victoria Almonte, Dominican Republic**

« I learned about the importance of youth and about our responsibility in both current and future challenges. I hope that this Congress materialises in specific actions. »

**Bayan Khalaf, Palestine**

« I believe that being part of WWCC 2021 would be a very good addition to my career since my specialization in both MSc and PhD is related to Water purification, so I can exchange my experience with other participants. »

**Georgina Mukwirimba, Zimbabwe:**

« It is important to involve the youth in issues that concern them not just as mere beneficiaries but also as future leaders. When we involve youth we are training them and equipping them with the skills to become the agents of change. »

**Pallavi Pokharel:**

« When youth is involved in water debates, they get an idea about the problem of water insecurity (not only of their country but also in a global scale. »

# KWON YOUNG-JIN, MAYOR OF DAEGU CITY

**“ We are confident that this global gathering is an opportunity to enhance cooperation ”**



**The Mayor of Daegu has been one of the personalities participating at the World Water Congress, where he addressed the need to enhance cooperation and to develop global networks around water management.**

### **What is the importance of this Congress for the city of Daegu?**

By successfully holding the 7<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum in 2015 and establishing the Korea Water Cluster (KWC), Daegu Metropolitan city has come to have a keen interest in the water industry as well as global water issues. To further such interests, by annually hosting the Korea International Water Week (KIWW) and the World Water Cities Forum (WWCF), we have been seeking to explore solutions to water-related issues facing mankind while forging a cooperative water network with various foreign cities. Through such measures, we have been steadily making progress towards becoming the hub city for water that can represent the Republic of Korea by developing a global network into the World Water Partnership and capitalizing on the Korea Water Cluster (KWC), which is the key infrastructure for the development of sustainable and innovative water technologies, as

well as the Korean Institute for Water Technology Certification(KIWATEC). In this regard, it is my hope that the World Water Congress can help publicize the commitment of Daegu Metropolitan City to all of these ongoing efforts and provide the necessary momentum to establish cooperative governance for addressing global water challenges in a concerted manner.

### **Can you refer to a special water initiative in Daegu that can be portrayed at the Congress?**

Since the successful hosting of the 7<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum in 2015, we have been reinforcing a global network by holding the World Water Cities Forum (WWCF), which is aimed at sharing water-related technologies and policies between cities from developing countries and those with advanced water industries. This year's forum marks its 7<sup>th</sup> hosting and will provide participating cities with opportunities to gather collective wisdom and join forces by sharing their best practices and offering feasible solutions to those cities with water problems on a hybrid platform. Under its theme of "Water Cities' Cooperation and Innovation," the WWCF is not a one-time event but rather strives to expand itself into a cooperative platform for addressing the water problems of cities worldwide by sharing the implementation status of solutions proposed at the forum as well as their tangible results.

### **What are the expectations of the city to the Congress?**

We are hoping to share the know-hows and experiences gained from overcoming various water-related crises in the past and publicize worldwide the city's commitment to promoting the water industry as well as relevant policies. Thus, we are confident that we can use this global gathering as an opportunity to expand the global

network and enhance the cooperative ties so that Daegu Metropolitan City can be recognized as the hub city for the global water industry.

### **What can Daegu offer to the participants of the Congress?**

The 17<sup>th</sup> World Water Congress is conducted on a hybrid platform where both on-and off-line participants can mingle and interact together. This kind of hybrid event, which has been becoming a new norm in the post-COVID era, is opening up new opportunities to expand our scope of global networking and cooperation, and the 17<sup>th</sup> World Water Congress is no exception in that regard. Daegu Metropolitan City will do its best to provide optimal settings for conferences and seminars to all the participants so that they can make the most out of the congress. I hope all of you will enjoy the alluring beauty and charm of Daegu.

### **Can you send a message to the participants/speakers to the Congress?**

I extend my profound gratitude to all the participants and speakers who have done their due parts for the successful World Water Congress despite the ongoing COVID19 pandemic. Your insightful lectures and presentations on innovative technologies and relevant policies along with productive discussions on diverse topics and experience sharing will no doubt be a great asset in our efforts to overcome global water issues at stake. I sincerely hope that everyone will make the most out of this five-day event and make enjoyable memories with like-minded experts and representatives from various cities and organizations who can make a difference for our better future. Also, I genuinely hope to see all of you again face to face at the Korea International Water Week 2022 next year.