



In collaboration with the convenors of the International High-Level Panel on Water Investments for Africa



International High-Level Panel on Water Investments for Africa and Global Cooperation

Mobilising Commitments towards the UN 2026 Water Conference, the 2030 SDG Agenda, and the Africa Water Vision 2063

Global Leaders Event to be hosted at the African Union Permanent Mission to the United Nations, on the margins of the 81st Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Monday, 21 September 2026 | 13:00–14:30 New York time

1. Background

1.1. In April 2016, the United Nations Secretary-General and the President of the World Bank Group convened a High-Level Panel on Water (HLPW), comprising 11 sitting Heads of State and Government, and one Special Adviser from Australia, Bangladesh, Hungary, Jordan, South Africa, Mauritius, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Senegal and Tajikistan. The HLPW was established to provide the leadership required to champion a comprehensive, inclusive, and collaborative approach to the development and management of water resources, and to improve water- and sanitation-related services.

1.2. The United Nations Secretary-General launched the outcome document of the HLPW in March 2018. The document called for the establishment of an Africa Water Investment Programme to accelerate the mobilisation of water investments; ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all; advance the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6; and contribute to the achievement of other SDGs that depend on the development and sustainable management of water resources, as well as the Africa Water Vision.

1.3. On 7 February 2021, the Assembly of the African Union Heads of State and Government adopted the Continental Africa Water Investment Programme, known as the AIP, as part of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa – Priority Action Plan 2 (PIDA-PAP 2), during the 34th Ordinary Session of the African Union Summit.

1.4. An estimated US\$30 billion needs to be invested annually to meet the 2030 SDG 6 target on basic water and sanitation. At present, only approximately US\$10–19 billion is invested each year. The AIP therefore seeks to close Africa's existing water investment gap, estimated at approximately US\$11–20 billion per year.

1.5. To mobilise the US\$30 billion annually required by 2030, the African Union Development Agency–NEPAD (AUDA-NEPAD), the African Ministers' Council on Water, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the African Development Bank, the Global Center on Adaptation, and the Global Water Partnership Organisation (GWPO) adopted, on 12 August 2021, a resolution to convene an International High-Level Panel on Water Investments for Africa.

1.6. On 25 March 2022, the President of the Republic of Senegal and Chairperson of the African Union launched the African Union (AU) -AIP International High-Level Panel on Water Investments for Africa at the 9th World Water Forum in Dakar, Senegal. The Panel was led by founding Co-Chairs: the Republic of Namibia, the Republic of Senegal, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, as well as H.E. Jakaya Kikwete, former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, as alternate Co-Chair.

1.7. The objective of the AU-AIP High-Level Panel on Water Investments for Africa is to mobilise investments for the implementation of the AIP and close Africa's existing water

investment gap. The Panel developed a high-level report and investment plan outlining pathways and recommendations for countries to mobilise US\$30 billion annually towards closing the gap.

1.8. In August 2025, the African Union Commission, in collaboration with the Panel, AUDA-NEPAD, and GWPO, convened the African Union-AIP Water Investment Summit 2025, in Cape Town, South Africa.

1.9. Convened under South Africa's G20 Presidency, the Summit brought together African Heads of State, global investors, ministers, private-sector leaders and development institutions in a unified call to close Africa's annual US\$30 billion water investment gap.

1.10. To sustain political momentum beyond the Summit, H.E. Cyril Ramaphosa, President of South Africa and then G20 President, launched the Global Outlook Council on Water Investments and the Global Water Investment Platform (GIP), as mechanisms to follow up on the outcomes of the Summit. Their mission is to champion water investments at the highest levels of global diplomacy, notably through the G20, COP processes, the United Nations, and other international forums.

1.11. Building on the Summit's outcome of mobilising an estimated US\$10–12 billion in potential water investments, the 2025 G20 Leaders' Declaration committed to work towards constructive outcomes at the 2026 UN Water Conference and to align the efforts of the G20, the United Nations, multilateral development banks, and the private sector, thereby positioning water as a global investment priority.

1.12. The G20 Leaders' Declaration was an important moment for global cooperation on water, underscoring the urgency of strengthening resilience, advancing sustainable development and accelerating long-term,

inclusive investment flows aligned with national priorities. The Declaration highlighted water as an essential component of resilience, food security, disaster preparedness and climate response.

1.13. In February 2026, the African Union Summit adopted the outcomes of the African Union-AIP Water Investment Summit 2025 and the 2025 G20 Leaders' Declaration. Leaders also adopted the Africa Water Vision 2063 and designated water and sanitation as the theme for the year 2026.

2. High-Level Leaders Event at the 81st Session of the UN General Assembly

2.1. As Co-Chairs of the AU-AIP International High-Level Panel on Water investments for Africa, the Republic of Namibia and Senegal will lead a High-Level Leaders Event alongside the Alternate Co-Chair and other invited global leaders, on the sidelines of the 81st UN General Assembly. Convened by the African Union Commission in collaboration with the AU-AIP High-Level Panel, and hosted by the African Union Permanent Mission to the United Nations, the event will take place on 21 September 2026, from 13:00 to 14:30 New York time.

2.2. The High-Level Leaders Event will set out a vision for accelerating the outcomes of the AU-AIP Water Investment Summit 2025, advance the water-related determinations of the G20 Leaders' Declaration, scaling AIP globally in collaboration with the United Nations and G20 processes, and prepare for concrete outcomes at the 2026 UN Water Conference.

2.3. As Panel Co-Chair, the Republic of Namibia will set out its intent to champion water investment and its vision of positioning Windhoek as a global political, diplomatic and investment hub for water, to build on the gains made at the Summit, the AIP, and towards the 2026 UN Water Conference. In this context,

Namibia will set its intent to become a platform for international dialogue, consultation, investment mobilisation, and cooperation on water security, climate resilience, transboundary waters, and peace.

2.4. The High-Level Leaders Event will also advance the call, made in the Pact for the Future, whose intergovernmental negotiations were co-facilitated by Namibia and Germany, for stronger multilateral cooperation, accelerated SDG implementation, and reform of the international financial architecture, translating these commitments into action on water through greater mobilisation of public, private, and climate finance.

2.5. Key milestones will be shared toward realising the US\$10–12 billion in water investment projects already mobilised at the AU-AIP Water Investment Summit 2025, along with pathways for mobilising the full US\$30 billion per year by 2030 needed to close Africa's water security and sanitation investment gap.

2.6. Panel members and invited leaders will highlight their commitments and potential contributions to mobilise global support for the Panel's water investment work through the Global Water Investment Platform (GIP).

2.7. The High-Level Leaders Event offers a unique opportunity to formally review the AIP's implementation progress, mobilise commitments toward the US\$30 billion annual investment target, elevate water investment for Africa on the global political agenda, raise ambition, and transform the investment outlook for water security and sustainable sanitation — in support of a prosperous, peaceful and equitable future.

3. Strategic Engagement towards the 2026 UN Water Conference

3.1 During the High-Level Leaders Event, and in preparation for the 2026 UN Water Conference, the Republic of Namibia looks forward to engaging with the Conference Co-Hosts - Senegal and the United Arab Emirates - as well as the Co-Chairs of the Interactive Dialogues on Investments (South Africa and France), Water Cooperation (Zambia and Finland), and the Multilateral Process (Germany and Mexico), together with other relevant partners.

3.2. The purpose of the engagements is twofold: to explore options for elevating water investment within the Conference process, and to identify an appropriate high-level moment to advance concrete water investment commitments and partnerships.

4. Expected Outcomes

The High-Level Panel Event is expected to deliver the following outcomes:

4.1. Vision Statements by the Republic of Namibia and the Republic of Senegal, in their capacity as Co-Chairs of the AU-AIP International High-Level Panel on Water Investments for Africa, outlining a roadmap towards concrete outcomes at the 2026 UN Water Conference, transforming the investment outlook for water security and sustainable sanitation in Africa, and scaling up the AIP

globally through the G20 Legacy Initiative, the Global Water Investment Platform (GIP). Together with statements by invited leaders and partners, these will form part of the substantive input to preparations for the 2026 UN Water Conference.

4.2. Review and endorsement of the progress report on the AIP's implementation and impact, including the activities of the AU-AIP International High-Level Panel on Water Investments for Africa.

4.3. Review and endorsement of the AIP-PIDA Water Investment Scorecard final report. The Scorecard is a first-of-its-kind report covering more than 30 African countries, to be showcased as a tool to track progress in the mobilisation of water investments, identify bottlenecks, and enhance mutual accountability for action at Heads of State level.

4.4. Formal commencement of the Panel's high-level engagement to mobilise commitments and resources for implementation of the outcomes of the AU-AIP Water Investment Summit, including the 2025 G20 Legacy Global Water Investment Platform (GIP) and the GIP Upstream De-risking Facility, towards the 2026 UN Water Conference.

4.5. Perspectives on how to accelerate progress and close Africa's water investment gap, addressing the five pillars of the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework: governance; data and information; innovation; financing; and capacity.



For more information about the Continental Africa Water Investment Programme (AIP) please visit <https://aipwater.org/>



For more information about the Global Water Investment Platform (GIP) please visit <https://gipwater.org/>

5. Draft Proposed Agenda

International High-Level Panel on Water Investments for Africa Global Leaders Event

Date: 21 September 2026, **Time:** 13:00–14:30, **Venue:** African Union Permanent Mission to the United Nations, New York

Time	Program
13:00	Welcome Remarks, Introduction and Setting the Scene - H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Chairperson, African Union Commission - H.E. Évariste Ndayishimiye, Chairperson of the African Union and President of the Republic of Burundi
13:10	High-Level Statements from Panel Co-Chairs and Convenors* - H.E. Jakaya Kikwete, Former President of the United Republic of Tanzania and Alternate Co-Chair of the High-Level Panel - H.E. Bassirou Diomaye Faye, President of the Republic of Senegal and Panel Co-Chair - H.E. Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa and Co-Convenor - H.E. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, President of the Republic of Namibia, Panel Co-Chair and Convenor
13:30	Mobilising Commitments from States and Governments for Concrete Outcomes at the 2026 UN Water Conference African Union High-Level Panel Members (TBC) - Democratic Republic of the Congo; Republic of The Gambia; Republic of Kenya; Kingdom of Morocco; United Republic of Tanzania; Republic of Zambia Co-Chairs of UN Water Interactive Dialogues and other Global leaders championing investments, cooperation and water diplomacy (TBC) - Republic of Barbados, Federative Republic of Brazil, Republic of Finland, French Republic, Federal Republic of Germany, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, United Mexican States, Republic of Panama, Republic of Tajikistan, United Arab Emirates
14:00	Mobilising Partner Commitments (TBC) Moderated by Global Water Partnership Organisation (GWPO) African Development Bank; Asian Development Bank; AUDA-NEPAD; European Union; Green Climate Fund; Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Capital Development Fund; UNICEF; World Bank Group
14:30	Summary and Closing H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Chairperson, African Union Commission

*Leaders appearing in the draft provisional agenda will be confirmed upon receipt of written confirmation

International High-Level Panel on Water Investments for Africa Leadership



H.E. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah
Co-Chair
President of the Republic of
Namibia



H.E. Bassirou Diomaye Faye
Co-Chair
President of the Republic of
Senegal



H.E. Jakaya Kikwete
Alternate Co-Chair
Former President of the United
Republic of Tanzania

