

19th Meeting of the Group of Friends on Water and Peace

Protecting Civilians: Introducing the Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts

This meeting will offer Member States an opportunity to learn about the protection of freshwater and water related infrastructure during armed conflicts and will introduce the Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts.

The impact of armed conflict on freshwater, water-related installations and other essential services is severe and long lasting. It poses grave humanitarian, development, and environmental challenges. Widespread conflict-related damages to dams, wastewater treatment plants, desalination plants, wells and pipelines have become a particularly worrying trend in 2023, resulting in a rapid decline of access to water for millions of civilians around the world.

During armed conflict, international law provides a solid regulatory framework, capable of limiting the extensive effects of armed conflicts on essential services indispensable for civilians. However, challenges with the implementation of international norms and law, in particular International Humanitarian Law, persist.

Recognizing the need for increased international mobilization on the protection of freshwater and water infrastructures during armed conflict, the Republic of Slovenia, Switzerland, and the Geneva Water Hub, in collaboration with partners (Senegal, Panama, Costa Rica, The Philippines, Indonesia, UNICEF and Pax for Peace) have laid the foundation for the Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts, which was officially launched during the Protection of Civilians Week in May 2024 at the UNHQ in New York.

The Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts, a community of member states, international governmental and non-governmental organizations, academia and civil society, advocates for respect and implementation of international law to protect freshwater and related installations at the international, regional, and domestic levels. It will also foster exchanges of knowledge on conflict-related damage, raise awareness about its consequences for civilians, identify opportunities to close the legal and policy gaps, and support relevant stakeholders in their implementation.

This meeting of the Group of Friends on Water and Peace will build on the official launch of the Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts and focus on how it can galvanize efforts at all levels to protect water and water-related installations from the consequences of armed conflicts.

Agenda

Opening Segment:

- **Ambassador Anita Pipan**, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva and Chair of the Group of Friends on Water and Peace
- **Ms. Laetitia Kirianoff**, Head, Humanitarian Section, Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva and Co-Chair of the Group of Friends on Water and Peace

Understanding the impact of attacks on water:

- **Mr. Guillaume Pierrehumbert**, Head, Water and Habitat Unit, International Committee of the Red Cross
- **Ms. Sandra Krähenmann**, Deputy Head, Policy, Research and Legal Unit, Geneva Call

Presentation of the Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts:

- **Prof. Mark Zeitoun**, Director General, Geneva Water Hub

Statements by the members of the Global Alliance:

- **Ambassador Christian Guillermet Fernández**, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Costa Rica to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva
- **Ambassador Febrian Alphyanto Ruddyard**, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Indonesia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva
- **Ambassador Coly Seck**, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Senegal to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva
- **Ambassador Carmen Ávila**, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Panama to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva
- **Ms. Hazel De Wet**, Deputy Director, UNICEF Geneva
- **Mr. Wim Zwijnenburg**, Humanitarian Disarmament Project Leader, PAX

Q&A – Interactive discussion with the audience on the role of the Global Alliance

Closing

- **Ambassador Anita Pipan**, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva and Chair of the Group of Friends on Water and Peace

Some guiding questions:

- How to promote a better understanding of the impacts and long-term consequences of attacks on water and sanitation installations?

- How to promote the use of existing tools and mechanisms to ensure a more systematic implementation of legal frameworks including the principles and norms of International Humanitarian Law, International Human Rights Law and International Water Law during and after armed conflicts?
- How can States, international organizations and civil society play a role in reducing the gap between existing legal frameworks and the international, regional and domestic mechanisms, which ensure their implementation? How may the use of these mechanisms contribute to strengthen the application of international norms and principles during and after armed conflicts?
- How can the UN General Assembly, the UN Human Rights Council and the UN Security Council enhance the implementation of existing legal frameworks protecting freshwater and related installations during and after armed conflicts?
- How to ensure pre-conflict preparedness and protective processes to shield water infrastructure and essential services through the inclusion of resilience-building measures? How to strengthen collaboration among diverse partners and actors from the peace, development and humanitarian communities in these efforts?
- What are the existing good practices and lessons learned that can lead to better protection of freshwater and related installations during and after armed conflicts?

When: 3rd of July from 12:00 to 13:30, followed by a cocktail reception.

Where: The meeting will be held in person at the Restaurant Vieux Bois, (Av. de la Paix 12, 1202 Genève)

Please RSVP to Mr. Erik Schnetzler (eschnetzler@genevawaterhub.org)

Should you have any questions, please contact Ms. Katarina Salaj (Katarina.Salaj@gov.si) or Mr. Basilio Ghisletta (bghisletta@genevawaterhub.org)

We look forward to seeing you soon!



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED
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