NETHERLANDS
UNESCO WMO
WATER COMMITTEE

De Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal
Ter attentie van de informateur, mr. S. van Haersma Buma
p/a Bureau Woordvoering Kabinetsformatie
Postbus 20018
2500 EA DEN HAAG

Delft, 25 November 2025

Dear Mr Van Haersma Buma and Members of the House of Representatives,

In many regions worldwide, the risks of flooding, drought, and declining water quality are increasing. This is often due to a combination of inadequate water management, climate change, socio-economic developments including population growth, and the rise of local and regional conflicts over water. The Netherlands holds a very strong international position in water management, which can be leveraged to address these challenges.

The Dutch government, the private sector, and Dutch knowledge and educational institutions are prominent global partners in the field of water management. The knowledge and insights we gain internationally strengthen our ability to tackle our own challenges, such as those related to climate adaptation. Internationally, “water” is an important part of the Dutch profile. The fact that Dutch actors disseminate knowledge and expertise worldwide is highly valued. Through water diplomacy as a form of “soft power,” the Netherlands also has impact in other policy areas and it can help to open doors. Dealing with water often requires system innovations—innovations of the water system as well as the governance system. All of this contributes to strengthen the Netherlands’ economic position.

However, the current position of the Netherlands in this field is under pressure. Global competition in knowledge and markets is increasing. Synergy between Dutch actors (government, companies, knowledge institutions and NGOs) is becoming less self-evident and less coherent. Diplomacy focused on self-interest and reduced investment in international knowledge exchange undermine the international profile of the Netherlands. Knowledge relations, in particular, help partner countries make their water management more sustainable and thereby generate more goodwill in bilateral relations as well as in the market.

The Netherlands UNESCO WMO Water Committee (NUWWC) provides recommendations to strengthen the Dutch international knowledge position in the field of water. The proposed measures enhance coherence in the efforts of government, businesses, research and knowledge institutions, and NGOs, in high-, middle-, and low-income countries alike. These parties will be better equipped to develop their own policies, programmes and projects, for the benefit of water management both in the Netherlands and internationally. Because

effective water management is a fundamental requirement everywhere, this contributes to all objectives of the international cooperation policy of the Netherlands.

Core principles of good water management are participation, transparency, cooperation, integrated approaches, evidence/knowledge-based policymaking, and the application of both traditional and new technologies and knowledge (Artificial Intelligence, nature-based solutions). This requires stronger interlinkages and exchange between the different knowledge domains related to water (including law, governance, health, and the physical-chemical water system), and stronger collaboration between science, government, and practice. Good water governance for system innovation depends on other fields of governance as well, such as spatial planning.

As a committee, we have the following recommendations:

1. **Promote international water cooperation with a central role for knowledge: good for the Netherlands and for international stability.**
   The role of knowledge in Dutch international water policy needs sharpening. The Netherlands can maintain its international knowledge position by investing in knowledge, science, ánd people from an innovation perspective. Investing in the water knowledge base is essential for achieving safe, healthy, and sustainably functioning water systems abroad—and in the Netherlands.

   The NUWWC recommends developing a shared and coherent vision on the role of knowledge in international water policy. We call on the national government/the Cabinet to take the initiative for this, or to invite the NUWWC (in cooperation with bodies such as the AIV and SER) to draft a proposal.

2. **Accelerate system innovation with a new approach to water management.**
   The challenges of water management often require system innovations: a different view on water management and spatial planning, cross-sector collaboration, inclusivity, transdisciplinary exchange, and differently operating water institutions. International knowledge exchange plays a crucial role in building the capacity for system innovation, both at individual and institutional levels. However, Dutch engagement needs new emphases: knowledge must also lead to decision-making and implementation. Long-term international cooperation on institutional capacity-building and “learning by doing” go hand in hand: institutions take more responsibility, involve stakeholders more, and become better at co-creation.

   The NUWWC calls on the national government/the Cabinet to explore how work on system innovation can be better embedded in international water cooperation.

3. **Intensify strategic interaction between water policy and science.**
   Knowledge institutions play an important role as knowledge brokers. Expertise platforms, such as the Expertise Netwerk Waterveiligheid (ENW) and the Expertise Netwerk Zoetwater en Droogte (ENZD), and on an international level the NUWWC, function as "science-policy interfaces." These roles can be further strengthened. They can be used to provide critical reflection on policy, contribute ideas when dilemmas arise in implementation, or when policy choices must be made.

   The NUWWC recommends that the national government/the Cabinet make structural use of the role of knowledge institutions and expertise platforms. Make use of existing expertise networks, implementation programmes (Ecoshape, NL2120), and internationally oriented organisations (Invest International, NLingenieurs) and sector networks (NWP, Water Alliance).

4. **Stimulate new research and education programmes to address global water challenges with new insights and partnerships.**
   Education is an important foundation for international cooperation and for maintaining the international network in the water sector. With new knowledge, water challenges can be approached differently. Moreover, a shortage of water professionals is anticipated. Investing in education and capacity-building for individuals and institutions, establishing scholarship programmes, and stimulating international partnerships is therefore urgent.

   The NUWWC urges the national government/the Cabinet to invest -through the lens of innovation- in international capacity-building, knowledge partnerships, and new water-oriented research and education programmes or training initiatives.

5. **Pursue high-quality knowledge exchange at the European level.**
   The Netherlands is an important co-financier of research and knowledge activities at the European level, such as Horizon Europe programmes and the Water4All Partnership. In addition, Dutch knowledge institutions are relatively successful in securing European research funding. Knowledge collaboration in Europe is of high quality and important for stimulating water-oriented innovation and coherence at the European level.

   The NUWWC recommends that the national government/the Cabinet continues to invest in knowledge collaboration at the European level, in cooperation with European partners.

The NUWWC believes it is important that the Netherlands remains a leading actor in the international water sector, is regarded as a "preferred partner," and contributes to a coherent and future-oriented international water agenda. By stimulating close exchange between politics, policy development, science, and practice, and by engaging in equitable

cooperation with international (knowledge) partners, Dutch water expertise can be deployed effectively to address global water challenges and contribute to sustainable relations.

Yours sincerely,

On behalf of the members and observers of the Netherlands UNESCO WMO Water Committee

Prof. D.r Michelle van Vliet

Scientific co-chair

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Annex: Brochure Netherlands UNESCO WMO Water Committee (2025)

The Netherlands UNESCO WMO Water Committee is a platform of scientists, policymakers and practitioners. It contributes to the international water research and implementation programmes of UNESCO and the WMO. The committee was originally established under the International Hydrological Decade (1964–1974). The platform brings together Dutch academic, research and operational organisations, as well as policy institutes working on hydrology, water management and meteorology from an international perspective. Please see the attached brochure for more information on the committee's composition and background.

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THE COMMITTEE

The Netherlands UNESCO WMO Water Committee (NUWWC) is a platform of scientists, policy makers and practitioners. It contributes to the water programmes of UNESCO and WMO. The committee was originally established in conjunction with the International Hydrological Decade (1965-1974). The platform currently unites Dutch academic, research and operational organizations as well as policy institutes working on hydrology, water resources management and meteorology from an international perspective. It is supported by a committee coordinator.

The primary role of the NUWWC is to contribute to the international water research programmes of UNESCO (the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme, IHP) and WMO (Vision and Strategy for Hydrology). During UNESCO IHP Council and WMO Congress meetings, this also involves expressing the formal Dutch position concerning decision-making on proposed resolutions. The committee plays a leading role in stimulating scientific advancements and constructive collaboration in international water research and capacity development, by contributing with knowledge and lessons learned, and by driving the implementation of projects and initiatives that aim to achieve SDG6.

COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES

- **Connect and stimulate interaction** between scientists, policy makers and practitioners (the science-policy-practice interface) from the international water research and capacity development communities.
- **Harmonize and drive** the Dutch contributions and position with regards to the international water research programmes of UNESCO and WMO.
- **Promote** committee members' expertise with water organizations in other countries, potential new partners and strategic actors in the UN Water Family network.
- **Stimulate and organize** knowledge sharing events and knowledge co-development initiatives.

UNESCO

The UNESCO Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (IHP) is the only intergovernmental cooperation programme of the UN system dedicated to freshwater research and management, and related capacity development. UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) hosts the IHP Secretariat, which coordinates the implementation of IHP together with its network of IHP National Committees, UNESCO Category 1 and 2 Centres, UNESCO Water Chairs, and other partners. Its ninth phase (2022-2029) is currently being implemented. IHP aims to highlight the relevance of water for sustainable development from the perspective of education (from primary to professional education), scientific advancement and innovation, as well as its social, historical and cultural dimension.

The Permanent Delegation of the Netherlands to UNESCO and the NUWWC coordinator harmonize the collective input and collaboration with UNESCO.
More information: link

WMO

WMO (World Meteorological Organization) has formulated its Vision and Strategy for Hydrology and the Associated Plan of Action. This represents the overall strategic framework of WMO for international water research and implementation projects in the fields of meteorology, climate research, cryosphere and operational hydrology. WMO conducts assessments of the quantity and quality of water resources. This helps national hydrological services with the hydrological data required for sustainable water resources management.

The Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute (KNMI) is responsible for the collaboration with WMO on meteorology-related topics. The National Hydrological Advisor, appointed at the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, coordinates operational hydrology related initiatives. The Advisor participates in WMO's Hydrological Assembly and Hydrological Coordination Panel. Support is provided by the Permanent Representation of the Netherlands to WMO and the NUWWC coordinator.
More information: link

THEMATIC EXPERTISE

The Committee members cover several areas of Dutch water expertise, built up over decades of research about and practical applications of water resources management.

OVERALL THEME

Hydrology

Hydrology is the central theme in the committee's collaboration with UNESCO and WMO. It serves as an overarching theme for various perspectives on water. From an academic perspective, this includes social, environmental, technological and cultural perspectives on water. In thematic terms, hydrology relates to flood and drought risk management to water governance, but also cross-cutting areas such as water-related capacity development and training. A broad range of programmes and initiatives is in place, which the Dutch water sector implements in collaboration with international partners.

SPECIFIC THEMATIC EXPERTISE

Water management in deltas

Deltas are densely populated places where rivers and seas meet. An integrated approach is required towards managing land and water in such challenging environments. The Dutch water sector has gained decades of experiences with managing water in deltaic areas. It has learned from other large deltas around the globe, with sometimes even more dynamic water systems. Delta management, and the development of policy frameworks for sustainable delta management including nature-based solutions, is a focal theme in the Dutch international water cooperation.

Water data collection and sharing

Several Dutch committee members have a long track record in water-related data generation, collection, analysis and sharing. This includes modeling and analyzing global hydrology and water resources, assessing water use in agriculture and crop production, conducting earth observation through remote sensing, and river flow forecasting. Advancements in meteorology improve our understanding of atmospheric processes, climate change and the effects on water resources. The topic of water data collection relates to the principles of Open Science. Committee members have contributed to the Global Runoff Dataset and European Water Archive.

SPECIFIC THEMATIC EXPERTISE

Water cooperation and governance

Water cooperation is key in international policies of the Netherlands. Some of the NUWWC committee members focus on studying the relationship between water, climate, peace and security. Others are active in water diplomacy in transboundary river basins. This theme also encompasses the broader field of water governance. Good water governance stresses the importance of timely stakeholder consultation across multiple levels and sound decision-making processes in water resources management.

Sustainable groundwater management

Groundwater makes up most of the world's freshwater reserves. It is essential to support wetlands and rivers. Although largely invisible, groundwater is essential to sustaining livelihoods in marginal areas, for example through drinking water supply and irrigation. In the Netherlands, where fresh groundwater aquifers prevent saline groundwater flows and seawater intrusion, various institutes have specialized in the topic of groundwater assessments and sustainable use of the resources. One example is the International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre, IGRAC, a WMO Centre.

Water Education and Capacity Development

Sustainable water resources management depends on the skills of professionals working in the water sector, as well as on the way national or regional water institutions operate. It is essential that the 'water workforce' is well-equipped in terms of competences and skills. Nearly all members of the NUWWC are active in water education and capacity development. IHE Delft Institute for Water Education is a UNESCO Category 2 Centre. In addition, over ten Dutch museums are member of UNESCO's Global Water Museum Network which aims to reach non-professionals and the general public with water knowledge.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Clingendael | Deltares | Twente University - ITC | Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment | Ministry of Foreign Affairs | Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management | Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature | Dutch Research Council | Rijkswaterstaat | Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute | Delft University of Technology | Utrecht University | Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam – IVM | Wageningen University and Research | KWR Water Research Institute | Dutch Water Authorities | Statistics Netherlands

OBSERVERS

International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre (IGRAC) | Ministry of Education, Culture and Science | Netherlands Water Partnership | Permanent Delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to UNESCO | IHE Delft Institute for Water Education | Netherlands Commission for UNESCO | EURO-FRIEND Water

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CONTACT

Are you interested in learning more about the Committee, its members, or in exploring opportunities for collaboration? Please contact the Committee secretariat via nuwwc@un-ihe.org.

Website: www.nuwwc.nl
E-mail: nuwwc@un-ihe.org
LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/groups/13149318/

Contributing to:

unesco Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme

50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE IHP 60 YEARS OF UNESCO WATER SCIENCES

WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION

WWW.NUWWC.NL