



## The 18th World Water Congress: A Journey of Knowledge Exchange and Unity

As the curtains fall on the 18th World Water Congress, it leaves behind a legacy of global cooperation, knowledge exchange, and shared commitment to water stewardship. This remarkable congress brought together 2980 registered attendees representing 891 water departments, organizations, and institutions, including 36 international organizations and 855 participants from 83 countries, with China at the forefront.

Over the course of this event, 4 plenary meetings, 36 special sessions, and 72 special sessions were convened, featuring 211 reports and 278 paper posters. In addition to these informative sessions, numerous multilateral activities fostered connections and understanding among attendees.

Delegates, spanning different cultures, languages, and backgrounds, crossed oceans and traveled from various corners of the world to participate. The congress showcased sincere dialogues, passionate discussions, profound reflections, and solemn declarations, and progress brought about by scientific advancements.

The congress, with its diverse representation and multifaceted discussions, has paved the way for a new era of global water governance. Participants, regardless of their origins, came together to promote a shared vision of responsible water management and a harmonious future for humanity and the environment. This congress marks the beginning of a new journey towards a sustainable and water-secure world, where collaboration knows no borders, and the commitment to safeguarding our most precious resource remains unwavering.





## Power of Youth: Cooperation for a Harmonious Future of People and Water

Callum Eric Crench, Director of the Executive Office of the International Water Resources Association, introduced the four World Water Envoys during the closing ceremony. Each Envoy reflected on their experiences, findings, and takeaways from the congress. They all also expressed gratitude to IWRA and the Ministry of Water Resources of the People's Republic of China.



▲ Kate Hawley

**Kate Hawley** from the United Kingdom placed a strong emphasis on the crucial ecological role that forests play. She highlighted the intricate connection between forests and water systems, underscoring the vital perspective of forest management within the realm of watershed water resources management. In addition, Kate Hawley emphasized the remarkable utility of GIS (Geographic Information Systems) and hydrological models as powerful tools in the realm of water resource management.

Furthermore, Kate Hawley shared her profound insights into the complex relationship between humanity and nature in matters related to water. She drew a metaphorical parallel, likening this intricate dynamic to the meandering course of rivers, emphasizing that the journey toward achieving harmony between humans and nature is not always a straightforward one. She expressed her deep gratitude to organizations like IWRA for providing invaluable tools for progress and offering the extraordinary gift of catalyzing meaningful change.



▲ Oudi Kgomongwe

**Oudi Kgomongwe:** Oudi from South Africa emphasized how the congress brought attention to groundwater management from various angles, including governance, international law, economics, and academia. She highlighted the significance of this comprehensive approach in addressing water-related challenges.

Moreover, Oudi Kgomongwe expressed her gratitude for the new connections and partnerships she formed during the event. These connections have not only expanded her network but have also provided valuable guidance on how to scale community-led groundwater management initiatives in South Africa.

Her experience exemplifies the congress's role in fostering international collaboration, knowledge exchange, and the development of practical solutions for global water challenges. Oudi Kgomongwe's commitment to implementing what she has learned underscores the congress's real-world impact and the importance of its diverse perspectives and expertise.



**Son Tra Nguyen** – Son Tra from Vietnam was inspired by China's innovative solutions for urbanization and water management. He sees these solutions as a valuable blueprint that can be adapted to address similar challenges in his home country.

He emphasized the importance of maintaining the connections and relationships established during the congress. He called for continued collaboration and partnerships among attendees to work together towards the shared objectives of ensuring equal, secure, and sustainable access to water resources.

His commitment to applying lessons learned from the congress to Vietnam underscores the global significance of knowledge-sharing and international cooperation in addressing pressing water-related issues. Son Tra Nguyen's call for ongoing collaboration reflects the spirit of unity and shared responsibility in addressing water challenges on a global scale.



▲ Son Tra Nguyen

**Moemen Sobh** – Moemen from Egypt shared his reflections on the congress, highlighting how it has enriched his perspective and provided him with new ideas to enhance his projects. He recognized that solutions to water-related challenges extend beyond technology and policy reforms; they also necessitate a fundamental shift in mindset and values.

His insights underscore the multidimensional nature of addressing water issues, emphasizing the importance of holistic approaches that encompass not only technical innovations but also cultural and attitudinal changes. Moemen's takeaway from the congress reflects the broader message of the event, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach to water sustainability.



▲ Moemen Sobh



## Summary of the Congress presented by Renée Martin-Nagle, ISC Co-Chair of the 18th World Water Congress

The 18th World Water Congress in Beijing, a global forum for water sustainability, concluded successfully after five days of intensive discussions and knowledge exchange. Attended by policy leaders, experts, and representatives from 69 countries, this historic event focused on the protection and sustainable development of water resources.

Notably, this was the first time the World Water Congress convened in China, attracting worldwide attention. Distinguished speakers included Mr. Liu Weiping, Vice Minister of the Ministry of Water Resources of the People's Republic of China, and Mr. Li Yuanyuan, President of the International Water Resources Association.



▲ Renée Martin-Nagle

Throughout the congress, 127 activities explored the theme "Water for all: Harmony between Humans and Nature." It also recognized individuals contributing to water management, with the Water Drop Award presented to Lindsey Blodgett, the Crystal Drop Award to Olcay Ünver and the Korea Water Resources Corporation (K-Water), and the Ven Te Chow Memorial lecture award presented to Prof. Xia Jun .

A prominent message emerged: urgent action is needed to address water-related challenges, including water stress, floods, droughts, and climate change. Modern water governance, cooperation, and international collaboration are critical.

China, a significant player in global water governance, shared its practices and commitment to high-quality development in the water sector. This includes building a national water network, enhancing flood and drought defense capabilities, protecting ecosystems, promoting digital twin water management, conserving water resources, and optimizing water allocation.

The congress highlighted the importance of inclusive development, multilateral cooperation, and sharing successful water governance experiences to achieve the water-related goals of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Collective efforts and international collaboration will be instrumental in addressing water challenges and building a sustainable and water-secure future for all.

The success of the 18th World Water Congress was attributed to the dedicated efforts of the Ministry of Water Resources of the People's Republic of China, the International Water Resources Association, the General Institute of Water Resources and Hydropower Planning and Design, and the Beijing Water Authority.



## Voice of Consensus: Announcement of the Beijing Declaration

Ms. Shi Qiuchi, the Chinese Chairman of the Scientific Committee of the Conference, read out the Beijing Declaration of the 18th World Water Resources Conference. Wang Daoxi, Vice Minister of Water Resources of China, Shi Qiuchi, Co Chairman of the Scientific Committee of the Conference, Renee Martin Nagel, and Li Yuanyuan, Chairman of the International Water Resources Society, jointly signed the Beijing Declaration on site.



### The Congress recognises:

Water is the source of everything, including humans and nature. It is unique and irreplaceable in terms of the birth, evolution, and long-term sustainable development of human society. The protection and rational use of water resources is a shared responsibility for all people and all countries and regions.

The scarcity of freshwater resources has become a significant constraint on economic and social development and on healthy ecosystems. Improving water use efficiency and effectiveness is fundamental to achieving harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Every individual and organisation, every enterprise and industry, every country and region, shall do their best to conserve water, and to rationally and efficiently develop and utilise water resources.

Innovative approaches to water resources management are necessary to address the impacts of climate change and global development. Water professionals and managers should not only focus on utilisation and protection of water resources, but also consider the rational utilisation and protection of all water-related natural resources and ecosystems, as well as economic and social development.

Since we live on the same planet and face common water problems and challenges, we need to exchange ideas and experiences on water governance. As the host country of the Congress, China has adopted innovative approaches to water governance - "prioritizing water conservation, balancing water distribution in time and space, and taking a systematic approach to water management with the synergy of government and market". China is sharing with the rest of the world its experience in guaranteeing the right to safe drinking water for all, improving water security capabilities, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. These achievements have been made under conditions of overall water shortages, extremely uneven spatio-temporal distribution of water resources, frequent occurrence of floods and droughts. This approach demonstrates the spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation proposed by the 2023 UN Water Conference.

## The Congress calls for:

Efficient utilisation and protection of water resources. As an important conference in the international field of water resources following the 2023 UN Water Conference, we -- experts, scholars and managers from all over the world -- continue to call for all countries and regions to make every effort to achieve the water-related Sustainable Development Goals, while also improving the rational development, efficient utilisation, optimised distribution, systematic approach, and effective protection of water through various aspects such as national policy, innovative technology and methods, information sharing, capacity building, investment and financing, and public participation.

Innovative concepts, technologies, policies, and management on water governance. Facing new problems induced by climate change and other global challenges, we need to develop new knowledge on water, innovate water management concepts, methodologies and technological products, and reform water management systems and mechanisms based on tradition, in order to respond to the complexities of climate change and ensure sustainable economic and social development while protecting vital ecosystems.

Scientific decision-making in water resources management. Water is a key element in complex natural ecosystems and in economic and social systems. Water practitioners should have a deeper understanding, through multidisciplinary research, of the complex relationship among water, land, and the ecosystems, as well as the integrated nexus between water, food, energy, health, and economic development, in order to balance the needs of populations, economy, natural resources and the environment, and maximise the supportive role of scientific decision-making in water management and policy formulation.

Water issues solution for poverty reduction. Water insecurity induces poverty and constrains economic growth in many parts of the world. All nations should strive to provide clean drinking water and sanitation facilities, enhance water security capabilities for residents in impoverished areas, including vulnerable groups in developed countries. Active participation of the private sector is encouraged to improve water governance. Developed countries should provide necessary technical assistance and financial support to developing countries to achieve sustainable utilisation of water resources and sustainable economic and social development.

Water science dissemination, and water literacy and awareness improvement. Efforts should be made to upgrade the level of water knowledge education all over the world, to encourage more people to care about, love, save and protect water, to respect river and lake ecosystems, and to recognise, use, manage and protect water in a more scientific and sustainable manner.

Sharing of experiences and solutions to jointly address water challenges. It is essential to promote international exchange and cooperation in scientific research, technological innovation, and management practice in the field of water resources, enhance mutual understanding and support, foster harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, and work together to accelerate the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals and to create a greener, more peaceful, and more sustainable world.





## Gratitude and Expectation: Cooperation and Development

### GIWP President Fengsheng Shen Highlights Role in Water Conservancy

During the closing ceremony, GIWP (General Institute of Water Resources and Hydropower Planning) President Fengsheng Shen emphasized GIWP's crucial role in China's water conservancy sector, with a history spanning over 70 years. He stated that GIWP has actively supported water conservancy reforms and development, providing essential technical support to China's economy and society.

President Fengsheng Shen pledged GIWP's commitment to the principle of harmonious coexistence between humans and water. The organization's key areas of focus include scientific research, technological innovation, and optimizing management plans for flood control, major national water network projects, ecological restoration, smart water conservancy, water-saving policies, and legal management.

Additionally, President Fengsheng Shen expressed GIWP's eagerness to collaborate with global scientific research institutions and academic groups to share experiences, address water security risks, and contribute Chinese wisdom and solutions to the global water crisis. GIWP's dedication to sustainable water resource management and its extensive history make it a vital player in tackling water-related challenges both in China and globally.



▲ Fengsheng Shen

### IWRA President Yuanyuan Li Closes the 18th World Water Congress with a Call for Global Cooperation

During the closing ceremony, Yuanyuan Li, President of the International Water Resources Association (IWRA), extended his sincere gratitude to all attendees, including representatives from government departments, research institutions, universities, enterprises, and international organizations from around the world. She acknowledged their valuable contributions, suggestions, and the sharing of water management concepts and experiences.

President Li also expressed his appreciation for the strong support provided by various institutions, including the Ministry of Water Resources of the People's Republic of China, as well as the organizers, sponsors, and participants. He emphasized that the success of the conference was made possible through their unwavering support and the dedication of staff and volunteers.

Highlighting the pressing global water challenges, including issues related to water resources, ecology, environment, and disasters, President Li underscored the growing complexity of these challenges. Coupled with the increasing impact of global climate change and uncertainties in economic recovery, addressing these water-related issues has become a shared responsibility.

President Li called for united efforts to advance water science and management, deepen international exchanges and cooperation, and promote high-quality development of water resources across planning, utilization, protection, and management. He stressed the importance of continued scientific research and policy exchange in the field of water resources.

In closing, President Li encouraged attendees to contribute their water management solutions and technical expertise to promote a greener, healthier, and safer global development. He urged all participants to work collectively toward building a harmonious relationship between humanity and nature and to contribute to the shared goal of creating a more sustainable and prosperous global community.



▲ Yuanyuan Li



## Vice Minister Daoxi Wang of China's Ministry of Water Resources Extends Gratitude and Calls for Global Water Cooperation

In his closing remark, Vice Minister Daoxi Wang of the Ministry of Water Resources of the People's Republic of China congratulated the congress's resounding success. He extended his heartfelt appreciation to representatives from over 60 countries and regions, as well as more than 30 international organizations, for their extensive participation. He also expressed gratitude to major river basin institutions, research institutions, provincial water conservancy departments in China, and experts and scholars from both domestic and foreign countries for their invaluable contributions. Wang acknowledged the meticulous arrangements and dedication of the World Water Congress organizing committee and staff.



▲ Daoxi Wang

Highlighting the vital importance of water management, Wang emphasized its role in the survival of nations, the progress of civilization, and the strength of countries. In the face of common global challenges such as frequent water disasters, water resource shortages, ecological damage, and environmental pollution, Wang stressed the need for collective action. He called for turning ambitions into actions, deepening partnerships, enhancing cooperation, and achieving mutual benefit and win-win outcomes.

Wang underlined China's commitment to taking powerful and effective measures. China is eager to uphold the principles of innovation, coordination, green development, openness, and sharing, guided by the 'water conservation priority, spatial balance, systematic governance, and dual efforts' water governance concept. China aims to engage in discussions and knowledge-sharing on water governance strategies and experiences with other countries. Wang concluded by emphasizing China's dedication to working collectively towards global water governance reform and development, uniting to write a new chapter in the global effort to manage this precious resource.



### The way forward: IWRA's Commitment to Advancing Global Water Management

The International Water Resources Association (IWRA) is dedicated to addressing global water resource management challenges and will persist in its mission to make a positive impact. The organization will maintain its focus on critical water-related issues worldwide, work on the enhancement and expansion of various congress activities, and continue to foster collaborations with key partners.

Central to IWRA's commitment is the continuation of hosting essential events such as the World Water Resources Congresses, Islands Water Congresses, and various online conferences. These gatherings serve as platforms for knowledge sharing, networking, and problem-solving in the realm of water resource management.

In addition to congresses, IWRA will continue to release valuable knowledge products and publications, with a special emphasis on policy briefs and its journal, 'Water International.' These publications serve as vital sources of information and insights for the global water community.

Furthermore, IWRA will actively engage in capacity building initiatives, offering webinars and master classes to empower individuals and organizations with the knowledge and skills needed to tackle water challenges effectively.

IWRA's unwavering dedication to advancing water resource management and promoting cooperation and knowledge exchange among stakeholders underlines its enduring legacy and vital role in addressing the world's water-related concerns.

## IWRA's 1st Islands Water Congress set to take place in September 2024



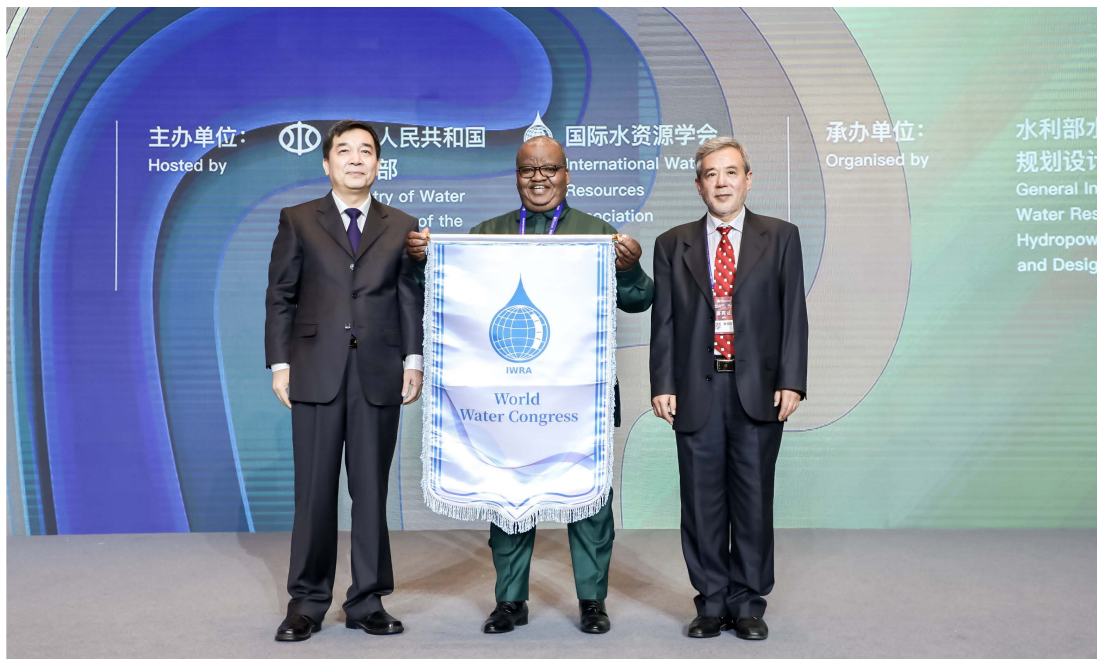
IWRA's 1st Islands Water Congress (<https://islandswatercongress.org/>) jointly organized by the IWRA and the Faroes Geological Survey will be held from September 4th - 6th under the a theme of Freshwater and Islands: Administration, Collaboration, and Innovation." This inaugural Islands Water Congress promises to be a significant gathering for water experts, researchers, policymakers, and enthusiasts.

## Historic Announcement: The 19th World Water Congress Heads to Durban, South Africa in 2025 – A First for Africa!

Prepare for a remarkable journey as the world of water resource management shifts its focus to Durban, South Africa. The 19th World Water Congress is set to take place in this vibrant African city in 2025, following the successful 18th World Water Congress held in Beijing.

The transition from Beijing to Durban symbolizes the global nature of the water challenges we face. Crossing the equator and spanning the Indian Ocean, this move brings the congress to the continent with some of the world's most dynamic emerging economies and developing nations.

The 19th World Water Congress promises to be a resounding success, building on the legacy of its predecessors. As the International Water Resources Association (IWRA) continues its commitment to addressing global water challenges and advancing the achievement of strategic water-related goals, the congress activities will play a pivotal role.







## Acknowledging the Unsung Heroes: The Dedicated Staff Behind the Scenes

While the spotlight shines on the stage, it's crucial to acknowledge the unsung heroes who tirelessly work behind the scenes to ensure the success of the congress. The Congress Secretariat, Major Event Support Group, and Logistics Support Team form the backbone of this remarkable event.

**The Congress Secretariat**, the longest-serving group, shoulders the initial preparations, often working late into the night. Their tasks are intricate and meticulous, leaving no room for errors. With a detailed division of labor for process control, host confirmation, on-site records, and conference services, they seamlessly connect every aspect to guarantee flawless agendas and activities.

**The Event Service Group** was the first to arrive at the venue, dividing its members into multiple teams to provide personalized pick-up and drop-off services for conference attendees. Sign-ins, document distribution, check-ins, lobby reception, and floor support are meticulously handled, leaving no detail overlooked. They also conduct thorough room inspections to ensure a peaceful and comfortable environment.

**The Logistics Service Team**, the hardest working of all, undertook an array of responsibilities. During the early stages of conference preparation, team members travelled extensively to secure funding, scout venues, arrange meetings with conference centers, recruit volunteers, procure equipment, oversee meal preparation, and create a pleasant atmosphere for attendees. Their dedication is instrumental in ensuring the conference's success.

**The Rapporteurs**, who played a vital role in capturing the essence of the congress. They recorded summaries of all the congress sessions, which were used in the daily newsletters and the final congress report. These individuals ensure that the insights and discussions of each session are preserved, contributing significantly to the documentation of the event's proceedings.

**The leaders of the Ministry of Water Resources**, in their participation at the conference venue, took the time to review the meticulous execution of various tasks, acknowledging and appreciating the hard work put into making the event run smoothly. These dedicated individuals behind the scenes are the pillars upon which the success of the congress rests, and their contributions deserve our heartfelt gratitude.

**The IWRA Executive Office**, behind this collective effort, the IWRA Executive Office deserves special recognition. They provided comprehensive support on all fronts of the congress from start to finish, such as aiding the International Scientific Committee, the Congress Secretariat, and the Rapporteurs. Their unwavering dedication ensured the smooth execution of this congress.





## The many faces of the Congress



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