Water insecurity threatens growth, resilience, and security: UK statement at the High-Level Celebration of World Water Day 2026

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Statement by Sacha Heathfield, UK Policy Adviser, Climate and Nature, at High-Level Celebration of World Water Day 2026.

The United Kingdom is fully aligned with the cross-regional statement delivered by Finland and would like to make a few additional remarks.
World Water Day is being held amidst a global crisis of too much, too little, or too polluted water, and in an era of Global Water Bankruptcy.

Climate change and nature loss are intensifying the global water cycle, fuelling more frequent and severe floods and droughts. The reality is stark, and we welcome the launch of the global development water report presented today.

The impacts are far-reaching and systemic for our economies and societies: water insecurity threatens growth, resilience, and security, as underlined by the UK's recent Global Ecosystems Assessment.

We know that women and girls are on the front line of this crisis, disproportionately impacted, yet we also know that women and girls are underrepresented in water governance, and that water security is a critical enabler of gender equality.

The United Kingdom is working towards a water-secure world free from poverty on a liveable planet. Strengthening resilience to climate impacts; reforming the global development architecture; embedding women and girls' safety and rights at the heart of our work.

Looking ahead, we need to ensure that the UN Water Conference, High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, and trio of Rio Convention 'COPs' make 2026 a 'watershed' year.

We are championing four priorities to strengthen global water security.

First, building political ambition through integrating and elevating water security across the international architecture, enabling delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals, Paris Agreement and Global Biodiversity Framework.

Second, accelerating policy reform and strengthening government systems: integrating water security in national planning and improving climate-resilient, inclusive, safe, and gender-responsive water and sanitation services.

Third, strengthening corporate stewardship and sustainable water management through global trade and supply chains, whether in food and agriculture, energy, textiles or other key water-intensive industries and sectors.

Fourth, 'watering' the Global Financial System to integrate water risk and resilience, and ensure

freshwater is properly valued and accounted for, in economic and financial decision-making.

Across these priorities, the UK is committed to working in partnership with you all to strengthen water security and gender equality.

https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/water-insecurity-threatens-growth-resilience-and-security-uk-statement-at-the-high-level-celebration-of-world-water-day-2026