



SUMMARY REPORT

Edinburgh 25 June 2026
09:00 – 16:00

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On June 25th, roughly 61 people from over 40 organisations came together in Edinburgh. Below is a list of the organisations that were represented at the event:

AAHRED	LeafTurtle
Aganova	LimnoTech
Alliance for Water Stewardship	Mirage Energy
Apple	Montana State University
AstraZeneca	Nestle Waters
AWS	Pacific Institute
Blueit	Qatium
Ceres	Quantis
Chatham House	RTI International
Connecting for Change	SDC
Diageo	The Nature Conservancy
EdgeConnex	The Rivers Trust
ERM	Water For People
Finnish Environment Institute	Water Resilience Coalition
FluxGen	Water Witness International
Global Water Challenge (GWC)	Water.org
Grundfos	WaterAid
Haskoning	Wetlands International
Frank Water	WWF

This multistakeholder group spent time discussing three topics around tables that were framed around the 2026 UN Water Conference, specifically the topics were:

1. 2026 UN Water Conference – Private Sector Mobilisation
2. Connecting Business and Government
3. Collective Organisation & non-accredited space design

The group met around 10 tables for these discussions. Attendees completed surveys at the start and end of the day to gauge the sentiment in the room with respect to the community's ability to coordinate and mobilise ahead of the 2026 UN Water Conference. During the day there were also two shorter Provocations for the attendees to explore – the first of these was intended to be a warm up to the days dialogues and was conducted under Chatham House rules and notes were not taken. Facilitators guided reflections over the three discussions and captured input in a Google Doc, which was synthesized with ChatGPT into WaterLogue outputs.

WaterLogues is an evolving, unfunded initiative and these insights are intended to encourage and enable the community to advance certain actions. These insights from this WaterLogue event will be shared with the organisers of the 2026 UN Water Conference for consideration during their planning stages.

Key conclusions:

Discussion 1 – 2026 UN Water Conference:

Participants consistently emphasised that mobilising meaningful private sector action requires a shift from new commitments towards stronger collaboration, trust and implementation. Across all four pillars, there was broad agreement that the greatest opportunities lie in aligning business action with government priorities, strengthening basin-level governance, simplifying the water narrative around resilience, and creating enabling conditions for investment rather than simply mobilising more finance.

The discussions also highlighted several cross-cutting themes. Participants expressed a strong desire to build on the momentum, initiatives and commitments emerging from the 2023 UN Water Conference, rather than creating parallel efforts. There was recognition that participation—particularly from the private sector—cannot be assumed and that the value proposition for engagement must be more compelling. While investment remains fragmented and financial models for scaling water resilience continue to be a

significant challenge, participants consistently emphasised that improving the coordination and governance of investment is just as important as increasing the volume of finance available.

Overall, participants concluded that lasting progress will depend on practical partnerships, trusted coordination mechanisms, shared evidence and clearer pathways from global ambition to local action. Rather than launching new initiatives, they repeatedly called for strengthening existing platforms, showcasing successful examples, and creating the conditions for governments, businesses and civil society to work together around shared water resilience outcomes.

Discussion 2 – Connecting Business and Government:

Participants consistently emphasised that moving from dialogue to action requires stronger trust, clearer governance and more practical collaboration between governments, businesses and NGOs. Across all discussions, there was broad agreement that investment is constrained less by a lack of finance than by fragmented governance, weak coordination, limited trust and insufficient alignment around shared national and basin priorities.

The discussions highlighted several cross-cutting themes. Participants repeatedly stressed that long-term relationships, transparency and shared implementation are more valuable than new commitments or reporting frameworks. Shared need—particularly in response to drought, and to a lesser extent floods—was recognised as a powerful catalyst for bringing sectors together around common challenges. Participants also identified financing as both a major barrier and a potential enabler of collaboration, emphasising that stronger coordination of funding and more practical financing models are essential to unlock investment. Water resilience emerged as a useful framing that provides simple, accessible language capable of connecting governments, businesses and civil society around shared objectives.

Overall, participants concluded that governments, businesses and NGOs have distinct but complementary roles, with success depending on stronger coordination, clearer enabling environments, trusted conveners and practical, locally grounded examples that demonstrate credible pathways from collaboration to investment ahead of the 2026 UN Water Conference.

Provocation: Who is missing:

Participants consistently emphasised that expanding the impact of the water stewardship community depends on engaging a broader and more diverse set of actors with the influence to shape policy, mobilise finance and drive implementation. Across the discussions, there was broad agreement that participation should be intentional and purpose-driven, with a clear understanding of why different actors are needed and the value they bring.

The discussions highlighted several cross-cutting themes. Participants identified finance and investors, utilities, cities and local governments, infrastructure and supply chain actors, regulators, multiple levels of government, philanthropic organisations, and Indigenous Peoples, local communities and Global South organisations as priority groups that remain underrepresented. They also recognised that participation cannot be broadened simply through invitations; engagement must be tailored to the motivations, language and decision-making processes of different audiences. Framing water through economic risk, resilience and investment opportunities was seen as a more compelling way to engage many sectors, while reducing practical barriers to participation—particularly for Global South organisations, Indigenous Peoples and local communities—was viewed as essential to creating a more representative and influential water stewardship community.

Discussion 3 – Collective Organisation & non-accredited space:

Participants consistently emphasised that maximising the impact of the water stewardship community before, during and after the 2026 UN Water Conference will depend on better coordination, stronger visibility and more intentional collaboration. Across the discussions, there was broad agreement that the Conference should be designed to catalyse practical partnerships and lasting action, rather than simply providing a platform for dialogue.

The discussions highlighted several cross-cutting themes. Participants stressed that the water stewardship community should have a clearer and more purposeful collective presence, supported by stronger communication of existing initiatives, evidence and progress, while ensuring the perspectives of water users and the private sector are better represented. There was particularly strong support for developing a **public-private water stewardship collaboration proposal for the Conference's accredited programme**, creating a visible bridge between the accredited and non-accredited spaces and demonstrating how governments, businesses and civil society can work together around practical implementation. Participants also favoured designing the Conference to actively connect governments, businesses, civil society, finance and philanthropy through structured engagement, practical matchmaking and real-world examples of successful collaboration, with relationships and initiatives continuing well beyond the Conference itself.

NEXT STEPS:

On the back of the event, the following next steps were identified (not yet prioritised):

- Accredited space proposal on public-private collaboration to be developed by IWRA, WWF, AWS, CEO WM and others in July 2026
- Continue build out of collective action platform database to be released in beta form in Q3 2026
- Feedback, including this synthesis report, to be provided to the UAE government and 2026 UN Water Conference organizers.
- WWF, Earth Finance and GlobeScan to publish a paper on collaborative financing models in September 2026

** This WaterLogues event was made possible by the generous support from
Fair Water Footprint and Global Water Challenge **

SYNTHESIS OF DIALOGUES

DIALOGUE 1: 2026 UN Water Conference: Private Sector Mobilisation

This synthesis captures key insights and recommendations from discussions from attendees.

The purpose of this session was to explore what it would take to mobilise meaningful private sector action through the 2026 UN Water Conference. Through the consultative process leading up to the Conference, four areas have emerged as potential pillars for strengthening private sector engagement.

The objective of this session is not to review or endorse a framework. Rather, it is to draw on the collective experience of participants to identify what would make each of these pillars useful, credible and capable of driving meaningful action.

Attendees were asked to reflect on the question:

What would it take to mobilise meaningful private sector action through to the 2026 UN Water Conference?

The tables were divided into groups and were assigned more specific Pillars (see below) on which to consider the above question. These pillars were:

- **Pillar 1:** Joint Advocacy & Narrative
- **Pillar 2:** Aligned Goal Setting
- **Pillar 3:** Business-Government Collaborations
- **Pillar 4:** Investment & Innovation

Below is a summary of the key insights that came from each of these discussion groups:

Pillar 1: Joint Advocacy & Narrative

Summary

Participants consistently concluded that the water stewardship community needs a clearer, simpler narrative that resonates beyond the water sector and motivates action across governments, business and civil society. Resilience emerged as the strongest framing because it connects water to economic prosperity, climate adaptation and societal wellbeing. Participants also agreed that the narrative should be grounded in practical examples, local relevance and demonstrated outcomes rather than technical language or new concepts.

Key Insights

Resilience provides a common language

Broad consensus emerged that resilience is the narrative that best connects governments, business and civil society. Participants described water as a "super connector" that underpins economic activity, climate resilience and human wellbeing, making resilience a more accessible framing than traditional water stewardship language. Framing resilience as "water resilience" and rallying on this point emerged from the discussion.

Simple messages are more powerful than technical language

Participants repeatedly stressed the need for simple, bold language centred on resilience, risk, responsibility and resources. They felt that terms such as "collective action" and other technical concepts can become barriers if they are not accompanied by clear examples and tangible outcomes.

Global ambition needs local meaning

Participants recognised that international messages only become meaningful when translated into national, regional and basin-level action. They emphasised that examples should reflect local realities, different cultural and economic contexts, and demonstrate how water stewardship supports national priorities.

Evidence builds credibility

Participants consistently highlighted the importance of demonstrating what already works. Practical basin examples, positive stories, evidence of return on investment and examples from different regions were viewed as more persuasive than new messaging alone.

Water should be framed through wider societal benefits

Participants repeatedly described water as an enabler of climate adaptation, economic development, infrastructure resilience and delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals. They felt this broader framing would engage governments, business and investors more effectively than positioning water as a standalone environmental issue.

Divergent Views

- While participants broadly supported a common narrative, some questioned whether future messaging should remain explicitly water-focused or evolve towards a broader resilience narrative.
- Participants expressed differing views on the prominence of "collective action" in communications. Several felt that people connect more readily with demonstrated outcomes than with descriptions of collaborative processes.

Participant Recommendations

For the 2026 UN Water Conference

- Develop a simple, bold narrative centred on resilience, using language that links water to economic prosperity, climate resilience and societal wellbeing.
- Create spaces and opportunities to showcase practical examples from different basins that demonstrate tangible environmental, social and economic outcomes, and illustrate how water stewardship contributes to national priorities.
- Build on initiatives that are already demonstrating success rather than creating entirely new initiatives, encouraging governments to expand and strengthen existing approaches.
- Use visual storytelling and relatable examples to make the Conference narrative more accessible and relevant to different audiences and ensure the outputs of the conference are more relatable to those who are not physically present at the conference.
- Encourage and incentivize delegates to attend sessions and events that they would not normally attend to better understand the language being used by other groups and also understand the needs of other sectors and groups.
- Consider a disruptive action that highlights the importance of water – e.g., remove coffee from the conference as a very tangible example of the impacts of not finding a solution to water challenges

For the Water Stewardship Community

- Engage with audiences beyond the water sector by participating in forums focused on trade, agriculture, mining, economics and finance to better understand their priorities and language.
- Strengthen the evidence base by supporting locally led examples, including approaches such as Water Funds and the Fair Water Action Fund that help civil society organisations demonstrate impact.
- Develop a shared repository of basin case studies, current interventions and remaining gaps to support communication and collaboration.

- Work more closely with corporate public affairs teams to strengthen government engagement and demonstrate how water stewardship contributes to national priorities.

Pillar 2: Aligned Goal Setting

Summary

Participants consistently concluded that future water stewardship goals should strengthen coordination and collaboration rather than create additional reporting frameworks or new corporate pledges. They emphasised that lasting progress depends on building trust, strengthening governance and aligning diverse stakeholders around shared basin priorities. Goals were seen as most valuable when they create the conditions for long-term collaboration while remaining aligned with existing global frameworks.

Key Insights

Goals should prioritise coordination over new commitments

Participants repeatedly argued that new goals should not become another reporting or commitment framework. Instead, they should invest in trust, coordination and relationships, recognising that stronger collaboration is a prerequisite for lasting water stewardship outcomes.

Partnerships should be the foundation of future goals

Participants consistently described partnerships as the defining characteristic of meaningful goals. Governments, businesses, civil society and communities were all seen as having complementary roles, with companies contributing through their own targets while aligning behind shared basin priorities.

Goals should align with existing global frameworks

Participants favoured goals that reinforce existing commitments, including SDG 6, SDG 17, the Global Goal on Adaptation and biodiversity frameworks, rather than creating parallel initiatives. Alignment was viewed as a way to reduce duplication and demonstrate how water stewardship contributes to wider sustainability objectives.

Good governance enables lasting outcomes

Participants repeatedly highlighted the need for trusted conveners, clear governance arrangements and dedicated coordination. Neutral organisations, catalytic funding and recognised champions were all identified as important for sustaining collaboration and translating shared commitments into action.

Goals should reflect broader outcomes than water alone

Participants emphasised that meaningful goals should demonstrate contributions to wider priorities such as circular economy, nature-based solutions and community resilience. They also cautioned against an over-emphasis on replenishment or purely quantitative targets where these do not reflect basin priorities or encourage collaboration.

Divergent Views

- Participants questioned whether future goals should include quantitative targets, with several favouring commitments focused on processes such as trust-building, governance and coordination rather than numerical outcomes.

Participant Recommendations

For the 2026 UN Water Conference

- Demonstrate what coordinated leadership can achieve by launching one or two basin-based leadership platforms that bring together senior government, business and civil society leaders, supported by an independent backbone organisation and catalytic funding.
- Encourage the framing of future goals around strengthening partnerships and coordination rather than creating additional reporting or commitment frameworks.

- Align any new goals with existing global frameworks, including SDG 6, SDG 17, the Global Goal on Adaptation and biodiversity initiatives.

For the Water Stewardship Community

- Develop shared basin priorities that allow organisations to retain their own corporate targets while contributing to collective outcomes.
- Support long-term collaboration through trusted conveners, dedicated coordination and clear governance arrangements.
- Use language that reflects partnerships, shared responsibility and wider societal outcomes rather than focusing solely on replenishment or quantitative water targets.

Pillar 3: Business-Government Collaborations

Summary

Participants consistently concluded that stronger collaboration between governments and business depends on building trust, creating enabling policy environments and establishing clearer mechanisms for coordinated action. They emphasised that collaboration should move beyond individual projects towards long-term partnerships aligned with national and basin priorities. Participants also recognised that successful collaboration requires clearer governance, shared language and practical examples that demonstrate value for both sectors.

Key Insights

Trust underpins effective collaboration

Participants repeatedly identified lack of trust as the greatest barrier to collaboration between governments and business. They highlighted concerns around corporate motivations, changing personnel, political cycles and limited understanding between sectors, noting that trust must be built through transparency, humility and sustained engagement.

Governments have a key enabling role

Participants consistently highlighted the importance of governments providing clear national priorities, stable regulation, basin-level goals and public endorsement of private sector participation. This was seen as creating the certainty businesses need while ensuring investments support national objectives.

Collaboration requires stronger coordination and governance

Participants described fragmented institutions, differing timelines and the absence of recognised coordination mechanisms as major barriers. Neutral facilitators, multi-stakeholder platforms and basin-level governance arrangements were viewed as important mechanisms for bringing sectors together and maintaining momentum.

Shared goals and language enable collaboration

Participants noted that collaboration is often hindered by different terminology, objectives and ways of working across sectors. They highlighted the importance of developing shared goals, common language and clearer goalposts so that governments and businesses can align around common priorities.

Implementation remains a significant challenge

Participants observed that many strategies fail to translate into action because of permitting delays, inconsistent implementation of policy, limited links between national and local action, and weak connections between global corporate commitments and local delivery. Practical examples of successful collaboration were viewed as important for demonstrating what implementation can look like.

Participant Recommendations

For the 2026 UN Water Conference

- Showcase examples of successful public-private collaboration, including municipal infrastructure partnerships, wastewater reuse initiatives and country-level water compacts, to demonstrate practical models for implementation.
- Create equal opportunities to increase awareness of existing initiatives (e.g., Water Forward country compacts, Water Finance Framework etc.) rather than only showcasing a small discreet selection to encourage greater participation and understanding of available collaboration pathways rather than establishing new ones.

For the Water Stewardship Community

- Establish national multi-stakeholder platforms that publicly endorse and normalise private sector participation in delivering national water priorities.
- Use neutral facilitators to convene governments, businesses and civil society, helping to bridge differences, build trust and support long-term collaboration.
- Develop clearer national and basin-level goals, supported by shared data, so businesses can align investments with government priorities.
- Strengthen communication between global corporate teams and local implementation teams by sharing more basin-level case studies and practical examples of successful collaboration.

Pillar 4: Investment & Innovation

Summary

Participants consistently concluded that increasing investment in water resilience depends less on mobilising additional finance and more on improving governance, coordination and investment readiness. They highlighted the need for stronger basin planning, better data, clearer funding pathways and more effective collaboration between governments, utilities, investors and businesses. While new financing approaches generated interest, participants stressed that they should reinforce good governance rather than operate independently of it.

Key Insights

Governance and coordination are the primary barriers to investment

Broad consensus emerged that weak coordination, fragmented governance, limited basin data and unstable regulatory environments are greater barriers than the availability of capital. Participants repeatedly highlighted disconnects between governments, utilities, investors and local stakeholders as limiting investment.

Investment should support whole-of-basin resilience

Participants consistently argued that investment should extend beyond traditional infrastructure to include grey, green and social infrastructure, supported by adaptation planning at basin, catchment and regional scales. Water resilience was viewed as requiring integrated rather than isolated investments.

Collective action platforms can enable investment

Participants viewed collective action platforms as a practical way to align priorities, connect governments, investors and businesses, and attract wider participation. They also saw these platforms as a means of bringing innovative solutions to government attention and improving coordination around investment.

Clear evidence and investment pathways are needed

Participants highlighted the importance of shared data, practical business cases and better visibility of funding opportunities. They also noted that greater technology sharing and clearer pathways to finance would help basin stakeholders and agricultural water users move projects forward.

Innovative finance should be linked to governance

Participants expressed interest in approaches such as pooled "water funds of funds" that could optimise investment across projects and geographies. However, they consistently emphasised that these

mechanisms should include governance arrangements and guardrails to ensure investment supports basin priorities and long-term outcomes.

Divergent Views

- Participants differed on whether the priority should be scaling existing technologies and solutions or directing more investment towards innovation.
- While there was interest in pooled investment funds, participants questioned how these would be governed and whether they could adequately support projects that are important for water resilience but less commercially attractive.

Participant Recommendations

For the 2026 UN Water Conference

- Create opportunities to showcase adaptation planning led by governments that includes private sector participation as a practical pathway for investment.
- Showcase investment models and scenarios that demonstrate the business case for basin-level investment.
- Incentivize the showcasing of non-proprietary approaches such as pooled "water funds of funds" that optimise investment across projects and geographies, while ensuring discussions also address governance, coordination and accountability.

For the Water Stewardship Community

- Strengthen collective action platforms to improve coordination between governments, investors, utilities and businesses and to help prioritise investment.
- Improve sharing of technology, basin data and information on funding pathways to help stakeholders identify and access investment opportunities.
- Ensure that innovative financing mechanisms include governance arrangements that channel investment towards agreed basin priorities and long-term maintenance of projects.

DIALOGUE 2: Connecting Business & Government

This synthesis captures key insights and recommendations from discussions from attendees.

The purpose of this session was explore how governments, businesses and NGOs can move beyond general calls for collaboration and towards practical mechanisms that unlock investment, strengthen trust and align action around shared water resilience objectives.

Building on recommendations from the Stockholm WaterLogues, participants will explore both the structural barriers that currently limit public-private collaboration and the practical pathways that could help translate ambition into investment and implementation before the 2026 UN Water Conference.

Attendees were asked to reflect on the question:

What would it take to move from dialogue and ambition to practical public-private action on water resilience?

There were 2 rounds of dialogues in this session. For the first round, tables were assigned specific perspectives in order to reflect on the challenge, while in the second round, all tables focused on the same question.

ROUND 1:

The primary question that was presented to the attendees was:

If governments, businesses and NGOs broadly agree on the importance of water resilience, what is preventing alignment and what would it take to move from dialogue to action?

Tables were assigned three different perspectives to explore different aspects of this question. Below is a summary of the key insights that came from these dialogues in each of the groups.

Group A: The Government Perspective

Discussion question:

What would governments need to include in National Water Plans, Strategies or Country Compacts to encourage greater private sector investment and participation?

Summary

Participants focused on the policy and governance conditions needed to strengthen water stewardship and public-private collaboration. They emphasised that better coordination across government, greater transparency, stronger engagement with local communities and more integrated planning are essential to avoid fragmented decision-making. Participants also highlighted the need to position water as a broader societal and economic issue rather than solely an environmental one.

Key Insights

Government coordination needs to improve

Participants repeatedly highlighted the need to break down silos across government departments, particularly by moving water beyond environment ministries and engaging finance, growth and other decision-making portfolios. They felt this would help integrate water into wider government priorities.

Transparency supports better decision-making

Participants stressed the importance of greater transparency around water data, including abstraction licences and access to information. Shared data and better information were viewed as important for planning, collaboration and building confidence between stakeholders.

National and local priorities need stronger alignment

Participants identified a disconnect between national priorities and local community needs, noting that this can lead to crisis-driven responses. They emphasised the importance of involving the right stakeholders early in planning and maintaining ongoing engagement with communities and civil society.

Water should be positioned within wider societal priorities

Participants viewed water as an issue that spans government, society, the economy and the environment. They suggested that water provides a less politically contentious entry point than climate change and creates opportunities for more open discussions about economic growth, resilience and prosperity.

Participant Recommendations

For the 2026 UN Water Conference

- Encourage discussions that engage government ministries beyond the environment sector, including finance and economic development, to strengthen the integration of water into wider policy agendas.
- Highlight the importance of continuous engagement between governments, communities, civil society and the private sector, rather than one-off consultation processes.

For the Water Stewardship Community

- Promote greater transparency and accessibility of water data, including information on abstraction licences and basin conditions, to support better decision-making.

- Share more evidence-based local stories through government-led communication approaches to demonstrate the value of water stewardship in practice.
- Include private sector and utility engagement earlier in planning processes and support streamlined approaches for establishing public-private partnerships, including shared data and clearer collaboration mechanisms.
- Consider approaches that reduce incentives for excessive water use and strengthen the role of water security in policy discussions.

Group B: The Business Perspective

Discussion Question:

What would a credible corporate water commitment look like from the perspective of a government?

Summary

Participants consistently concluded that credible corporate commitments should be developed with governments rather than for governments. They emphasised that commitments should align with national and basin priorities, support long-term partnerships, strengthen government capacity and focus on implementation rather than creating additional high-level pledges. Transparency, trust and shared data were viewed as central to making commitments meaningful.

Key Insights

Corporate commitments should align with government priorities

Participants repeatedly stressed that corporate commitments should support existing government priorities, basin plans and infrastructure needs. They felt commitments would be more credible if they addressed recognised public priorities rather than introducing separate corporate agendas.

Long-term partnership is more valuable than project-based engagement

Participants consistently favoured commitments based on sustained engagement rather than short-term projects. Long-term participation, shared responsibility and continued involvement in planning were viewed as more valuable than one-off investments or volumetric targets.

Data sharing strengthens trust and planning

Participants highlighted the importance of sharing meaningful data rather than high-level disclosures. They believed that more detailed information on water use, priority basins and landscape conditions would improve government planning, strengthen trust and enable better collaboration.

Corporate commitments should move beyond compliance

Participants encouraged commitments that focus on water security, resilience and institutional strengthening rather than compliance or company-specific metrics. Sharing expertise, innovation, capacity and technology with governments and utilities was viewed as an important contribution that companies can make.

Implementation is more important than additional commitments

Participants questioned the value of new commitments if they do not improve implementation. Several noted that process-based commitments—such as aligning with basin plans, improving data sharing and strengthening trust—may ultimately deliver greater value than additional policy-aligned targets or public pledges.

Divergent Views

- Participants questioned whether governments are actively seeking corporate commitments and what value such commitments provide unless they directly support government planning and implementation.

- Participants discussed the balance between broad commitments that can apply across contexts and more specific commitments tailored to national or basin priorities, without reaching a clear conclusion.

Participant Recommendations

For the 2026 UN Water Conference

- Encourage corporate commitments that align with government basin plans and national priorities rather than creating separate corporate agendas.
- Promote commitments that describe how companies will engage over the long term, including sharing data, expertise, innovation and capacity alongside financial investment.

For the Water Stewardship Community

- Share more detailed, basin-level data rather than high-level disclosures so governments can better incorporate corporate information into planning and decision-making.
- Begin engagement with governments through dialogue and trust-building, using basin plans to identify shared priorities before developing commitments.
- Strengthen institutional capacity by sharing private sector expertise, innovation and technology with governments and utilities.
- Build commitments around implementation, transparency and shared outcomes, using existing collective action platforms where appropriate rather than creating new standalone initiatives.

Group C: The NGO Perspective

Discussion question:

What role should NGOs play in facilitating public-private collaboration and investment?

Summary

Participants consistently viewed NGOs as playing a unique convening role within water stewardship by building trust, connecting different stakeholder groups and linking global knowledge with local action. They emphasised that NGOs are most effective when acting as honest brokers, supporting collaboration and strengthening local capacity, while recognising the importance of clearer roles, stronger collaboration between NGOs and greater transparency about their own limitations.

Key Insights

NGOs are valued as conveners and trusted brokers

Participants consistently described NGOs as uniquely positioned to convene governments, businesses, communities and scientists around shared challenges. Their ability to build trust, facilitate dialogue and bridge the gap between global organisations and local actors was viewed as one of their greatest contributions.

Local knowledge is a critical strength

Participants repeatedly highlighted the importance of connecting global expertise with local basin knowledge. Large international NGOs were seen as adding value by working through local partners, while local organisations were recognised for their understanding of community priorities and on-the-ground realities.

Stronger collaboration between NGOs is needed

Participants noted that competition for limited funding can undermine collaboration. They called for greater alignment between NGOs and civil society organisations, more structured collaboration, shared evidence and clearer recognition of complementary roles.

NGOs have a role in strengthening investment and decision-making

Participants saw NGOs contributing by connecting basin experts with global expertise, supporting evidence collection, sharing data, identifying common risks and helping governments and businesses understand local conditions. They also highlighted the role NGOs can play in catalysing capital and supporting long-term investment approaches.

Neutrality requires credibility and transparency

Participants generally described NGOs as neutral, mission-driven organisations, but also recognised that all organisations bring their own perspectives. They emphasised that credibility depends on being transparent about capabilities, avoiding exaggeration and maintaining a focus on shared outcomes rather than organisational interests.

Divergent Views

- Participants discussed whether NGOs should be regarded as neutral actors, noting that while many are trusted conveners, all organisations have their own agendas and perspectives.
- Participants distinguished between the roles of international NGOs and civil society organisations, observing that international NGOs often work on global agendas while local civil society organisations represent community interests and are often more trusted by governments.

Participant Recommendations

For the 2026 UN Water Conference

- Encourage opportunities and incentivize NGOs to collaborate on sessions and events to both showcase the strength of multi-NGO facilitation and coordination
- Create opportunities for NGOs to explore solutions to cross NGO collaboration at both a global and local scale to reduce overlaps and duplication and enhance the sector's ability to convene

For the Water Stewardship Community

- Strengthen collaboration between NGOs and civil society organisations through more structured engagement, shared evidence and clearer recognition of complementary roles.
- Create shared platforms for data and knowledge exchange so NGOs can act as honest brokers and better connect local basin expertise with global water knowledge.
- Focus NGO efforts on convening, trust-building and connecting stakeholders rather than competing for funding or pursuing individual organisational interests.
- Support stronger links between WASH organisations and water resources organisations to encourage more holistic approaches that address both human and environmental water challenges.
- Ensure communication and evidence remain grounded in the realities of local basins, avoiding exaggeration of data or organisational roles while strengthening accountability and credibility.

ROUND 2:

The primary question that was presented to all attendees was:

What would a practical trust-to-investment pathway look like that could be initiated before or at the 2026 UN Water Conference?

Summary

Participants consistently described trust as the foundation for unlocking investment in water resilience. They emphasised that trust is built through long-term relationships, shared understanding, transparency and delivery rather than one-off commitments. Effective investment pathways should be aligned with national and basin priorities, involve the right actors from the outset, and combine collaboration, evidence and practical financing mechanisms. Participants also stressed that local engagement, shared metrics and visible success stories are essential for moving from dialogue to implementation.

Key Insights

Trust must precede investment

Participants consistently described trust as the enabling condition for collaboration and investment. Rather than viewing investment as the starting point, they saw it as the outcome of a process built on shared understanding, open dialogue, delivery on commitments and sustained relationships.

Investment pathways should align with national and basin priorities

Participants emphasised that corporate action is most effective when aligned with national plans and basin-level priorities. Clear government objectives, credible metrics and mechanisms that allow companies to demonstrate contributions towards public goals were seen as critical for building confidence and attracting investment.

Collaboration should be locally grounded and built around shared priorities

Participants repeatedly highlighted the importance of bringing governments, businesses, communities and NGOs together around shared challenges at the basin level. They stressed that collaboration should recognise the different strengths of each organisation and be supported by clear governance, shared data and common objectives.

Trust grows through practical experience and visible success

Participants noted that trust develops through doing, not simply through dialogue. Practical activities such as river walks, exposure visits, peer-to-peer engagement and showcasing successful basin initiatives were seen as valuable ways to build relationships, strengthen understanding and create momentum for larger investments.

Investment requires stronger coordination, evidence and financing mechanisms

Participants discussed the need for clearer pathways from collaboration to investment, including investable plans, blended finance, sustainable funding mechanisms and stronger business cases. They also highlighted the importance of sharing successful financing models and practical examples that demonstrate how water resilience investments can deliver tangible outcomes.

Divergent Views

- While most participants focused on basin-level collaboration, some suggested national frameworks and commitments as the primary entry point for coordinating investment.
- Participants proposed different mechanisms for catalysing investment, ranging from collaborative platforms and peer dialogue to new financial instruments such as sustainable water certificates, although all were intended to strengthen long-term water resilience.

Participant Recommendations

For the 2026 UN Water Conference

- Create opportunities for governments, businesses and civil society to develop trust through practical engagement, including peer dialogue, exposure visits and sharing successful basin examples.
- Increase meaningful private sector participation in Conference preparations and discussions, recognising concerns that business engagement has been limited in some preparatory processes.
- Showcase proven trust-to-investment pathways, practical financing mechanisms and successful basin initiatives to demonstrate how collaboration can translate into implementation.

For the Water Stewardship Community

- Align corporate investments with national water plans and basin priorities, ensuring actions contribute to publicly defined objectives and measurable outcomes.

- Build trust through long-term engagement, transparent data sharing and delivery on agreed commitments, recognising that trust develops incrementally over time.
- Develop collaborative investment pathways that begin with shared understanding, define roles and responsibilities, create investable plans and mobilise blended finance supported by ongoing monitoring and learning.
- Share practical case studies, financing models and communication approaches that help demonstrate the value of water resilience investments to governments, businesses and communities.

PROVOCATION: Who is missing?

This synthesis captures key insights and recommendations from discussions from attendees.

The purpose of this session was to challenge participants to consider whether the water stewardship community is engaging the actors most capable of accelerating action, influencing policy and mobilising capital at scale.

Previous WaterLogues discussions highlighted that many of the organisations and sectors most critical to achieving water resilience outcomes remain largely absent from water stewardship conversations. This session explores who is missing, why they are not engaging, and what might encourage them to participate.

The discussion was intended to be exploratory and forward-looking. Rather than focusing on organisations already active in the community, participants are encouraged to identify the actors, sectors and institutions that could significantly expand the reach, influence and impact of the water stewardship agenda.

The provocation that was put to the attendees was:

If we were designing the water stewardship community from scratch today, who would we make sure was in the room that currently is not?

Summary

Participants agreed that broadening participation in the water stewardship community requires greater intentionality about who is invited, why they are needed and how they can contribute. Discussion focused on engaging underrepresented sectors with direct influence over investment, infrastructure and implementation, while recognising that different audiences require different engagement approaches. Participants also highlighted practical barriers to participation, particularly for Global South organisations, and stressed that water stewardship must be framed in terms that resonate with the priorities of each audience.

Key Insights

Participation should be purpose-driven

Participants emphasised that invitations should be based on the role each actor can play rather than simply increasing attendance. There was broad agreement that organisers should be clear about why specific sectors are needed and what contribution they are expected to make.

Critical sectors remain underrepresented

A recurring theme was the absence of key actors including utilities, multiple levels of government, finance, insurance, development banks, regulators, infrastructure sectors, major corporations, philanthropic organisations, technical providers and grassroots organisations. Participants felt these groups are essential for moving from discussion to implementation.

Engagement approaches must reflect different audiences

Participants noted that finance, government and industry are not single audiences but diverse groups with different incentives and decision-making processes. They stressed the importance of understanding these differences and engaging organisations through the forums, language and networks they already use.

The economic case for water remains under-communicated

Participants repeatedly observed that many sectors do not yet recognise water stewardship as relevant to their objectives. Framing water through economic risk, resilience, investment opportunities and practical business outcomes was seen as more likely to attract participation from finance, insurers and infrastructure sectors.

Participation barriers extend beyond invitation

Participants highlighted that cost, limited representation, lack of awareness, unclear relevance and capacity constraints continue to limit participation, particularly for Global South NGOs and grassroots organisations. They also noted that some sectors remain absent because they do not yet understand how water stewardship relates to their responsibilities.

Divergent Views

Some participants questioned whether additional actors should be integrated into existing forums, while others suggested creating complementary events or dedicated spaces for particular stakeholder groups, such as civil society organisations.

Participant Recommendations

For the 2026 UN Water Conference

- Clearly define why each stakeholder group is being invited and the role they are expected to play in advancing water stewardship outcomes.
- Broaden participation beyond the traditional water community by actively engaging utilities, finance, insurance, infrastructure sectors, regulators, philanthropies, major companies and multiple levels of government.
- Reduce barriers to participation for Global South NGOs, grassroots organisations and local communities to ensure their perspectives are represented.

For the Water Stewardship Community

- Engage organisations through the forums, networks and events they already participate in, rather than expecting new audiences to join existing water stewardship spaces.
- Tailor engagement messages to different audiences by demonstrating the relevance of water stewardship to economic risk, resilience, investment, infrastructure and sector-specific priorities.
- Improve understanding of the finance sector by recognising its diversity and developing clearer links between water stewardship, financial risk, due diligence and investment opportunities.

DIALOGUE 3: Collective Organisation & non-accredited space design

This synthesis captures key insights and recommendations from discussions from attendees.

The purpose of this session was to focus on how the water stewardship community can maximise its collective impact before, during and after the 2026 UN Water Conference.

The session explores two complementary challenges:

- How can the community improve visibility, coordination and collaboration in the lead-up to the Conference?

- How can the non-accredited zone be designed to create meaningful engagement, new partnerships and tangible outcomes during the event itself?

The objective was not to create new governance structures or coordination bodies. Instead, participants were asked to identify practical approaches that could strengthen community connectivity, improve participant experience and help the 2026 UN Water Conference generate lasting value.

The primary question that attendees were asked to consider was:

How can the water stewardship community maximise its collective impact before, during and after the 2026 UN Water Conference?

For this dialogue, tables were assigned two different threads to consider, namely:

THREAD A: Coordinating the Community

Discussion Question:

How can the water stewardship community improve visibility and collaboration ahead of the 2026 UN Water Conference without creating new governance structures or reporting requirements?

Summary

Discussion on this topic was limited but centred on improving the visibility of water stewardship ahead of the 2026 UN Water Conference. Participants questioned what greater visibility should achieve and emphasised the need to better represent the role of water users, strengthen the private sector voice and provide clearer information on existing initiatives and evidence. A small number of practical ideas were proposed to support coordination and engagement.

Key Insights

Visibility should have a clear purpose

Participants questioned the objective of increasing visibility, asking what additional value the water stewardship community should bring to the Conference. They stressed that greater visibility should be linked to a clear contribution rather than visibility for its own sake.

Water users need stronger representation

Participants felt that the importance of water users is not yet sufficiently recognised within national priorities and planning processes. They also highlighted the need to ensure the private sector has a stronger voice in discussions leading up to the Conference.

Evidence can strengthen engagement

Participants suggested that existing datasets, case studies and performance indicators could help build momentum ahead of the Conference by demonstrating materiality, impacts and examples of good practice.

Coordination across the community could be improved

A recurring theme was the value of making information about initiatives and activities easier to access so participants can better understand what is already happening and how efforts connect.

Participant Recommendations

For the 2026 UN Water Conference

- Clearly articulate the value that the water stewardship community is seeking to contribute to the Conference and use this to evaluate submissions from the community.
- Ensure the perspectives of water users and the private sector are represented within Conference discussions.

For the Water Stewardship Community

- Develop a single platform to share initiatives, actions and progress, helping participants understand what organisations are trying to achieve and what has already been delivered.
- Use existing evidence, including CDP data, case studies and sector performance indicators, to build momentum and demonstrate the importance of water stewardship ahead of the Conference.
- Provide greater clarity on how key organisations intend to engage in the lead-up to the Conference.

THREAD B: Designing a non-accredited space that delivers value

Discussion Question:

How can the non-accredited zone be designed to create meaningful engagement, new partnerships and tangible outcomes for the water stewardship community?

Summary

Participants focused on how the 2026 UN Water Conference could create more meaningful collaboration rather than simply hosting discussions. There was broad support for designing interactive spaces that deliberately connect participants across sectors, encourage relationship building and lead to practical outcomes beyond the Conference itself. Participants favoured showcasing successful partnerships, creating structured opportunities for collaboration and ensuring that water stewardship is integrated into broader Conference themes rather than operating as a standalone community.

Key Insights

Design the Conference for action, not attendance

Participants consistently argued that the Conference should create opportunities for partnerships, project development and tangible next steps rather than relying primarily on panels and presentations. Structured networking and facilitated collaboration were seen as essential to achieving lasting outcomes.

Cross-sector interaction should be intentionally designed

A recurring theme was the need to create opportunities for governments, businesses, civil society, finance and philanthropy to interact in meaningful ways. Participants supported formats that deliberately connect organisations with complementary interests rather than leaving networking to chance.

Real-world examples build confidence and inspire action

Participants emphasised the value of showcasing successful public-private partnerships, collective action platforms and basin initiatives that have delivered measurable results. Practical examples were viewed as more compelling than theoretical discussions and could encourage wider adoption.

Water stewardship should be embedded within wider Conference priorities

Participants believed water stewardship would have greater influence if linked to broader themes such as Water for Prosperity, Water for Planet and Investments for Water. They also stressed the importance of demonstrating how water stewardship contributes to wider policy, development and investment objectives.

Relationships should extend beyond the Conference

Participants highlighted that successful engagement should begin before the Conference and continue afterwards. They supported mechanisms that help participants identify relevant partners in advance and maintain dialogue and collaboration beyond the event itself.

Participant Recommendations

For the 2026 UN Water Conference

- Design interactive collaboration spaces that prioritise partnership development, project design and practical follow-up, rather than traditional conference formats alone.

- Create structured mechanisms to connect participants with complementary interests, including facilitated networking, thematic roundtables and matchmaking opportunities organised around shared topics or geographies.
- Incentivise panels and sessions include a balanced mix of government, business, civil society, philanthropy and finance perspectives to encourage cross-sector dialogue.
- Showcase successful public-private partnerships, collective action platforms and basin initiatives that demonstrate measurable impact and can be adapted in other contexts.
- Build stronger links between the water stewardship community and the Conference's broader thematic dialogues, particularly those focused on prosperity, resilience and investment.
- Develop engagement activities that begin before the Conference and continue afterwards, enabling new partnerships and collaborative initiatives to develop over time.

Bridging the two:

Proposal: Public–Private Water Stewardship Collaboration Initiative

A flagship collaboration within the accredited programme that demonstrates **how governments, business, civil society and finance can work together to deliver national and basin water priorities**. Rather than creating a new commitment, the initiative would invite a small number of countries to work with private sector and NGO partners to identify practical opportunities for collaboration aligned with existing national priorities.

Participating countries would:

- Present one or two priority water resilience challenges where partnership could accelerate progress.
- Convene relevant government agencies, businesses, NGOs and finance around those priorities.
- Identify practical opportunities for collaboration, investment or technical support.
- Commit to continuing the collaboration beyond the Conference through existing national or basin-level platforms.

The accredited session would launch the initiative, while the non-accredited space would provide the place for partners to meet, develop ideas and begin forming the collaborations needed to support implementation.

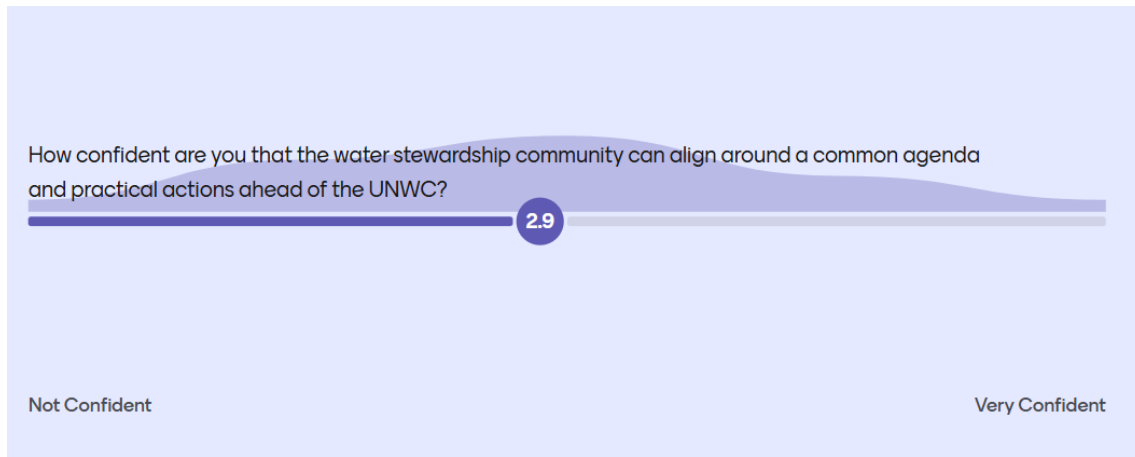
SURVEY: ATTENDEE SENTIMENTS

At the start of the event, attendees were asked to complete a survey and answer the question:

How confident are you that the water stewardship community can align around a common agenda and practical actions ahead of UN Water 2026?

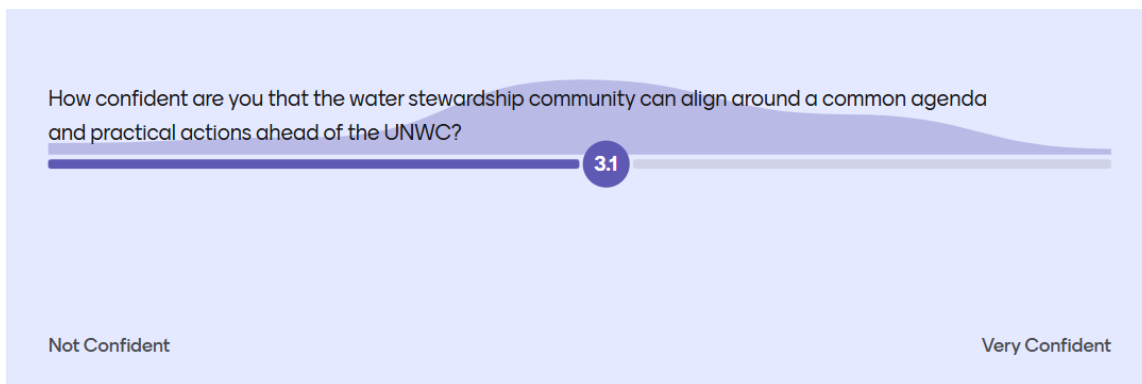
Attendees were asked to answer the same question at the end of the event. Below are the results of each of these surveys. The intention was to understand if the dialogues throughout the day had shifted the sentiment of the attendees in any way.

First thing in the morning the aggregated responses from attendees were (0 = Not confident & 5 = Very Confident):



Total responses = 47

At the end of the day, the aggregated responses from attendees were:



Total responses = 27

APPENDIX: DATA PROMPTING

Below is a copy of the primary prompt that was used to process all the raw data that was collected in the Google Doc sheets.

*You are acting as the official rapporteur for the WaterLogues event.
 Your role is to faithfully capture the discussion exactly as participants expressed it.
 You are **not** acting as a consultant, advisor or strategist.
 Do not improve participant ideas.
 Do not infer conclusions that participants did not reach.
 Do not generate recommendations that were not clearly expressed.
 Your responsibility is to organise the discussion into a concise report that participants themselves would recognise as an accurate reflection of what was said.*

STEP 1 – REMOVE FACILITATOR CONTENT

*The raw notes contain both facilitator guidance and participant discussion.
 Before beginning your analysis, compare the notes against the facilitator guide and agenda previously provided.*

The facilitator guide contains:

- discussion questions
- facilitator prompts
- suggested outputs
- headings
- explanatory text

*These are **NOT** participant contributions.*

Many facilitators copied these directly into the Google Docs before recording the discussion.

Completely ignore this text.

Treat it as though it does not exist.

Only analyse the words, ideas, examples and recommendations contributed by participants.

If there is any uncertainty whether text originated from the facilitator guide or participants, assume it is facilitator text unless participant discussion clearly expands upon it.

ANALYSIS PRINCIPLES

Your synthesis should be driven entirely by the evidence in the discussion.

When analysing the notes:

- *Give greater weight to ideas that emerged independently across multiple tables.*
- *Merge similar ideas where appropriate but preserve the original intent and language.*
- *Preserve concrete examples, specific mechanisms and practical ideas.*
- *Avoid replacing participant language with generic consultant language.*
- *Do not over-generalise.*
- *Do not fill gaps in the discussion.*
- *If participants did not reach a conclusion, say so.*
- *If participants did not make recommendations, do not create them.*

Imagine participants are reading the report afterwards. They should recognise their own discussion.

OUTPUT FORMAT

The output should be formatted exactly as though it were being inserted directly into a Microsoft Word report.

Use:

- *Bold headings*
- *Bold sub-headings*
- *Normal paragraphs*
- *Simple bullet points*
- *A blank line between each major section*

Do not use:

- *Markdown symbols*
- *Tables*
- *Numbered lists*
- *Nested bullets*

The formatting should require little or no editing after copying into Microsoft Word. The completed section should fit comfortably within approximately half a page.

Summary

Write one short paragraph (maximum 100 words).

Capture the overall direction of the discussion.

Focus on what participants collectively believed was most important.

Do not describe the discussion process.

Key Insights

Include only the strongest insights that genuinely emerged.

*There is **NO required number**.*

If only two important insights emerged, present two.

If five genuinely important insights emerged, present five.

For each insight use:

Insight title

One short paragraph explaining the insight.

Where helpful, indicate whether the insight reflected:

- *Broad consensus*
- *Recurring theme*
- *Emerging idea*
- *Minority perspective*

Only use these descriptors where they genuinely help explain the discussion.

Divergent Views

*Include this section **ONLY** if meaningful differences of opinion clearly emerged. Do not include it simply because different examples were mentioned. If participants broadly agreed, omit this section entirely.*

Participant Recommendations

This section has the highest evidence threshold. Only include recommendations that participants explicitly proposed or clearly developed during the discussion.

Do NOT convert observations into recommendations.

Do NOT infer recommendations.

Do NOT generate recommendations because this section exists.

A single well-supported recommendation is preferable to several weak ones. Prioritise:

- *specific implementation ideas*
- *practical mechanisms*
- *concrete examples*
- *tangible actions*

Retain participant language wherever possible. Where appropriate, organise recommendations under:

For the 2026 UN Water Conference**For the Water Stewardship Community**

If there are no well-supported recommendations for either category, omit that category entirely.

FINAL QUALITY CHECK

Before producing the final response ask yourself:

- *Have I accidentally analysed facilitator prompts?*
- *Have I replaced participant language with my own?*
- *Have I invented recommendations?*
- *Have I created divergence where none existed?*
- *Have I over-generalised specific examples*

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, revise the synthesis before presenting it. The final report should read like the authentic collective voice of participants, organised clearly and concisely by an experienced conference rapporteur.