



## **Declaration of Commitments**

by the organizing members of

### **“The United Nations of Rivers, Deltas and Estuaries”**

contributing to the UN 2023 Water Conference in New York

We, the organizing members of the United Nations of Rivers, Deltas and Estuaries working in the fields of water, nature, culture, heritage, sustainable development, and design gathered in Philadelphia and New York between 17th and 24th of March, 2023 are convinced - together with our partners - that we need to go beyond the current asset-oriented approach to river and waterbody management to include socio-spatial, ecological and cultural approaches that include long-term and process-based perspectives connecting the past with the present and the future. We are facing multiple global tipping points; we need to find short term solutions while embracing adaptive strategies. Targeted exploration and understanding of traditional ecological knowledge, practices and spaces, will be enhanced, transformed and partially preserved to achieve the SDGs and sustainable long-term ecosystems.

As the initiating group of the United Nations of Rivers, Deltas and Estuaries we commit to activating synergies among UNESCO Chair holders, institutions, activities and whoever wants to join, including scholars and practitioners, minority groups from the majority world, Indigenous people, etc. Our aim is to connect and engage with academics, practitioners, policy makers, artists, activists and professionals of all ages and backgrounds in a network. We will assess and revise the commitments annually with all participating partners.

#### **Our core commitments**

Building a broad integrative community

Providing open access to practices, methodologies, and to data

Co-implementing demonstration actions

Experimenting with frameworks

Co-development of didactic material

Collaboration action in support of leading policy making



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22-24  
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2023

## Our core commitments in detail

### Building a broad, integrative community

1. **Building up a community** of practice, coordinated by the core team (a group of ca 12-20 UNESCO Chairs, 20-30 academics, public institutions and water authorities, NGOs, artists, activities, etc. in the field) who as ambassadors of rivers, deltas and estuaries amplify and represent its voices.
2. Reaching 500 million **people visiting the WAMU** Network of global water museums
3. Holding **yearly online/hybrid gatherings** for the network
4. Exploring and trying out formats in which policy makers and artists work together within decision-making around water management twice a year (such as, e.g., an artist-in-residence)
5. **Acknowledging our water cultures and connections** to strengthen engagement in more respectful, responsible and sustainable practices

### Providing open access to practices, methodologies, and data

6. Creating and maintaining an **online open access dissemination platform** (connected to Bluepapers.nl) to share contents of webinars, select social media information, and all types of scientific publications.
7. Providing **didactic materials** through informative summary slides of each of the future Blue Papers,
8. **Organizing webinars** (2 per year) on the topic of water, nature, culture, heritage, sustainable development and design
9. Promoting and expanding an **international questionnaire** in 6 languages (so far)
10. Promoting **informal education and lifelong learning**.

### Co-implementing demonstration actions

11. Activate river and water awareness through a **global studies series on water awareness** (the **Blue Papers**), a peer-reviewed, open access publication. Additionally, each of the future Blue Papers will deliver a **digest of the content to substantiate policy advice**.
12. Implementing the WIN (World Inventory of Water Museums)
13. Holding **yearly online/hybrid gatherings** for the network
14. Promoting **tangible and sensory perspectives** on rivers and waterways to establish an action-oriented and relational understanding (such as, e.g., an artist-in-residence).
15. Give momentum to existing initiatives.

### Experimenting with frameworks

16. Exploring **shared thematic foci or places to create** communities of practice within the network
17. **Developing methods of analysis and collaborative practice** for considering pasts, presents, futures across **education programs**.
18. Establish a **typology of social and cultural practices** connected to rivers, compatible with the existing Ramsar wetland typology



19. Identifying **demonstration sites** for the implementation of shared methodologies and assessing their outcome and sharing best practices

#### Co-development of didactic and methodological material

20. **Implementing the WIN** (World Inventory of Water Museums)
21. Refining **mapping tools**, digital tools to expand impact
22. **Establishing UNESCO Chair network on Water, Culture, Nature, Heritage, and Design:** community of Practice
23. **Clarifying language and vocabulary used in communication** to facilitate the emergence of connected knowledge
24. Drinkable Rivers will publish a **book in English** to reach more people in watersheds, promoting the book along the river Thames. We will create a **practical guide** how to move towards a world with drinkable rivers. We will promote our **citizen science** to attract and commit active hub organizations who mobilize their volunteers to monitor our rivers. Continue to **walk rivers**: Dommel, Vechte, Thames (2023); Danube (2025). Continue to activate and grow **action communities** like Mayors for a Drinkable Meuse; Drinkable IJssel; Drinkable Kleine Nete, etc

#### Collaborative action towards leading transition strategies

25. Collaborating within the network to write projects for **competitive grants**
26. Philadelphia's Fairmount Water Works Interpretive Center, US National Historic Landmark and an award-winning leader in environmental education and the education arm of the Philadelphia Water Department commits to **advance public engagement** to address the urgent need for global water access and security. It will convene stakeholders at the Fairmount Water Works Interpretive Center at least one time on or before March 2024 to grow water knowledge and inspire collective action. Its place-based education programs bridge the informal/formal divide by connecting people of all ages with local watershed resources and the best management practices in green infrastructure, water quality improvements, infrastructure understanding and climate education and resiliency.
27. **Promote regional initiatives** focusing on inclusive collaboration, knowledge exchange, and initiating action on a wide variety of topics, e.g. decision-making, capacity building, awareness raising, and transboundary cooperation.
28. **Create collaboration** among scientists, artists, and policymakers to integrate.
29. Facilitate **interaction between local communities** with institutions and policymakers.
30. Promote **intergenerational dialogue** to foster collaborative and inclusive frameworks



### Lead partners

- UNESCO Chair Water Ports and Historic Cities;
- UNESCO Chair "Fleuves et Patrimoine" (River Culture);
- Global Network of Water Museums WAMU-NET;
- Drinkable Rivers;
- Deltametropolis Association;

### Full name(s) of organizing partners \*

- SABESP Brazil;
- Initiative for the Future of Great Rivers IFGR;
- Global Urban History Project GUHP;
- AgroParistech SUEZ Chair Water for All;
- AGUR, Dunkirk;
- OISAT/WASAT;
- International Water Management Institute;
- International Union for Conservation of Nature;
- Consortium for Sustainable Urbanization CSU;
- International Network of Liberal Women INLW;
- Association Internationale Villes et Ports (AIVP)
- The Alliance for Watershed Education of the Delaware River;
- Scientific Information Center of Interstate Commission for Water Coordination in Central Asia;
- Baldi Middle School – The School District of Philadelphia;
- Global Philadelphia Association;
- IHE Delft Institute for Water Education;
- Fordham University;
- Bernard and Anne Spitzer School at the City College of New York | CUNY
- The Philadelphia Water Department
- Fairmount Water Works Interpretive Center;
- Drexel University;
- Delft University of Technology,
- Leiden University;
- Het Nieuwe Instituut;
- The New School;
- City of Rotterdam;
- WaterFrames;
- Womenvai;
- World Federation of Engineers Organisation WFEO;
- Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology;
- Agrisolve Ghana Limited;
- University of Strasbourg;
- University of Tours;
- EGTC Interregional Alliance for the Rhine-Alpine Corridor;
- International Federation for Housing and Planning;
- ISOLA Indian Society of Landscape Architects;
- Wereldwaternet;
- InfoRelais;
- Riverhood;
- River Commons;
- Goethe Institut Rotterdam;



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FAIRMOUNT  
WATER  
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Drinkable Rivers