



## Committed to Action: Uganda's Pledges and Future Strategies Following the 2023 UN Water Conference



**A report of the dissemination side event held on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024 at the Uganda  
Water and Environment Week**

Kampala, Uganda

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## 1. Introduction



Uganda, represented by several Ministries, Departments and Agencies, as well as Members of Parliament, Permanent Secretaries, senior government officials, the private sector, academia, civil society organisations and other water related organizations participated in the United Nations Conference on the “Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action” held from 22 to 24 March 2023 in New York, USA. The Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) spearheaded the organisation of Uganda’s participation in the Conference<sup>1</sup>.

Participating in the Conference complimented Uganda’s aspirations of accelerating water access, strengthening water resources management and ensuring water equity as enshrined in the Uganda Vision 2040, the Third National Development Plan (NDP III), the Natural Resources Programme Implementation Action Plan (PIAPs), and the Updated Nationally Determined. Additionally, Uganda adopted and agreed to be party to the global initiative towards making all drinking water lead-free by 2040 and developed a roadmap to support the implementation of the commitments, outcomes and recommendations of the Conference.

Since the 2023 UN Water Conference, Uganda is implementing some of the global and national commitments with support from the [Conrad N. Hilton Foundation \(CNHF\)](#)’s Safe Water Strategy Initiative. The activities include raising awareness of the outcomes and commitments from the Conference, following up on Uganda’s contribution to the Global initiative towards making all drinking water Lead free by 2040, and scaling up district WASH Master planning in the Fourth National Development Plan.

## 2. UWEWK2024 Side Event on the Dissemination of Outcomes of the 2023 UN Water Conference

On 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024, during the 7<sup>th</sup> Uganda Water and Environment Week, the Government of Uganda through MWE organised a side event in the Main Auditorium to disseminate the outcomes of the 2023 UN Conference. Specifically, the side event aimed to raise awareness and inform stakeholders about the commitments made by the Uganda delegation at the UN Water Conference and the progress so far to achieve SDG 6 targets.

The side event moderated by Ms. Jane Nabunnya Mulumba, IRC Uganda ([www.ircwash.org/uganda](http://www.ircwash.org/uganda) ) Country Director was also used as a platform to share about



**Jane Nabunnya Mulumba**

the partnership already entered with the CNHF to develop action plans and budgets to operationalize some of the commitments.

## 2.1 Attendance at the side event

The side event was attended by 145 people (54 physically in the Auditorium and 91 Online). These were from line Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), CSOs, private sector, academia, religious and cultural institutions youth and women representatives, political and policy, decision makers and members of parliament.

## 2.2 Agenda and highlights from the presentations and panel discussion

The side event was executed in form of a dialogue and included three keynote presentations and a panel discussion. The detailed agenda and presentations annexed.

### Presentation 1: Outcomes of the UN Water Conference, the commitments, and efforts by Uganda to achieve SDG 6

The first presentation by Dr Callist Tindimugaya, MWE Commissioner for Water Resources Planning and Regulation focused on the outcomes of the UN 2023 Water conference, Uganda's efforts to achieve SDG 6 and progress in implementing the commitments.

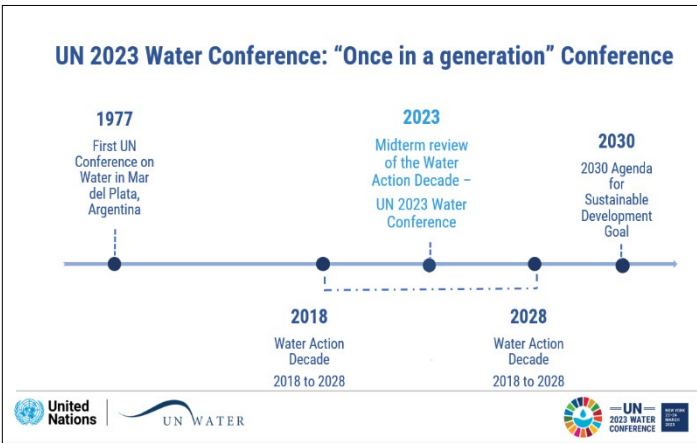
The presentation highlighted the following:

1. Summary of the conference proceedings and the five interactive dialogues (Water for Health, Water for Sustainable Development, Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment, Water for Cooperation and Water Action Decade) that were held in parallel with plenary meetings and side events.
2. Discussions on how to accelerate inclusive access to safely managed water and sanitation services in both rural and urban areas to reach the underserved population.
3. How to ensure availability of adequate and good quality water for domestic use and for production purposes through transformational initiatives with a focus on marginalized groups so that no one is left behind.



***Dr. Callist Tindimugaya***





4. The call to accede to the UN Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses and the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes as a means of promoting transboundary water cooperation.

5. Plans to scale up partnerships and collaboration through ongoing initiatives under the Third National Development Plan, such as the

Programme based approach to planning and implementation; the catchment-based planning, development and management of water related resources and convening of UWEWK annually.

6. Plans for implementation of the updated Nationally Determined Contributions with special focus on ensuring resilient water supply systems for domestic and productive uses, promoting sustainable water harvesting and storage, increasing sanitation and wastewater treatment infrastructure and services, scaling up integrated water resources management approaches and water use efficiency, and protection of ecosystems.
7. Scaling up Uganda's response to conflict and climate change induced migration and displacement through improved water services and water security.

The presentation gave a way forward concerning the outcomes and recommendations of the conference and voluntary commitments by Uganda, including a roadmap that outlines the following;

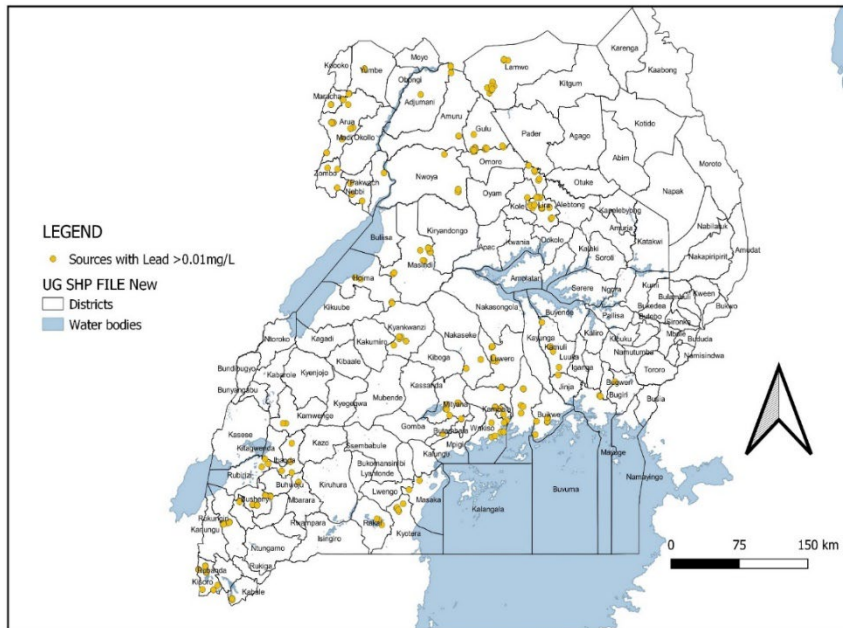
- a) Development of short and long-term action plans to operationalize all commitments and recommendations and to enable regular reports on the progress to be shared within Uganda and at UN level.
- b) Development and implementation of a mechanism to follow up the pledges and commitments that were made by various development partners that are relevant and of interest to Uganda
- c) Quantifying and costing the commitments and recommendations for Uganda in order to solicit for funds for implementation.
- d) Through MWE, to prioritise awareness raising to inform Ugandan about the outcomes of the UN Water Conference and the commitments and efforts made to achieve SDG 6 targets. The awareness raising activity will mobilise support from relevant national and international stakeholders and partners to enable scaling up of ongoing efforts and kick-start of implementation of various commitments.

## Presentation 2: Global Pledge to Protect Drinking Water from Lead



The second presentation focused on the Global Initiative Towards Making All Drinking Water Lead-Free by 2040. The following key updates were shared by the MWE Commissioner for Water Quality, Ms. Lilian Idrakua;

1. The global goal is to prevent lead-leaching from drinking water systems by 2030 and make all drinking water lead-free by 2040. Participants to the Pledge remain committed to achieving SDG 6 and providing safely managed drinking water services to everyone, everywhere.
2. Implementation of the Pledge by Uganda is being supported by the CNHF.  
**Commissioner Lilian Idrakua**
  3. The primary source of lead in drinking water is leaching from lead-containing materials in water systems like water pipes, hand pump materials and fittings;
4. People most vulnerable to lead are children and women of childbearing age.
5. Implementation of the pledge in Uganda has been done through: Training staff to test and monitor lead in water and other products; provision of field and laboratory equipment for testing for lead in both water and various products; develop technical regulations to address challenges of lead in drinking water, stakeholder awareness-raising on the benefits and costs associated with the pledge, research on sources, impacts, prevention and remediation, institutional and human resource capacity development and developing a map showing the lead contaminated areas in Uganda
6. Challenges include;
  - Inadequate resources
  - Inadequate staff and facilities. The number of water points for testing are too many.
  - Analysis of heavy metals is very expensive (Expensive equipment, expensive consumables; gases and standards and quality assurance procedures).
  - Need to test materials for lead to confirm source; geogenic or leached from piping and fixtures (XRF equipment).
  - High cost of replacement of lead-containing water system materials
  - Lack of regulations: Drinking water, water treatment filters etc.
  - Enforcement: Inadequate materials for regulation.
7. Preliminary findings:



**Sources with of Lead >0.01mg/L**

8. Proposed solutions include; testing and using lead-free materials in new water supply systems, identification and quantification of lead in drinking water, replacement of lead containing materials, use of appropriate onsite and household technologies to remove lead from drinking water.

9. Next steps include: confirmation of preliminary results for sources already tested; massive screening of water sources for lead contamination; engagement of stakeholders to raise awareness and discuss solutions for existing sources, engagement of relevant institutions to regulate materials for new sources.

Responses/answers were provided to questions related to the following:

- a) Other (apart from health) adverse effects of lead on materials used for water like pipes which would motivate private sector to engage in the elimination of lead.
- b) The cumulative burden load of lead to public health care
- c) Financing arrangements for lead-related ailments
- d) Percentage of water pipe infrastructure that Uganda has to replace to safeguard the quality of water in the taps.



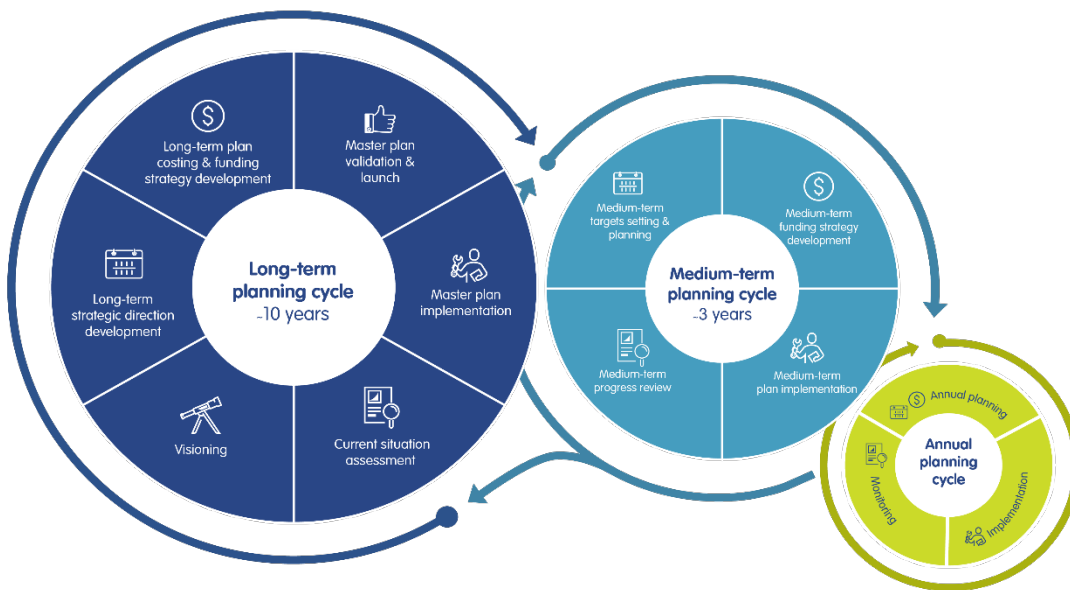
Presentation 3: District WASH Master Planning in the National Development Plan 4



The third presentation by Wilbrord Turimaso, IRC Uganda WASH Programmes Coordinator, was on the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Master planning in National Development Plan 4. Key messages shared include:

1. District WASH master plans are long-term (5-15 years) climate resilient strategies for achieving sustainable WASH. That is; they set out the costed long-term WASH vision of the district, aligned with achieving SDG 6 – sustainable WASH service provision for all, forever by 2030; determine investment required to achieve water and sanitation for all, ascertain the funding that government can leverage to achieve universal access to WASH by 2030 and identify key players (NGOs, private sector, CBOs) in the district that can contribute to WASH service delivery.

2. The district WASH master planning process includes six steps as illustrated below:

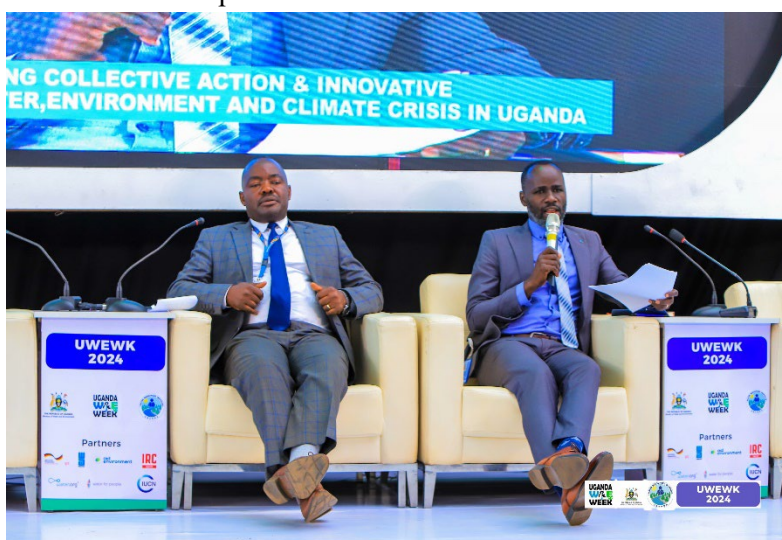


4. The district WASH master plans provide for equity and ensure that everyone is served
5. The development of the district WASH master plans has aided district local governments to have an understanding of the status of their districts regarding WASH implementation and hence the gaps that need to be addressed;
6. It takes the following to development implement district WASH masterplans:
  - Embedding the plans within national systems (especially planning systems), mechanisms and processes. Where necessary, these are strengthened.
  - Local government leadership, with involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including current and potential service providers as well as user representatives.

- Involvement of all stakeholders in establishing a baseline, agreeing on a vision and developing strategies. Working groups provide the data and work out the details.
- 6-12 months to develop. It is faster where existing up-to-date data is available.
- Between 20,000 USD and 50,000 USD as total costs to develop a district WASH master plan. Local governments contribute by (at least) providing local government staff time for the process.

### 3. Panel discussion

The panel discussion was an opportunity for sharing perspectives by some stakeholders who participated in the UN Water Conference. The panel was moderated by Ms. Jane Nabunya Mulumba, IRC Uganda Country Director, and comprised of Mr. Simon Odongo, WASH Officer, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Mr. Moses Ssonko, Principal Economist, Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development.



*Left - Mr. Moses Ssonko, Right - Mr. Simon Odongo*

The following key messages and recommendations came out of the discussions;

1. In order to achieve the commitments made by the Ugandan Government, the programs and actions implemented need to include the youth since they are the most affected by water related challenges and hence requiring their voices to be heard.
2. There is need to develop Catchment Management plans for the remaining 10 catchments out of the 32 catchments in Uganda to facilitate planning and prioritization of water related investments and interventions for implementation by various partners and stakeholders.
3. Nature Based Solutions are key in implementation of the commitments made by Uganda in terms of improving resilience of water related investments and adapting to impacts of climate change. Their implementation should therefore be scaled up.
4. The commitments need to be communicated widely so that they are known and appreciated by all relevant stakeholders and partners and incorporated in their plans and programs.
5. Improved water governance is key in implementation of the commitments and should therefore be given more attention and during the development of the actions plans for the different commitments.
6. Implementation of the commitments has not been costed and so the Government of Uganda through the Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development is not aware of the financial requirements and hence unable to mobilize the required funds. The costing of each of the commitments should be prioritized as it is key in mobilizing resources from government and other stakeholders and partners.
7. The annual budget of MWE is about 1.3 trillion and is not enough to meet the priorities of the sector. However, there are other funds that are received from donors and other partners which are not captured in the annual budget of the ministry. There is therefore a need to capture all the funds that support implementation of water and related programs, whether captured in the government annual budget or

not, so that the funding gap for implementing the commitments is determined and well communicated to the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

8. There is need to strengthen planning and budgeting as well as mainstream water and climate change activities in all other sectors since these sectors rely on water.
9. Collaboration among stakeholders requires more attention and funding.
10. The Certificate of Compliance to Climate Change in various sectors needs to annually be issued for the water and environment sector so that the extent to which climate change issues are mainstreamed in sector activities is assessed and appropriate action taken.
11. There is need to improve efficiency in utilising available funds to avoid duplication and low absorption of funds.
12. The commitments made by Uganda should be included in the National Development Plan IV which is currently under development by the National Planning Authority.
13. The Ministry of Finance does not have sector and climate change experts. MWE needs to ensure that information is shared and the Finance team is regularly updated and involved

#### **WAY FORWARD WITH RESPECT TO THE OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONFERENCE AND VOLUNTARY COMMITMENTS BY UGANDA**

- An Action plan and work plan for operationalization of all commitments and recommendations will be developed for the short term and long term to enable regular reports on the progress to be prepared and shared within the Uganda and at UN level.
- A mechanism to follow up the pledges and commitments that were made by various development partners that are relevant and of interest to Uganda will be developed and implemented
- The commitments and recommendations for Uganda will be quantified and costed in order to solicit for funds for their implementation



United Nations



## Annex 1: Agenda of the side event

TIME	TOPIC	RESPONSIBILITY
<b>THURSDAY MARCH 21, 2024</b>		
<b>11:30 -11:35</b>	<b>Registration of the participants</b>	<b>WRI</b>
11:35– 11:50	Remarks by Representative of Hilton Foundation Remarks by Chairperson, National Planning Authority Opening remarks by PS, MWE	Moderator (Ms Jane Nabunnya Mulumba- CD-IRC)
11:50 – 12:05	Presentation of the outcomes of the UN Water Conference and the commitments	Dr Callist Tindimugaya, Commissioner, WRPR
12:05 – 12:40	Support to implement outcomes of the UN 2023 Water Conference by Hilton Foundation support a) Share efforts by Uganda to achieve SDG 6, including the commitments made at the 2023 UN Water Conference b) Global Pledge to Protect Drinking Water from Lead c) Water, sanitation and hygiene Master planning in National Development Plan 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr Callist Tindimugaya- Commissioner, WRPR</li> <li>• Ms Lillian Idrakua- Commissioner, WQM</li> <li>• Mr Wilbrord Turimaso, WASH programs coordinator, IRC</li> </ul>
12:40 – 1:05	Panel discussions/perspectives by some stakeholders (UNHCR, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development)	Moderator
1:05 – 1:25	Plenary, Q &A	Moderator
1:25 – 1:30	Closure	Moderator

<sup>i</sup> The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation in 2023 extended financial support to the Ministry of Water and Environment for a one-year collaborative project with the National Planning Authority and IRCWASH to scale up specific initiatives to faster achieve SDG6, including participating in global and regional WASH events and disseminating widely the progress and commitments made by Uganda so far.