ONEWATER
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WATER FORUM
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“Beyond Borders: cooperation and innovation for the sustainable management of transboundary waters”

Italian Agency for Development Cooperation - AICS

Euro-Mediterranean Water Forum 2026 · 29 September – 2 October · La Nuvola, Rome

KEY INFORMATION

Date	29 September 2026
Time	14:30 – 16:00
Room	Atlante
Format	Panel discussion
Language(s)	English

SUMMARY

Transboundary water resources represent a strategic challenge and opportunity for international cooperation. Rivers, lakes, and aquifers that cross multiple countries **require a shared approach to ensure equity, sustainability, and resilience in the face of growing pressures such as climate change, urbanization, and intensive exploitation**. These resources are key to global water security and the socioeconomic stability of countries within the same river basin.

In this contest and through the experiences shared by local authorities, UN Agencies, Academia, Research Institutions and private sector, the session, organized by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), **aims at raising awareness on transboundary water governance, cooperation, and development finance,** focusing on identifying actionable entry points for integrating water considerations into policy, planning, and investments.

AGENDA & SPEAKERS

Time	Speaker Name & Title	Organization	Role / Topic
14:30 – 14:35	Paolo Enrico SERTOLI, Water focal point	AICS	Moderator - Presentation
14:35 – 14:40	Marco RAGO, Special Envoy for International Water Policy	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Italy	Speaker – Opening remarks

Time	Speaker Name & Title	Organization	Role / Topic
14:40 – 14:45	Marco Riccardo RUSCONI, Director	AICS	Speaker – Introductory remarks
14:45 – 14:55	Antti RAUTAVAARA, Special Envoy for Water	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland	Speaker – Keynote speech
14:55 – 15:00	Mara TIGNINO, Scientific Director	Geneva Water Hub	Panelist
15:00 - 15:05	Roberto AMERISE, Head of the Division for General Affairs, Financial Programs and International Cooperation, Sustainable Finance and Development	Ministry of the Environment and Energy Security of Italy (MASE)	Panelist
15:05 – 15:10	Francesca BERNARDINI, Chief, Water and Industrial Safety	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe	Panelist
15:10 – 15:15	Walid HAKIKI, Head of the Planning Sector	Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation, Egypt	Panelist
15:15 – 15:20	Mustafa Berk DUYGU, Head of Department, Drinking Water Department	Ministry of Agriculture, Turkey	Panelist
15:20 – 15:25	Dagmar BEHRENDT KALJARIKOVÁ, International Relations Officer, Directorate General for Environment	European Commission	Panelist
15:25 – 15:30	Gianpiero MENZA, Senior Manager, Business Development & Diversification	Alliance of Bioversity International	Panelist
15:30 – 15:35	Giorgio MICALE, Full professor of Chemical Engineering at the University of Palermo and AIDARA Vice President	AIDARA	Panelist
15:35 – 15:40	Soumaya MOUHLI, Head of the Shared Water Management Division	Observatoire du Sahara et du Sahel (OSS), Tunisia	Panelist
15:40 – 15:45	Edoardo CREMONESE, Head of Drought Unit	CIMA Foundation	Panelist
15:45 – 15:55	Q&A Session, with moderation		Moderator
15:55 – 16:00	Paolo Enrico SERTOLI, Water focal point		Moderator – Closing remarks

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

Transboundary water management is a structural **component of sustainable development policies**, particularly in contexts characterized by uncertain water availability, climate variability, and strong interdependence between states. In shared basins and aquifers, **water is not only a natural resource, but also a factor connecting political, economic, and institutional issues**. In the absence of cooperation

mechanisms, climate and demographic pressures risk amplifying vulnerabilities, inequalities, and tensions, with differential impacts on women and men. This approach is based on a clear premise: cooperation on water is first and foremost a matter of governance, including for the prevention and resolution of water conflicts.

The intensifying effects of climate change, population growth, and increased human pressure on agricultural, urban, and industrial uses are exacerbating the risks associated with the quantity and quality of water resources, necessitating the strengthening of regional cooperation mechanisms, shared information systems, and institutional planning and management capacities. In this context, the adoption of approaches that incorporate the use of advanced digital tools for monitoring, forecasting, and overall water resource management is becoming increasingly important.

This scenario closely aligns with the priorities of the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction** (2015–2030), which recognizes that hydrological and climate-related risks are transboundary in nature. The Framework calls for strengthened international and bilateral cooperation to exchange scientific data, harmonize emergency plans, and implement multi-hazard early warning systems capable of protecting populations across the entire length of shared watersheds.

In this context, the 1992 "**Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes**" (Water Convention), serviced by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), is of particular importance. The aim of the Convention is to promote cooperation between countries for the prevention and control of transboundary impacts on transboundary watercourses and international lakes and for the equitable and sustainable use of water resources. The Convention represents the main legally binding instrument that the international community has adopted to ensure intergovernmental coordination, the harmonization of approaches and methods, and the effective implementation of actions aimed at achieving the Goals and Targets relating to the water sector within the framework of the 2030 Agenda process, enhancing in particular the central role of Target 6.5 relating to the "integrated management of water resources at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate". The global expansion of the Water Convention paves the way for stronger cooperation on transboundary water based on tested principles and approaches.

At the UN Water Conference 2023, the European Commission launched a **Team Europe Initiative (TEI) on transboundary water management in Africa**, aiming to promote regional development and integration by improving transboundary water management. Since its launch, the TEI has made significant progress, with a growing number of EU Member States contributing and a growing number of projects launched. The initiative brings together EU institutions, Member States, African Union entities (AUC, AMCOW, ANBO), and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) for a total of €672 million and 51 ongoing initiatives related to water management in Africa. Working at the continental, regional/basin, and national levels, the TEI supports institution building, policy formulation, investment mobilization, and capacity building. Italy joined the TEI in January 2026.

OBJECTIVES

The session aims at creating a space for dialogue between governments, institutions, local communities, academia, and the private sector to share experiences, best practices, and innovative water governance tools. Therefore, the event aims to:

- **Promote** the exchange of knowledge and technical solutions as well as best practices for the integrated management of transboundary waters;
- **Strengthen** institutional, multilevel, and multisectoral cooperation between neighboring countries;
- **Promote** monitoring tools, bilateral/multilateral agreements, and conflict resolution mechanisms;
- **Integrate** the principles of the Sendai Framework into water diplomacy, promoting joint strategies for transboundary disaster risk reduction (DRR) related to extreme floods and droughts;
- **Raise** awareness among stakeholders regarding the importance of sustainable management of shared water resources.

TARGET AUDIENCE

- Representatives of national and local water ministries and authorities;

- International and regional organizations;
- NGOs and industry associations;
- Researchers and universities;
- Water sector businesses and startups.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Networking among key stakeholders;
- Identifying pilot projects and funding opportunities;
- Initiating potential synergies and/or operational collaborations among panelists.