

Water and Climate Resilience in the HKH

Advancing SDG 2030 Agenda through Science and Cooperation

Dates: 04–05 December 2025 | ICIMOD Headquarters, Kathmandu, Nepal | Hybrid

Convenors: ICIMOD, UN Water Convention (UNECE), UNESCAP, and IUCN

Agenda

Day 1: 4 December 2025

Venue: Kailash Hall, ICIMOD Headquarter

Time: 9:00 am

Time	Activity
09:30–10:15	<p>Opening session</p> <p>Background and objectives – Faisal Mueen Qamer, Lead River Basins, ICIMOD</p> <p>Welcome remarks by the host – Qianggong Zhang, Head of Climate and Environmental Risks, ICIMOD</p> <p>Welcome remarks by the co-host – Mikiko Tanaka, Director, South and Southwest Asia Sub-regional Office</p> <p>Welcome remarks by the co-host – Remy Kinna, Legal Officer, Secretariat of the Water Convention, UNECE</p> <p>Keynote speech – Shahbaz Khan, Director of the UNESCO Regional Office in Beijing and Governing Council Chair, Asian Pacific Water Forum. [45 minutes]</p>
10:15–10:45	Group photo and tea break
10:45–12:15	<p>Session 1: Water–Climate Risks and Regional Science Collaboration in the HKH</p> <p>Chair: Hester Biemans, Professor and Researcher Global Water Resources at Wageningen University</p> <p>Rapporteur: Manisha Maharjan, ICIMOD</p> <p>Scene setting presentation: Cryosphere change, transboundary flow shifts, and cascading climate extremes in the HKH – Arun B. Shrestha, ICIMOD</p> <p>Science-based networks for water–Climate cooperation in the HKH: This session brings together leading basin networks to share scientific insights, achievements, and opportunities for collaboration that strengthen transboundary understanding and climate adaptation.</p>

	<p>Discussions will highlight synergies among networks and pathways to advance SDG 6, 11, and 13 through science-based cooperation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Upper Indus Basin Network (UIBN) – Muhammad Ashraf, Country Representative, IWMI Pakistan - Meghna Forum, Vishwa Ranjan Sinha, IUCN Asia Regional Office - Yarlung Zangbo–Brahmaputra–Jamuna Basin Network (YBJBN), Sonia Binte Murshad, BUET, Bangladesh - HKH Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Hub – Saswata Sanyal, ICIMOD (<i>virtual</i>) - HKH CryoHub – Mohd Farooq Azam, ICIMOD <p>Session synthesis: Key takeaways, directions for strengthening science-based cooperation in the HKH. [90 minutes]</p>
12:15–13:15	Lunch break
13:15–14:30	<p>Session 2: Engagement of UNECE Water & Climate Task Force: Pathways and Opportunities for the HKH</p> <p>Chair: Md Abul Hossen, Joint Rivers Commission, Bangladesh Session Coordinator: Remy Kinna, UNECE Water Convention Secretariat Rapporteur: Michael Koch, UNESCAP</p> <p>This session explores how the UNECE Water and Climate Task Force and its Global Network of Basin Organisations can support the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region in strengthening transboundary water cooperation and climate resilience. It will highlight Bangladesh’s experience as the first South Asian Party to the Water Convention and the benefits of its twinning arrangement with the Netherlands. Presentations from UNECE, INBO, and Australia’s DFAT will outline the Task Force’s structure, achievements, and opportunities for HKH countries and basin initiatives to engage.</p> <p>Opening remarks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Md Anwar Kadir, Member, Joint Rivers Commission, Bangladesh - Neeltjie Kielen, Delegated Representative Water, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Bangladesh <p>Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jos G. Timmerman, Senior expert water and climate, Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, The Netherlands (<i>online</i>) - Marjorie Germain-Lupi, Project Manager, INBO (<i>online</i>) - John Dore, Lead Specialist, Climate Resilience & Water Security, DFAT, Australia (<i>online</i>) - Md Abdul Hossen, (former) Member, Joint Rivers Commission, Bangladesh (<i>virtual</i>) - Shawahiq Siddiqui, International Water Law Expert

	<p>Session synthesis: Key takeaways, opportunities in the HKH to engage with the global tools, lessons and climate adaptation strategies.</p> <p>[75 minutes]</p>
14:30–15:00	Tea break
15:00–16:30	<p>Session 3: From Science to SDG-Aligned Actions</p> <p>Session chair: Kenzo Hiroki, Coordinator of High-level Experts and Leaders Panel on Water and Disasters (UN HELP)</p> <p>Session coordinator: Faisal M. Qamer, ICIMOD</p> <p>Rapporteur: Rashed Uz Zzaman, ICIMOD</p> <p>This session will translate basin science and regional assessments into concrete, SDG-aligned actions by linking evidence from the Indus, Brahmaputra/Yarlung Zangbo/Jamuna, and Ganges sub-basins to global targets, identifying gaps in monitoring and cooperation, aligned with the six Interactive Dialogues of the 2026 UN Water Conference. The session will feed into APFSD 2026, the Asia-Pacific Preparatory Meeting for the UN Water Conference, and regional VNR inputs.</p> <p>Five working groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Climate–Water Risks: Water for Planet / DRR / resilience - Ecosystems & NbS: Water for Planet / Water for Prosperity - Resilient Infrastructure: Water for Prosperity / Water for People - Policy, Innovation & Implementation: Water in Multilateral Processes / Investments for Water - Basin Governance & Cooperation: Water for Cooperation / Water in Multilateral processes <p>Report back: Presentation of key results from each thematic group.</p> <p>Session synthesis: Key actionable points, emerging priorities and linkages to UN processes; HKH SDG Action Matrix</p> <p>[90 mins]</p>
18:30–20:00	Reception dinner

Day 2

Date: Friday, 5 December 2025

Venue: Kailash Hall, ICIMOD Headquarter

Time: 9:00 am

Time	Activity
09:00–10:30	<p>Session 4: Roundtable on Water–Climate Nexus: National Perspectives</p> <p>Session Coordinator: Mikiko Tanaka (ESCAP) and Mahendra P. Lama (JNU) Rapporteur: Jing Huang (ESCAP)</p> <p>This roundtable reflects on national experiences in managing water resources under intensifying climate risks in the Hindu Kush Himalaya. Policymakers will share solutions, challenges, and cooperation needs for sustainable, inclusive, and climate-resilient water management.</p> <p><i>Special address by dignitary (Virtual)</i></p> <p>H.E. Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Advisor to the Interim Government, Ministry of Water Resources and Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Bangladesh</p> <p>Panel discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Archana Verma, Additional Secretary and Mission Director, National Water Mission, Ministry of Water Resources, India (<i>virtual</i>)- Dr. Debolina Kundu, Director, National Institute for Urban Affairs, India (<i>virtual</i>)- Sanjeeb Baral, Joint Secretary, Water Resources and Energy Research Center, Water and Energy Commission, Nepal- Pema Thinley, Deputy Chief Planning Officer, Office of Cabinet Affairs & Strategic Coordination, Office of the Prime Minister & Cabinet, Bhutan- Dr. Md Abdul Hossen, former Member, Joint Rivers Commission, Bangladesh (<i>virtual</i>)- Dr. Kalyan Rudra, Chairman, West Bengal Pollution Control Board, India- Dr. Arvind Kumar, President, India Water Foundation, India <p>Session synthesis: Key takeaways, highlight national experiences in integrating water and climate strategies to build resilience in the HKH.</p> <p>[90 minutes]</p>

10:30–11:15	<p>Session 5- Inclusion and Practice</p> <p>Session Chair: Veena Vidhyadharan, Oxfam in Asia Session Coordinator: Vishwa Ranjan Sinha, IUCN Rapporteur: Yeshi Lham, ICIMOD</p> <p>This session explores how inclusive science through youth engagement, gender-sensitive approaches, citizen science, and Nature-based Solutions can drive water and climate resilience in the HKH.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Md. Shahadat Hossain, Institute of Water Modelling (IWM) - Bangladesh - Liang Gao, Sichuan University – China - Rajan Subedi, Oxfam - Nepal - Mahwish Afridi, Hashoo Foundation – Pakistan <p>Session synthesis: Key takeaways, inclusive approaches in basin strategies [45 minutes]</p>
11:15–11:30	<p>Tea break</p>
11:30–13:00	<p>Session 6: Aligning Multilateral Action for SDG 6 & 13</p> <p>Moderator: Anshuman Varma, ESCAP Session Coordinator: Mikiko Tanaka, ESCAP Rapporteur: Jing Huang (ESCAP)</p> <p>Building upon Session 3, this session aims to provide a platform for regional and international partners to share new insights and ongoing efforts in the HKH that can inform and contribute to global processes on water and climate.</p> <p>Overview of the session</p> <p>Working Groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Climate–Water Risks: Water for Planet / DRR / resilience - Ecosystems and NbS: Water for Planet / Water for Prosperity - Resilient Infrastructure: Water for People / Water for Prosperity - Policy, Innovation & Implementation: Water for Prosperity and Investments for Water - Basin Governance & Cooperation: Water for Cooperation / Water in Multilateral processes <p>Report back: Presentation of Key insights from each thematic group Discussion and Q & A</p> <p>Session synthesis: Key messages for recommended actions and opportunities. [90 minutes]</p>
13:00–14:00	<p>Lunch break</p>

14:00–15:15	<p>Session 7 — Panel Discussion: Pathways to a Joint Basin Response under Climate Stress</p> <p>Session Chair: Christina Leb, World Bank</p> <p>Session Moderator: Arun Shrestha, ICIMOD</p> <p>Rapporteur: Rongkun Liu, ICIMOD</p> <p>This session will explore how HKH countries can move from shared science to coordinated basin-level action under climate stress. It will focus on practical cooperation during crises such as floods, droughts, and glacial hazards. The discussion aims to identify actionable pathways linking basin cooperation to SDG 6, 11 and 13. Insights will feed into the HKH River Outcome Brief and preparations for the 2026 UN Water Conference.</p> <p>Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aneel Salman (IPRI, Pakistan) – economic & institutional tools - Medha Bisht (SAU, India) – water corporation - Ni Guangheng (Tsinghua University, China) – operational coordination - Mohammad Abu Sayed (JRC, Bangladesh) – policy & data sharing (<i>TBC</i>) - Purna B. Chhetri (Royal Thimphu College, Bhutan) – community & local governance - Jaco Du Toit, UNESCO Representative to Nepal– link to multilateral instruments <p>Session synthesis: Highlight 3–4 key cooperation pathways on trust-building, data sharing, joint response, and sustained science–policy engagement.</p> <p>[75 minutes]</p>
15:15	Working tea break
15:15–16:45	<p>Session 8: From Regional Evidence to Global Platforms</p> <p>Rapporteur: Chimi Seldon, ICIMOD</p> <p>a: Drafting the HKH Rivers Outcome Brief (45 minute)</p> <p>Breakout work to refine key HKH messages and recommendations for APFSD, VNRs, HLPF, and the UN Water Conference 2026.</p> <p>b: Plenary on HKH Rivers Outcome Brief (45 minute)</p> <p>Presentation and high-level reflections on the draft HKH Rivers Outcome Brief and its pathway into global processes.</p> <p>[90 minutes]</p>
16:45–17:15	Vote of thanks