

NEW REALITY



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| Panel Discussion

| WATER FOR PEACE AND SECURITY

Issues related to water have often been among the causes of armed conflict. The uneven distribution of freshwater in the world, its vital importance for life and development, as well as factors such as population growth, urbanisation and climate change all determine the relationship between water and peace, as well as accentuate its relevance.

By protecting water at the highest, constitutional level, some states have already shown their commitment to preserving this vital natural resource for future generations. Globally, however, awareness of the importance of the nexus between water and peace still lags behind current pressing trends.

Nearly two thirds of all trans boundary watercourses lack any joint management bodies. The financial mechanisms to incentivise multi-sectoral, efficient and trans-boundary water cooperation are limited. So far, the protection of water in armed conflicts, the mechanisms of hydro-diplomacy, as well as the role of water as an instrument in reconstruction and reconciliation processes in post-conflict situations have not been extensively explored. International institutions lack effective instruments for preventing water-related armed conflicts and for using water-related mechanisms for the maintenance of sustainable peace.

Nonetheless, several important developments have recently contributed significantly to promulgating the role of water as a source of peace and security. In November 2016, the United Nations Security Council held an open debate on this topic for the first time in history. A year before, the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace was established, with a mandate to present recommendations on how to enhance the mechanism for cooperation in relation to water, prevent conflicts and improve global water governance so that water becomes an instrument of peace. The report of the Panel is expected in September 2017.

The success of these and other initiatives will depend on the continued and comprehensive awareness of the urgent need to address the challenges water poses for peace and security. Furthermore, commitment and progress in dealing with security-related questions regarding water scarcity will also help address other challenges concerning water, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

| GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What are the key challenges and opportunities facing water's role and use as an instrument of peace?
- What steps can be taken at the global level to improve the institutional, legal and financial mechanisms and frameworks affecting global water governance?
- How can the international community harness the growing awareness of the nexus between water, peace and security?