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An Experience of A Lifetime

YOUTH4WATER PLUS AT UN 2023 WATER CONFERENCE

by *Abhishek Mani*

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The position I took as a Youth4Water Plus representative

Many Side Events were organized in this UN Water Conference.

- 185 Side Events inside the HQ;
- 165 Outside the HQ, and
- 180 Virtual Side Events

I participated in the United Nations General Assembly, many youth constituency events, UNICEF led events and some events organized by the Bangladesh, Netherland and Tajikistan water ministry..



Representing Youth4Water Plus at the Conference, *Pic Credit: Abhishek Mani*

The Main Topics of the Discussions were United Nations Joint SDG Fund (Water Blue Economy, the role of the UN Joint SDG Fund); Enhancing water resiliency in food systems through water stewardship, Water and youth's participation in Governance; Operationalizing water & climate youth demands: Strategy & Way Forward for implementation of the Water Action Agenda.

Key highlights that Youth were concerned about

Many countries are currently facing a water crisis but I'm highly interested in the problem of *Sierra Leone*, a country of the Africa Continent. Major water, sanitation and hygiene challenges in Sierra Leone are the low levels of use of basic sanitation services, access to safe/quality drinking water and inadequate use of safe hygiene practices by children and their families. The determination of these priority concerns is based on the available evidence derived from the analysis of the national WASH situation.



Children of Sierra Leone walk miles for water, Pic Credit: CEOworld

Only 16% of the population has access to basic sanitation services with 28% defecating in the open while 58% and 23% have no access to basic water services and practicing safe hygiene practices respectively.

I like the work UNICEF is doing in Sierra Leone. They are providing more and more support to ensure water accessibility in that area.

Key highlights that Youth were frustrated about

I'm also interested in the Water Action Plan taken by the Government of *Bangladesh*. They are highly concerned about Water Security. I think their problems are similar to our problems. Like Odisha they are always facing Cyclone, Drought and floods problems. Bangladesh is high on the list of countries most vulnerable to climate change, ranking 7th on the 2021 World Climate Risk Index. Among the countries most affected by extreme climate conditions, it only contributes a small share of global emissions.

Climate change-induced natural disasters plague Bangladesh due to its geographic location and flat, low-lying topography. High population density, poverty and reliance on climate-sensitive sectors for water and food security, particularly water resources, agriculture, fisheries and livestock, increasing its vulnerability to climate change.



A boy is drinking water from a dried up River in Bangladesh, Pic Credit: Riasat Rakin/Flickr

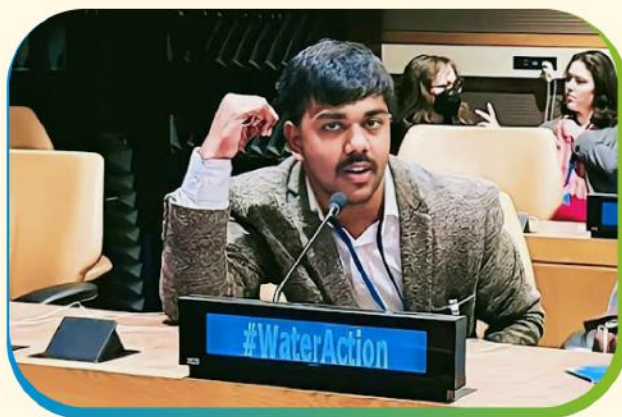
Different kinds of Climate-induced disasters such as tropical cyclones and storm surges, monsoon floods, flash floods, droughts, sea-level rise, salinity intrusion, ocean acidification, etc.

Their Prime Minister is very careful about Water Security and Climate Change.

Key highlights that Youth demanded about

The speakers of the United Nations Water Conference are mostly aggressive. They are highly concerned about the Climate Emergency. They want participation of youth in the different Climate Policy process. They all demand a proper Action for Climate Change. Speakers like Zi Han Xuan, Global Focal Point of YOUNGO, leading all the youths of the world demand a suitable and effective action plan for water crisis and insecurity. "The commitments at this Conference will propel humanity towards the water-secure future every person on the planet needs," noted UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres at the closing ceremony.

The results of the UN 2023 Water Conference will be monitored by the United Nations and the conversations will continue at the two big meetings about progress on the event of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that will take place this year.



Pic Credit: Abhishek Mani

The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July will review a few select Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 6 on water and sanitation. In September, the SDG Summit will assess progress on the whole 2030 Agenda and discuss how it can help us address today's many interlinked crises.

My message to the Chief Minister of Odisha, and the Prime Minister of India

Thanks to the United Nations for organizing the UN 2023 Water Conference. This event is crucial in addressing the challenges that the world faces especially in the context of climate change, biodiversity loss, and disaster risk reduction.

As young people, we recognize that water is a vital resource that underpins the sustainable development of our planet. Water scarcity is one of the biggest challenges facing our generation. We call on world leaders to take bold action to ensure access to clean and safe water for all.

As young people, we are committed to finding innovative solutions to water challenges. We believe that technology can play a critical role in improving water management and increasing access to safe drinking water. We call on governments and industry leaders to invest in research and development to create sustainable, low-cost solutions that can be deployed at scale.



We, the Youth want serious #WaterAction, Pic Credit: Abhishek Mani

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We want serious
#WaterAction



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