

## #NewYork #Bangkok Diaries: AROUND THE WORLD IN 11 DAYS

The ten day sojourn from Delhi- New York- Incheon- Bangkok-Delhi was almost 40 hours of intermittent flying. Landing in New York, a city of endless possibilities, high energy, great diversity and much to visit and explore whether you're a foodie, an art enthusiast, a theatre lover or just someone who loves a fast-paced life, New York City is the place for you. However for me all the roads in New York were leading to the United Nations Headquarters where the UN 2023 Water Conference was being held. Similarly Bangkok was as usual bustling with tourists, a place to wander, eat, and imbibe. But like in New York my eyes were focused on the UNCC to attend the 10th Asia Pacific forum on Sustainable Development. This ten day haul was full of events, sessions, plenaries and bilateral meetings. My first stopover was New York-

### NEW YORK - UN 2023 WATER CONFERENCE

The UN 2023 Water Conference was convened from 22-24<sup>th</sup> March 2023 after 44 years since 1977. The conference opened with energy and optimism for a true watershed moment and began with a clear diagnosis of the situation that progress has fallen severely short in achieving SDG 6 for universal access to WASH and actions that work, exist, but must be taken to scale. Some 10,000 participants gathered at UN Headquarters and online from 22 to 24 March 2023, to urgently scale up action to address the water crisis and



ensure equitable access to water for all. Co-hosted by the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Republic of Tajikistan, the Conference brought together world leaders, civil society, business leaders, young people, scientists, academics, the UN System and others from across sectors — agriculture, energy, environment and water — around a common goal: to urgently tackle the water crisis and set the world back on track to achieving SDG 6 – On Clean Water and Sanitation. It was almost

an impossible task to cover such a huge agenda in just a span of three days but some concrete actions came out of it.

# INDIA WATER FOUNDATION AT THE UN 2023 WATER CONFERENCE

Being an ECOSOC accredited civil society organization India Water Foundation got several opportunities to organize events, speak at main sessions, plenary and other side events.

**1. OFFICIAL VIRTUAL SIDE EVENT-** India Water Foundation organized an official side event in collaboration with World Water Council on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2023 under the aegis of UN 2023 water conference to also commemorate India Water Foundation's 15<sup>th</sup> founding day. The high level policy dialogue on 'Accelerating SDG 6 Achievements through Cross Sectoral Partnerships' was chaired by the Hon'ble Minister of Jalshakti Sh. Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and context setting by Dr. Arvind Kumar, President, India Water Foundation.

Other Excellencies, dignitaries and speakers in the event were- Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under Secretary General of United Nations and Executive Secretary of UNESCAP, Mr. Loic Fauchon, President, World Water Council, Mr. Shombi Sharp, UN Resident Coordinator India, Mr. David Cooper, Acting Executive Secretary, Convention on



Biological Diversity, Mr. Satya Tripathi, Secretary General, Global Alliance for a sustainable Planet, Mr. Saroj Kumar Jha, Global Director-Water, World Bank Group, Mr. Ruhiza Jean Boroto, Senior Land and Water Officer, FAO, Mr. Jun Watanabe, Senior Representative JICA India Office and Mr. Vishwaranjan Sinha, Programme Officer, Water and Wetlands for South Asia, IUCN. The event was hosted by Ms. Shweta Tyagi, Chief Functionary of India Water Foundation.

**2. Special Event** – Out of the four special sessions was ‘**Regional Dialogue on Accelerating Implementation of the Water Action Agenda**’ and I was panellist in this session. It was organised and had contributions by-



**Member States:** Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management, **Austria**; Ministry of Environment, **Dominican Republic**; Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation, **Egypt**; Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV), **Germany**; Government of **Tajikistan**, Ministry of Water, **Tanzania**



**United Nations Regional Commissions:** Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), United Nations Economic

and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

**Civil Society:** India Water Foundation (ESCAP region); African Civil Society Network for Water and Sanitation (ANEW) (ECA region); Bahr Alolom Forum, Iraq (ESCWA region); Latin America Youth Water Network (ECLAC region); Women for Water Partnership and Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment (ECE region)



**3.** On the eve of World Water Day on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023 at UN 2023 Water Conference in New York I spoke at the side event ‘PPP Model for Rainwater Harvesting and Enhancing Native Biodiversity – Use Cases from India’ organised by HCL, The Nature Conservancy, ATREE, IHS and Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group outside the UN headquarters at the Nature Hub, New York. I presented the talk on ‘Harnessing cross cutting nature of Water to achieve Agenda 2030.’

**4. Bilateral Meetings-** I had an opportunity to meet several dignitaries, experts and colleagues at New York. Had few bilateral meetings as well-

**A. Ms. Mumba Musonda-** It was a pleasure meeting and interacting with Dr. Mumba Musonda, Secretary General, of The Convention of Wetlands. Our comprehensive discussions steered from the wetlands restoration and rejuvenation work carried out in India and how India Water Foundation and The convention can create a close partnership to strengthen and meet the objectives of the convention. We also discussed on the implementation of decade of ecosystem restoration and



how we can contribute

towards it by forging committed partnerships and tangible actions.



**B. Dr. Eddy Moors -** During the UN 2023 Water Conference in New York had the opportunity to have a bilateral meeting with Dr. Eddy Moors, Rector, IHE Delft Institute of water education under the auspices of UNESCO. In our comprehensive discussions we explored strengthening our impacts by means of partnerships for co-

creating knowledge and capacity development to strengthen individual and organizational performance and learning. To ensure that high-quality and up-to-date water programmes are accessible and affordable to those who need them and support them in developing and implementing water education and research programme.



**C. Ms. Jane Madgwick-** Also had the opportunity to briefly meet Ms. Jane Madgwick CEO of Wetlands International and exchanged thoughts on the wetland restoration and rejuvenation programmes in India.

**D. Mr. Loic Fauchon-** The discussions with Mr. Loic Fauchon, President of the World Water Council ranged from the G20 events to the World Water Forum to take place in 2024 in Bali.

**E. Mr. Giriraj Amarnath-** I also met Mr Amarnath, Principal researcher – Disaster Risk Management and Climate Resilience and Research Group Leader: Water Risks to Development and Resilience. Our discussions ranged on variety of topics and exchanged notes on technology, food and hot spots I New York.



Meeting with Mr. Loic Fauchon



Meeting with Mr. Giriraj Amarnath



Meeting with Mr. Sulton  
Rahimzoda, Republic of Tajikistan



Meeting with DG NMCG

NEW YORK - UN 2023 WATER CONFERENCE IMAGES





## 10<sup>TH</sup> ASIA PACIFIC FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

After spending four hectic days in New York where no amount of time is enough to fully experience the city I travelled to Bangkok, Thailand to attend the 10<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development from 27-30<sup>th</sup> March 2023 organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The Tenth Forum was attended by more than 1,700 participants, including representatives of Governments, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations bodies, international organizations and major groups and other stakeholders.



### India Water Foundation at 10<sup>th</sup> APFSD

**1. SDG6 Roundtable** - I was a speaker at the roundtable discussions on SDG6 profile at the 10<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) at Bangkok, Thailand. The round table on the review of SDG 6 was co-organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations' Children's Fund (UNICEF) with UN ESCAP. The other country representatives in the discussion were from Indonesia, Australia, Kyrgyzstan and agencies like GWP, FAO and UNICEF. I presented the perspectives from India and



highlighted why programme like Amrit Sarovar is imperative because not only are we staring at depletion of groundwater and pollution of surface water but also vanishing water bodies like lakes, ponds, wetlands etc. due to encroachment and development works. As a member of the national wetlands committee of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and climate change of Government of India we made the provision of enumerating, geo tagging and making an inventory of water bodies to make encroachment

difficult especially in urban areas by making them part of the revenue records which is being implemented by the government now.



**2. SDG6 Plenary-** In the SDG6 plenary I presented the key takeaways and outcomes of the UN 2023 Water Conference. The commitments made by countries, private sector, international and UN agencies and NGOs. Also the main outcome was 708 and increasing water action agenda commitments registered on the water action website.

### 3. Bilateral Meeting

It was of utmost honour and privilege to have got an opportunity to meet Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana Executive Secretary ESCAP and Under Secretary General of United Nations. We discussed the priority areas of ESCAP in the SSWA region and she appreciated India Water Foundation’s work to ensure



proper management and adequate availability of water resource.

She stressed why an integrated approach to SDG6 is essential to bringing the other Global Goals to fruition.



There have been events in the past as well but there is very little sign that these efforts have accelerated progress. Most countries remain off-track on targets for universal WASH. Most have made little progress on water security. And for those countries that have achieved transformational change, there’s no evidence that international commitments have been the trigger. If past summits have failed, what UN undertakings would speed

up progress on the SDG6? It’s not what happens during the conferences and forums, it’s what happens afterward?



# 10<sup>TH</sup> ASIA PACIFIC FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IMAGES





