



Moving drought resilience up the global political agenda

New York, 23 March 2023 – Mobilizing political will, resources and tools to help countries, cities and communities better prepare and respond to the growing impacts of droughts is critical as global freshwater demand is projected to outstrip available supply by 40% by 2030, leaders urged at the UN 2023 Water Conference in New York.

Members of the International Drought Resilience Alliance (IDRA), co-chaired by Spain and Senegal, met in New York earlier today for the inaugural meeting of the Steering Committee to discuss how drought resilience can be elevated on the global development and cooperation agenda. The meeting marked a significant step forward in international efforts to address the growing threat of drought worldwide, as the Steering Committee begins to shape the future direction and strategy of the Alliance.

Launched at the UN Climate Summit in November 2022 by the Prime Minister of Spain, Pedro Sánchez, and the President of Senegal, Macky Sall, IDRA is as a collaborative platform to catalyse political momentum and mobilize resources for targeted actions to enhance drought resilience in countries, cities, and communities. The Alliance was bolstered by Spain's financial contribution of €5 million announced by Prime Minister Sánchez at the launch event.

"Drought management must be planned, based on science and experience. Today more than ever, data and knowledge are essential to avoid human and economic losses and climate-induced migrations," said Hugo Morán, Secretary of State for the Environment of Spain.

"Our fight against drought and land degradation is truly an existential struggle. That is why I invite all countries and all development partners to join IDRA and actively contribute to its success," said Serigne Mbaye Thiam, Minister of Water and Sanitation of Senegal.

Italy is the latest country to join the Alliance, bringing the total IDRA membership to 32 countries and 20 organizations. "By joining IDRA on the occasion of the UN Water Conference, Italy wants to confirm its strong commitment to contributing to the transition from an emergency response to one based on impact reduction through adaptation, preparedness and resilience measures," announced Gilberto Pichetto Fratin, Italy's Minister of the Environment and Energy Security.

"The International Drought Resilience Alliance has a crucial role to play in addressing the global challenge of drought, and I am confident that with strong political leadership and collaboration, we can make a significant difference," said Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). UNCCD has supported the operationalization of the Alliance since its launch.

The newly established IDRA Steering Committee comprises 17 members, namely: Chile, Dominican Republic, European Union, Germany, Kenya, Mauritania, Namibia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal (Co-chair), Spain (Co-chair), United States of America, Asian Development Bank, Corporacion Andina de Fomento, The Nature Conservancy, United Nations Development Programme, World Meteorological Organization and WWF.

IDRA Steering Committee members stressed the need for the Alliance to play a leading role in shaping global policies and frameworks to address the challenge of drought and build resilience in the face of climate change. They also discussed the need for governments to prioritize drought prevention and preparedness, as well as to implement policies that promote sustainable water and land management, and climate change adaptation.



Drought resilience is among the key topics being discussed at the UN Water Conference, which meets against the backdrop of the latest findings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that drought frequency, severity and overwhelming impacts are on the rise. These include higher human mortality in vulnerable areas, as well as increasing food and water insecurity that is driving forced displacement.

Droughts cause suffering and losses such as devastating farmlands, endangering ecosystems and destroying livelihoods. In the two decades from 1998 to 2017, droughts generated economic losses of about US\$124 billion across the world, not to mention the cost in human suffering and lives.

Professor Johan Rockström, Director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and co-chair of the Global Commission on the Economics of Water addressed the IDRA Steering Committee, highlighting the importance of the Commission's landmark report released on the eve of the conference, which found that more than US\$ 700 billion in agricultural and water subsidies are distributed globally each year, often fuelling excessive water consumption and land degradation.

"Drought risks are unevenly distributed, falling most heavily on those who are the least able to cope. To pivot from emergency response to long-term drought resilience both the public and private sectors must realign their investments. This is one of IDRA's priorities," Executive Secretary Thiaw added.

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