LAWASIA
THE LAW ASSOCIATION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
FOUNDED IN 1966

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UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL 61ST SESSION

Item No. 3: Interactive Dialogue with Special Rapporteur on Enjoyment of a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment
Oral Statement

The Law Association of Asia and the Pacific (LAWASIA) states that recognition of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment in Resolution 48/13[1] must translate into enforceable action.

In 2026, a report by the UNU-IWEH warned that the world had entered an era of "water bankruptcy." Statistics paint a bleak picture with 2.2 billion people lacking safe drinking water, 4 billion experiencing severe water scarcity once every year and 70% of major aquifers on a long-term decline.[2]

South Asia remains among the most water-stressed regions globally. In Asia and the Pacific, coastal aquifers and Small Island Developing States face over-extraction and salinisation, while monitoring and water quality data remain insufficient in many least developed countries.[3]

Adding to these stressors are energy production projects[4] and AI data centres. Accelerated AI expansion is predicted to bring 4.2 to 6.6 billion cubic metres of water demand by 2027.[5]

Recognising the foundations of existing international water instruments[6] and SDG 6[7] and noting emerging pressures, we urge this Council to:

(i) Consider a global water framework treaty with core obligations.

(ii) Develop a guidance note for multilateral water agreements.

(iii) Strengthen transparent water monitoring efforts.

(iv) Encourage States to regulate high-consumption sections, including AI, through EIA, permits and transparent water management solutions.

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[1] United Nations General Assembly Resolution 48/13 (2021). https://docs.un.org/en/a/hrc/res/48/13
[2] UN-IWEH refers to United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health, Global Water Bankruptcy – Living Beyond Hydrological Means in the Post-Crisis Era, https://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:10445/Global_Water_Bankruptcy_Report__2026_.pdf
[3] 2026 United Nations Water Conference Inputs from ESCAP for the Interactive Dialogues' Concept Papers, https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2025-11/ESCAP%20inputs.pdf
[4] United Nations World Water Development Report 2024. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000388950
[5] Data centres use vast amounts of water – here's how we advance water circularity, https://www.weforum.org/stories/2025/11/data-centres-and-water-circularity/
[6] UN Watercourses Convention (1997) and the Minamata Convention.
[7] Sustainable Development Goal 6 aims for universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all by 2030. https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal6