WWQA
World Water Quality Alliance

YEMAYA

December 2025

New Beginnings

Dear Friends and Partners of the World Water Quality Alliance,
As you will know, there have been some changes to the WWQA Coordination Team in UNEP during the past year and we have decided to make a few changes. Most notably will be a new layout of the YEMAYA and the recent Contact Database Update Survey that all of you will have seen and filled out - as you're still on our contact list :-)
Thank you very much for your participation and continued interest in the work of the WWQA!

The survey is now closed, and we received input from more than 200 participants — thank you for the great response!
We are currently reviewing the inputs and feedback received and will share more detailed findings with you at a later stage.
In the meantime, we would like to share one key result that stood out clearly. It reflects your perceived benefits of being part of this community, which is a crucial driver for us and helps guide the focus and direction we should move toward together. We are particularly excited to see *"Contribute to a global water quality assessment"* emerge so strongly as a priority for many of you. We look forward to building on this, alongside the many other important aspects highlighted, as we move forward together.

13. Please rank the potential benefits to you of being a member of the WWQA.

182 Responses

As we are still adjusting and finding our footing, there has been some delay in getting this YEMAYA out and we are also working on revising the overall structure/content going forward.

However, as there are some updates and information that we received from our community, we would like to share this light version of the YEMAYA with you today and reassure you of our commitment to return to a more regular cycle in the new year.

Thank you for your understanding.

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1. Update from UNEA 7

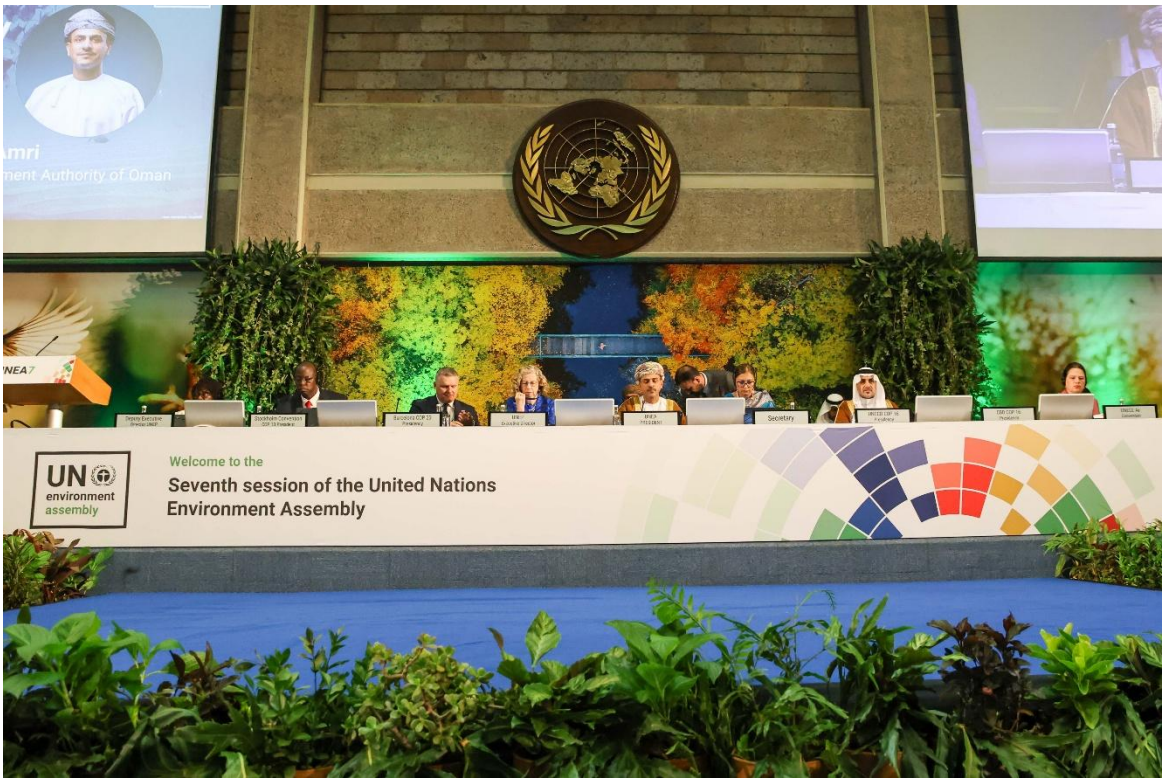

Photo credit: IISD/ENB | Anastasia Rodopoulou

In the second week of December 2025 negotiators and ministers met in Nairobi for the 7th session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), the highest decision-making body on the environment. Next to passing UNEP's Medium-term Strategy 2026-29 and the associated Programme of Work and Budget, UNEA also addressed numerous resolutions on a variety of topics, many of them with linkages to the hydrological cycle, for example:

- Karst ecosystem for Global Water, Biodiversity, Climate Resilience, and Economic Development.
- Preservation of glaciers and the broader cryosphere.

- Sound management of chemicals and waste.

All agreed resolutions and decisions can be found here: Outcomes of UNEA-7

However, the resolution on Karst ecosystems was withdrawn by the proponent Indonesia as despite of several days of negotiations the Member States could not reach a consensus. Indonesia will explore collaboration on the topic through another avenue.

During the High-Level Segment UN Secretary-General António Guterres stressed via video message the need to unite science with policy and to scale solutions. Among several challenges he listed he also mentioned water management. The UAE invited delegates to the 2026 UN Water Conference that will be co-hosted by the UAE and Senegal in December 2026.

Many side events that happened in parallel to the negotiations covered freshwater and related topics.

- The Water Continuum: Uniting Climate, Nature, and People through the flow of the water cycle
- Drying Seas and Lakes – A Global Catastrophe of the 21st Century
- Empowering Communities for Sustainable Lake and Peatland Conservation

All links to UNEA-7 side events (official side events, MEA events and associated events) can be found in the playlists on UNEP's official YouTube page.

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2. Updates from the Workstreams

Citizen Science for SDG 6.3.2

Citizen Science Association for Southern Africa

Democratizing Knowledge for Action

Newsletter 3 – 17 October 2025

WORLD WATER MONITORING DAY EVENT | 19 SEPTEMBER 2025

World Water Monitoring Day, observed annually on September 18, encourages individuals, communities, NGOs, businesses, and policymakers to take an active role in safeguarding water resources. It highlights the importance of citizen science in monitoring rivers, dams, wetlands, groundwater, and estuaries, contributing data to national and international databases. The day also serves as a platform for education and awareness, reminding us that sustainable water management is essential for human health, the environment, and development—captured in the principle: *"You cannot manage what you cannot measure."*

In celebration of this important date, the Citizen Science Association for Southern Africa (CSA_SA) together with Emaplatini Heritage Forum, Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), Water Research Commission (WRC), South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), Rand Water, Ecolink Environmental Education and Training Centre, IIE MSA and WaterCAN hosted an Imbizo yeSizwe (a discussion **platform open to the public**) together with a river monitoring and clean up event.

As part of this, students from nearby schools (Mzamo and Shomang Primary School and Emadwaleni Secondary School) were provided with an opportunity to learn more about the value of our shared water resources, coming together with community members, concerned individuals, researchers and business to take collective action.

Citizen Science Association for Southern Africa - Newsletter

On the back of the exciting announcement made recently regarding the official registration of the Citizen Science Association for Southern Africa (CSA_SA), we are pleased to share our quarterly newsletter with you all.

This edition focuses on the recent Water Monitoring Day event held in Soweto on 19 September 2025 and includes a number of photos and videos. We hope you enjoy reading about the event and look forward to your involvement at the next one.

Warm regards, Jacqueline Goldin, Linda Downsborough and Vanessa Stippel
On behalf of the Interim Steering Committee of the Citizen Science Association for Southern Africa

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Science-Policy Interface for Water (SPI4W)

Photo credit: Sabrina Kirschke

Session at PartWiss 2025 convened by the SPI4Water Workstream

The protection of the qualitative and quantitative status of water resources is gaining increasing attention in many regions of the world, as it is essential for achieving social, economic, and ecological goals such as food production, energy provision, and biodiversity

conservation. To address this complex challenge, research is increasingly drawing on participatory approaches. These approaches aim to jointly generate policy-relevant knowledge or to translate scientific knowledge into political practice. In recent years, a variety of participatory formats have been developed and applied, including participatory science communication, citizen science, and transdisciplinary research. However, it remains unclear which specific mechanisms of impact these different participatory approaches actually have.

In our session 'Participatory Approaches to Strengthening the Science–Policy Interface' at PartWiss 2025 in Leipzig, Germany, we aimed to improve our understanding of the comparative effects of diverse participatory approaches on political processes related to water. We brought together perspectives from participatory science communication, citizen science, and transdisciplinary research—united by a shared focus: how to better connect knowledge and policy in the water domain.

Key Insights from the Session

- **Participatory approaches are highly diverse.** They engage different actor groups, use a wide range of methods and tools, and operate at various levels within the science–policy ecosystem.
- **This diversity translates into different types of impact:**
  from shifts in participants' political attitudes to joint problem framing and long-term cooperation between science and policy actors addressing complex water challenges.
- **At the same time, important open questions remain:**
  – Are participatory research formats truly more effective for evidence-informed policy-making?
  – Through which mechanisms do the different approaches exert influence?
  – How can their contribution to policy processes be measured?
  – And which combinations of approaches are most promising for generating real impact?

It became clear that participatory approaches are not interchangeable—but they can strongly complement each other when their specific strengths are consciously leveraged.

We extend our sincere thanks to all contributors for their rich perspectives and the lively discussion: Johannes Graupner and Angelina Tittmann (IGB), Doris Knoblauch (Ecologic Institute), Dr. Nikola Nölle, Dr. Melanie Kryst, and Lena Herzog-Sounaye (Berlin University Alliance), Christian D. León (University of Stuttgart), Linda Söller (ISOE).

Convened by the SPI4Water Workstream, by Sabrina Kirschke (MfN), Tamara Avellan (IOER), and Hannah Kosow (University of Stuttgart)

3. Other News & Updates

The Water Atlas 2025

Data and facts about the basis of life

Water covers two-thirds of the Earth, is essential to life, and has shaped culture, the environment, and humanity since time immemorial. But this essential resource is under threat: overuse, pollution, and the climate crisis are destabilizing the water cycle. The Water Atlas 2025 aims to focus the public debate on protecting our waterways. In 19 articles and dozens of infographics, the Water Atlas 2025 examines these threatening developments: groundwater levels are falling, and drinking water supplies and ecosystems are at risk.

Industry, agriculture, and our growing demand for resources are placing significant strains on water quality. Microplastics, chemicals, and pesticides are endangering humans and nature alike. Extreme weather events such as droughts and floods are increasing. Disadvantaged regions are particularly affected, which is exacerbating social tensions and conflicts. The connections between water and climate are complex and often poorly understood. The term "water blindness" describes the lack of awareness of the impacts of climate change on water. Although many people consider water worthy of protection, there is a lack of focus and determined implementation of protective measures.

The Water Atlas 2025 raises awareness of these challenges and presents concrete approaches for sustainable water management.
The Water Atlas 2025 makes it clear: preventative water protection, stricter political regulations, incentives for water-efficient production, and cross-border cooperation are necessary. International agreements such as the UN Water Conferences offer opportunities to develop and implement solutions. It's time: decisive action can protect the foundation of all life.

You can access the full report here.
Published by the Heinrich Böll Stiftung

Announcement of water quality related PhD positions at the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (UFZ) in Leipzig, Germany.

We are pleased to share four open PhD positions (f/m/x) within the research cohort "In4Nile – Advancing Water Quality Information in the Nile River Basin" at the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (UFZ) in Leipzig, Germany.

The cohort aims to advance water-quality information in the Nile River Basin through data collection, analysis, and modelling in an interdisciplinary team. The positions span geospatial analysis, chemical pollution assessment, natural-language processing, and basin-scale water-quality modelling, contributing to a better understanding of pollution status, drivers, impacts and possible future scenarios in the Nile Basin.

PhD 1: ***Spatio-temporal patterns of water quality drivers and pollution pathways*** - click here for more information.

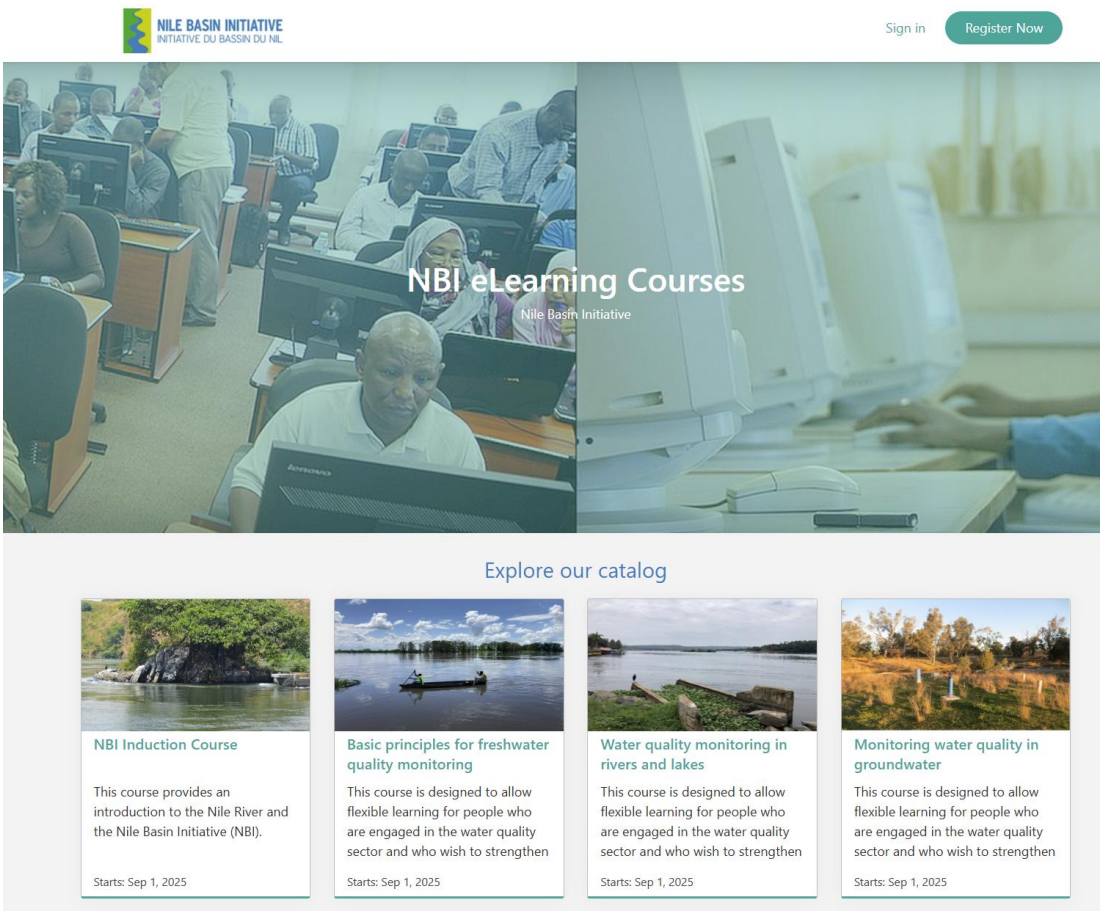
PhD 2: ***Analysis and assessment of aquatic chemical pollution in the Nile Basin pollution pathways*** - click here for more information.

PhD 3: ***Monitoring water quality impacts using NLP and LLMs pollution pathways*** - click here for more information.

PhD 4: ***Multi-pollutant spatially explicit water quality modelling: from historical evolution to future scenario assessments pollution pathways*** - click here for more information.

📍 Location: Leipzig, Germany
📅 **Application deadline: 12 January 2026**

We welcome motivated candidates interested in environmental data science, water quality, modelling, machine learning, and interdisciplinary research. Further details for each position, including contact information for questions, can be found in the links above.



New Water Quality Online eLearning Courses - Launched by the Nile Basin Initiative

The Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), through funding received by the World Bank under the Nile Cooperation for Climate Resilience (NCCR) Project initiated through the Cooperation in International Waters in Africa (CIWA), was able to hire a consultant to develop region specific water quality online courses. These courses were adapted from UNEP GEMS/Water's eLearning courses and updated with regional relevance and focus.

The courses available include the following and can be accessed here or through the links below:

- Course 1 Basic Principles for Freshwater Quality Monitoring Programme Design
- Course 2 Water Quality Monitoring in Rivers and Lakes
- Course 3 Monitoring Water Quality in Groundwater
- Course 4 Using Aquatic Organisms to Monitor Freshwater Quality
- Course 5 Incorporating Particulate Matter in a Water Quality Monitoring Programme

- Course 6 Fundamentals of Quality Assurance for Freshwater Quality Monitoring
- Course 7 Managing and using freshwater quality data
- Course 8 Sustainable Development Goal Indicator 6.3.2 for Water Quality

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4. Outlook 2026

The year ahead will bring new opportunities to advance the global water quality agenda and will culminate in the 2026 UN Water Conference in the UAE in December.

As the custodian for SDG indicator 6.3.2 on ambient water quality, GEMS/Water will kick off the 4th indicator data drive in early 2026. This will provide us with an updated snapshot of the global water quality situation and allow us to engage closely again with focal points around the world. As in previous rounds of data collection we will encourage focal points to take an in depth look at their own monitoring programmes and encourage them to complement conventional monitoring data with novel sources of data such as citizen science and satellite-based Earth Observation.

The work on SDG indicator 6.3.2 takes place under the umbrella of UN-Water's Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG 6 (IMI-SDG6). As part of IMI UNEP will contribute to UN-Water's 2026 Synthesis Report on "Evidence of SDG 6 progress, supported by latest data and information". The Synthesis Report 2026 will provide the UN system's collective input to the in-depth review of SDG 6 at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), scheduled to take place in July 2026. Marking a decade of SDG 6 implementation,

the report will assess progress made, showcase how the goal has strengthened national action and policy coherence across all levels, and distill key lessons learned.

UNEP's GEMS/Water will continue implementing its various work packages, among them the continued promotion of citizen science, capacity development on lakes and the development of tools to assist partners in managing their water quality data. In our role as coordinators of the WWQA we will continue to engage with the different workstreams and the Advisory Committee.

We look forward to working with all of you to ensure water quality is visible and represented in the global fora and processes in 2026 and to continue our work towards a better understanding of global water quality challenges and trends as well as advocacy for water quality at all levels.

Lastly, we wish you all a good end of the year and transition into the new year.

WWQA Coordination Team

Want to learn more about the WWQA?

To learn more about the WWQA you can visit our website and follow us on LinkedIn.

Missed a WWQA webinar? No worries! You can catch up on all our past sessions by visiting the WWQA YouTube channel.

Disclaimer
Unless otherwise indicated, all contributions are by the WWQA coordination team.

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YEMAYA welcomes articles, opinions and audio-visual material related to the issue of water quality. Please send any contribution to wwqa-coordination@un.org with a short 100-word biography, the name of your organisation.

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