



SESSION DESCRIPTION FORM 2.

10TH WORLD WATER FORUM

This Session Description Form 2 is for the specified program of the session. Please complete this form no later than 28th of February 2024.

**The session description 1 (online form) is separately requested for the session coordinators to deliver a concise session outline with the contact info and the logistical requests.*

Session Code and Title:

T2B2

River Life: Water and ecosystem connectivity and ecological flows

Session Coordinators (Name, Position, Organization, email, mobile number):

Dr. Xin He, Deputy Director of Division, China Institute of Water Resources and Hydropower Research, hex@iwhr.com, +86 136 8363 0962

Dr. Rahmah Elfithri, Chief of Section, UNESCO, r.elfithri@unesco.org, +33 7 4946 2121

Session Description including objectives and expected outcomes (500 words maximum):

Water knows no boundary, and freshwater biodiversity needs to be interconnected from source to sea across landscapes, in order to survive, thrive, and provide crucial ecosystem services. As an example, monitored freshwater fish populations have declined by 83% globally according to the WWF. Moreover, healthy large-scale ecosystems such as rainforests and wetlands contribute to the fight against climate change, which is one of the main drivers for biodiversity loss worldwide. Bending the curve of freshwater biodiversity loss will require sustaining and restoring water flows and ensuring ecosystem connectivity at basin-level. Water does not only connect ecosystems and species; it also connects different geographies and human activities. Such large-scale restoration and protection projects should be coordinated across neighboring countries along the same river basin and at the regional scale in order to be fair and effective. Moreover, such complex endeavors need to take into account all aspects of the project: cultural implications, socio-economic consequences, as well as impacts on fisheries, agriculture and industrial activities need to be considered in the design, implementation, and monitoring phases.

In this session, high-level guests, such as the Minister of the Ministry of Water Resources of China, the President of the World Water Council, and officials from UNESCO and OFB will give keynote addresses on the importance of ecosystem connectivity at various scales. A panel of experts from different parts of the world will come together and contribute their compelling stories on how science, engineering, policy, and governance can be coordinated to produce innovative solutions for conservation and restoration of freshwater ecosystems, their species, and services, with a focus on river flows, connectivity and the ethics in management.

Objectives:

- Highlight the importance of river connectivity and ecological flows in preserving and restoring freshwater ecosystems.
- Assess the impact of human activities on biodiversity loss and reduced resilience to climate change.
- Showcase innovative solutions and best practices by case studies or success stories, promote “River Ethics” in river management.
- Advocate for IWRM approaches where science, engineering, policy, and innovative governance are strategically coordinated.
- Raise public awareness and engage communities in the conservation of water-related ecosystems.

Expected outcomes:

- Deeper understanding will be gained regarding the critical role of water and ecosystem connectivity in maintaining biodiversity, ecosystem services, and climate resilience.
- Innovative solutions, technologies, and approaches will be collected for enhancing biodiversity in freshwater ecosystems.
- Concrete, actionable insights and best practices for restoring and maintaining ecological flows and river connectivity will be suggested to the topic coordinator at the end of the session.

Detailed Session plan :

ESTIMATED TIMING	ITEM DESCRIPTION / ROLE	SPEAKERS	SPEAKERS STATUS (OK OR TBC)
3 min	Welcome remarks and Introduction of speakers	Peng Jing, President, China Institute of Water Resources and Hydropower Research	OK
3 min	Opening address	Loïc Fauchon, President, WWC	TBC
3 min	Opening address	Lidia Brito, Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences, UNESCO	TBC
10 min	Keynote talk	Li Guoying, Minister, Ministry of Water Resources of China	OK
10 min	Keynote talk	Olivier Thibault, Director, OFB French Biodiversity Agency	TBC
5 min	Penal discussion	Bart Dewaele, Director, Join for Water	OK
5 min	Penal discussion	Xiaodong, Professor, China Institute of Water Resources and Hydropower Research	OK
5 min	Penal discussion	Galit Gatut, Professor, University of Muhammadiyah Malang	OK
5 min	Penal discussion	Tom D'Haeyer, Senior Engineer, Antea Group Belgium	OK
5 min	Penal discussion	Piyatida Ruangrassamee, Researcher, Chulalongkorn University	OK
5 min	Penal discussion	Miguel Polo Cebellán, President, Jucar River Basin Authority	TBC
15 min or depending on time left	Questions and Answers	Everyone	OK
3 min	Closing remarks	Rahmah Elfithri, Chief of Section, UNESCO	OK