

5th ISTANBUL INTERNATIONAL WATER FORUM

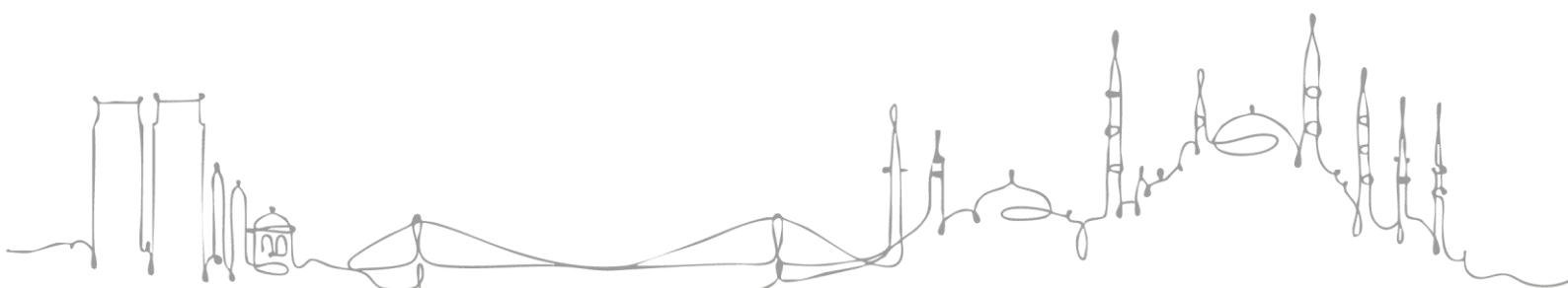
“Strengthening Water Resilience: Innovation to Action”

5-6 May 2026 | Istanbul, Türkiye

CONCEPT NOTE

High Level Interactive Dialogue

Paradigm Shift in a Changing World: Water and the Bridging
Power of Istanbul



High Level Interactive Dialogue: Paradigm Shift in a Changing World: Water and the Bridging Power of Istanbul

In a rapidly changing world marked by climate change, geopolitical shifts, and widening inequalities, the global water agenda stands at a turning point. Achieving water resilience now requires a profound paradigm shift, one that redefines how water is valued and managed. This high-level panel will aim to provide the strategic outlook of the 5th Istanbul International Water Forum by exploring how cooperation, solidarity, and innovation can transform global water challenges into opportunities for joint benefits and shared progress.

At the heart of this discussion lies Türkiye and Istanbul. Istanbul is a city shaped by water, where continents, cultures, and ideas have converged for centuries. Türkiye's unique geography mirrors today's interconnected realities: upstream and downstream, developed and developing, East and West. This strategic position reflects Türkiye's broader role in bridging perspectives and fostering dialogue across regions, from Central Asia and the Caucasus to the Mediterranean, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. Türkiye's experience in navigating across regions, economies, and political realities offers a reflection of the global challenge itself: to connect fragmented approaches into a coherent, cooperative, and resilient water future. Istanbul thus symbolizes not only a meeting point of continents, but a meeting point of ideas, a place where global perspectives can be reimagined through dialogue and shared responsibility.

Bringing together water leaders, the session will discuss how the international community can move from fragmented responses to collective strategies that also respect different contexts. The session aims to reflect on how countries and institutions can adapt to changing realities through diplomacy, financing, capacity building, and inclusive governance while maintaining trust, equity, and dialogue at the core.

The session will also examine how the next generation of partnerships can align water management with climate action, prosperity, and sustainable development, paving the way toward the UN 2026 Water Conference and 2030. Ultimately, it will call for a renewed global vision, one that views water not as a dividing resource but as a connecting force, reminding us that at the 5th IIWF in Istanbul, as in the world, resilience is built through connection.

Objectives and expected outcomes:

- To explore and frame the paradigm shift required for achieving water resilience and cooperation in a rapidly changing world.
- To provide a platform for bridging between regions, perspectives, and ideas.
- To identify key political, institutional, and societal enablers that can transform fragmented responses into coherent, collective strategies.
- To inspire a renewed global vision that views water as a connecting force for peace, sustainability, and shared prosperity.
- To deliver forward-looking messages and recommendations feeding into the UN 2026 Water Conference and the final phase of the 2030 Agenda and beyond.

Keywords: Paradigm shift, water resilience, dialogue, cooperation, Istanbul

