

WHAT ARE THE HEADS OF STATE INITIATIVES?

The Heads of State Initiatives are a movement to inspire and support the world's most ambitious and forward-thinking leaders, to achieve a common vision to secure water, sanitation and hygiene for all.

Heads of State and Government refer to Presidents and Prime Ministers. Their initiatives are different for every country and can take various forms – from national compacts to presidential decrees, to royal seals of approval for new sector strategies, among others. What they have in common is inspiring political leadership and strong commitments made at the highest level. The Heads of State Initiatives are backed by coordinated advocacy and technical assistance activities by SWA partners at global and national levels, to celebrate and build political backing for these commitments and support their development and implementation.

THE ORIGINS OF THE HEADS OF STATE INITIATIVES

In 2022, the Government of the Netherlands, IRC WASH, SWA and UNICEF jointly agreed to work on a series of events and activities to boost political leadership to the very highest level for water, sanitation and hygiene. It was this joint work that inspired the formation of the Heads of State Initiatives.

For each country joining the Initiatives, a dedicated combination of partners at global, regional, and national levels is brought together to deliver a specific objective set out by that country's leader.

WHY HEADS OF STATE AND/OR GOVERNMENT ARE THE KEY TO ACHIEVING WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE FOR ALL?

SWA partners have always worked to engage leaders at the highest levels of decision making, including parliamentarians, ministers, and Heads of State and/or Government.

Solid commitments made by such leaders can elevate water, sanitation and hygiene to become a national priority, triggering resources and action from different areas of the government and their partners, at a faster pace.

On current trends, the world will fail to meet its commitment to achieve water and sanitation for all (SDG 6) by 2030.

The human rights to water and sanitation, though recognized by the United Nations and most countries, remain unfulfilled in too many places. By inspiring and working with leaders from countries across the globe, we can get back on track.

About SWA

Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) is a United Nations-hosted partnership working towards water, sanitation and hygiene for all. Its partners include governments, utilities, regulators, donors, international financial institutions, UN agencies, civil society and research organizations, and the private sector. Together, partners stimulate high-level political dialogue – at country, regional and global levels – and coordinate progress towards the water, sanitation and hygiene-related targets of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

HEADS OF STATE AND/OR GOVERNMENT CAN:

📌 **Raise the political prioritization** of water, sanitation and hygiene, accelerating progress towards achieving SDG 6 by 2030 and realizing the human rights to water, sanitation and hygiene.

📌 **Create long-lasting national commitments**, establishing water, sanitation and hygiene as a legacy issue, and as a cause that can transcend political divides.

📌 **Reinforce links** with other sectors, priorities and policy interests, including action on economic development, national security, climate, education and health.

📌 **Mobilize and align government bodies and development partners** around policies and actions that deliver SDG 6, as well as other related SDG targets.

📌 **Articulate, strengthen and incorporate** water, sanitation and hygiene into national development plans.

📌 **Increase international cooperation** and leverage resources, technologies, and knowledge by collaborating with peers from other nations to accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

WAYS TO ENGAGE HEADS OF STATE OR GOVERNMENT

The SWA partnership can offer many ways to strengthen public recognition of Heads of State and/or Government Initiatives on water, sanitation and hygiene. These include:

1. PROVIDING NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL VISIBILITY

Celebrating success on a global stage for country leaders announcing compacts or initiatives, including through placements in key international and national media.

2. COLLABORATING WITH AND ENSURING SUPPORT FROM SWA'S GLOBAL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Providing peer support, advice and/or publicity through SWA's Global Leadership Council, whose members include former Heads of State or Government.

3. CONTRIBUTE TO THE DESIGN OF NATIONAL INITIATIVES AND STRATEGIES

Advice on the development and delivery of plans related to Heads of State or Government initiatives, as well as other products such as briefings, presentation, analysis tools, etc. These strategies and products can be built around country context, political dynamics, and specificities of the sector.

4. MATCHMAKING AND WIDER PEER-LEARNING

Bringing partners together to learn from each other, highlighting successful approaches and how to plan for potential issues.

"Water is key to enable humanity to overcome two of its biggest threats: climate change and pandemics. Without political interventions at the very highest levels, we are on the course to miss the opportunities these human rights can offer. SWA is here to support leaders who have the vision and ambition to ensure water and sanitation for all."



Catarina de Albuquerque
CEO, Sanitation and Water for All

"Water and sanitation are the foundation for every other area of development. Education, health, gender equality and even the economy all falter while universal access is still a distant dream. I call on my fellow Heads of State – past and present – to join us in these Heads of State Initiatives. Let us show what leaders can do – and finally deliver the hope and prosperity that water can bring, to all communities, across the world."



H.E. Laura Chinchilla
Former President of Costa Rica and a member of the SWA Global Leadership Council