

2026 United Nations Water Conference

Promoting Water Resilience in the European Union and the Gulf Cooperation Council: Experiences from the South-East Mediterranean and the United Arab Emirates

Organised by the European Public Law Organization – EPLO

Tuesday 8 December 2026 | 17:15–18:30 | 75 minutes

Room 14 • UN-accredited Blue Zone • Abu Dhabi

Format

High-level moderated panel discussion, followed by concluding recommendations and commitments.

Background and rationale

Water resilience is becoming an increasingly urgent priority for both the European Union and the Gulf Cooperation Council. Climate change, prolonged drought, water scarcity, growing demand, ecosystem degradation, population pressures and competing economic uses of water are placing significant pressure on existing water systems.

Cyprus, the Greek islands and the United Arab Emirates provide three highly relevant and complementary geographical contexts. They face chronic water scarcity, limited freshwater availability, high seasonal or urban demand, dependence on energy-intensive water infrastructure, structural and physical limitations in resilient and smart water infrastructures, and the need to protect vulnerable coastal and marine ecosystems.

At the same time, Greece, the UAE and Cyprus have developed valuable experience in areas including desalination, wastewater treatment and reuse, integrated water-resource management, demand reduction, digital water monitoring, nature-based solutions, water governance and public-private cooperation.

The event will bring together policymakers, technical experts, environmental organisations and representatives of European and UAE institutions to examine how these experiences can inform a stronger framework for cooperation between the EU and the GCC.

Particular attention will be given to the experiences of small and water-stressed islands and coastal communities, the UAE's experience in managing water scarcity in an arid environment, and the relationship between freshwater resilience and the health of coastal and marine ecosystems.

Draft agenda

17:15–18:30 | Room 14 | All times are local to Abu Dhabi

5 min | Opening remarks

Professor Spyridon Flogaitis, Director, European Public Law Organization – EPLO

Professor Flogaitis will welcome participants and introduce the role of international cooperation, public law and effective institutions in advancing sustainable and equitable water governance.

5 min | Opening remarks

H.E. Lucie Berger, Ambassador of the European Union to the United Arab Emirates

Ambassador Berger will be setting the scene as regards cooperation between the European Union and the UAE on water resilience, cooperation and advancing the green transition

5 min | The UAE perspective

H.E. Eng. Ahmed Al Kaabi, Undersecretary Assistant for Electricity, Water and Future Energy Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure

The intervention will outline the UAE's water-security priorities, experience in managing extreme water scarcity and approach to innovation, desalination, reuse and international water cooperation.

15 min | Setting the scene

Dr Petros Varelidis, Secretary General Natural Environment and Waters, Greek Ministry of Environment and Energy

Representative of the Government of Cyprus

Spyros Kouvelis, Director, Institute for Sustainable Development – EPLO / Board Member, European Commission Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters”

The intervention will present Greece's and Cyprus's priorities concerning water resilience, drought preparedness, sustainable island development, water infrastructure and European cooperation. The vision of the European Commission Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters” through policy and research funding along with the new European Ocean Pact that includes fresh water will be presented.

35 min | Moderated high-level panel discussion

H.E. Eng. Ahmed Al Kaabi, Undersecretary Assistant for Electricity, Water and Future Energy Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure

Dr Petros Varelidis, Secretary General Natural Environment and Waters, Greek Ministry of Environment and Energy

Spyros Kouvelis, Director, Institute for Sustainable Development – EPLO / Board Member, European Commission Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters”

Representative of the Government of Cyprus

Dr Ioannis Katsoyiannis, Professor of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, & Director of the Institute for Sustainable Water Management and Water Law of EPLO

Huda Al Houqani, Director - Abu Dhabi Sustainability Group at Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi

Member of the European Commission Mission Board for “Restore our Ocean and Waters”

Representative of the European Investment Bank

8 min | Audience Q&A

Questions and contributions from participating governments, international organisations, researchers, civil-society organisations, financial institutions and water-sector stakeholders.

2 min | Conclusions and key recommendations

The moderator will summarise the principal messages, potential areas of EU–GCC cooperation and proposed actions emerging from the discussion.

Moderator

Christina Deligianni

Policy and Programmes Director, Institute for Sustainable Development – EPLO/ European Climate Pact Ambassador

The moderator will facilitate a focused discussion connecting water governance, climate resilience, ecosystem restoration, innovation and investment.