

AIDA WORLD WATER CONGRESS 2026

Between 24-26 June 2026, the International Association for Water Law (AIDA) World Water Congress will be hosted in Oslo, bringing together policymakers, legal scholars, researchers and practitioners to address one of the most pressing challenges of our time: water law and governance in times of climate change and biodiversity loss.

The congress will be hosted by the University of Oslo (UiO), the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU), and the Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA), and will provide a global platform for exploring how law, governance, and policy can support sustainable water management in an increasingly uncertain world.

As climate change intensifies and biodiversity loss, water insecurity and competing demands for finite water resources continue to grow, the need for effective and integrated water law and governance frameworks has never been greater. These discussions are critical to advancing climate resilience, equitable water access, ecosystem protection and long-term sustainability. Key themes to be discussed include climate adaptation and mitigation, water rights and justice, and the balancing of water use with biodiversity conservation across freshwater and coastal ecosystems.

As part of these discussions, WATCON (under SOAS) will contribute to session 6: “Sectoral Water Conflicts and Water Justice in South Asia – Multi-scalar Aspects”, chaired by Philippe Cullet. The session will examine how water conflicts frequently emerge at the local level but are often shaped by broader regional, national, and transboundary dynamics, particularly in the context of climate change and increasing water insecurity.

Drawing on research from the ERC-funded project Addressing the Multi-scalar Dimensions of Sectoral Water Conflicts Through the Lens of Water Security: Lessons from South Asia (WATCON), the panel will explore the legal dimensions of water conflicts across scales and sectors, highlighting the need for more integrated and equitable approaches to water governance.

Key presentations will include:

- @Philippe Cullet on the relationship between water justice, water security and sectoral water conflicts, and the need for equitable and environmentally sustainable allocation of water resources. He will focus on the legal dimensions of intra- and inter-sectoral water conflicts that are often insufficiently considered.
- @Birsha Ohdedar on multi-scalar water conflicts in South Asia, examining how local hydropolitics, transboundary river governance and climate-related pressures intersect, with insights from the Brahmaputra basin.
- @Lovleen Bhullar on water security, human rights and climate change in the borderlands of the two Punjabs, illustrating how climate-related water challenges can exacerbate conflicts and vulnerabilities across multiple governance scales.
- @Nate Palmer on sectoral water conflicts from an ecological perspective, exploring how indigenous institutions, diverse understandings of water and local governance systems interact with national and international legal frameworks.

The session aims to move beyond sector-specific and state-centric approaches towards a more integrated, multi-scalar and justice-oriented water governance system, which is capable of addressing the complex challenges posed by climate change, biodiversity loss and growing competition for water resources.