

Global Parliamentary Water Network

Remarks from John Oldfield of the [Global Parliamentary Water Network](https://www.un.org/ohrlls/sites/www.un.org.ohrlls/files/programme_high-level_investment_forum_at_the_dushanbe_water_process_25_may_2026.pdf), as delivered on May 25, 2026 at the High-Level Investment Forum at the Dushanbe Water Process: Mobilizing Private Investment and Innovative Financing for Water Infrastructure in Land-Locked Developing Countries (LLDCs)

National Museum of Tajikistan

<https://conf2026.dushanbewaterprocess.org/>

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Thank you, Chair, all protocols observed.

Thank you to the Government of Tajikistan for its decades of global leadership for water. The timing for this session is excellent:

- There is a clear and growing need for more innovative, private domestic resource mobilization for water, in landlocked countries and beyond, and
- There is also a clear lack of political prioritization of this issue.

That gets us into the world of politics and our optimism at the Global Parliamentary Water Network that legislators can help develop the demand side for private finance in water across the globe.

A famous US politician, Tip O’Neill, once said that “All politics is local.” All water is local too: the problems, the solutions, and the financing — public and private — should be predominantly local. “Local solutions for local problems,” applies across all countries, landlocked and otherwise, as we have heard from our keynote presentation this morning.

The Global Parliamentary Water Network suggests that better integrating legislators into water finance, public and private, may well accelerate progress

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from a linear rate of change to an exponential curve. The private-sector partners we consulted for these remarks were uniform on one point: the “financial alchemy” as our friends at AquaFed call it, already exists – we don’t need to invent anything new.

One thing that does need to be addressed is the under-prioritization of the legislative branch. Legislators are universally supportive and are always looking for innovative ways to meet the needs of their constituents. Before I continue, I want to express our greetings to the members of the Zambian delegation. Zambia has recently launched its Parliamentary Caucus on WASH (PC-WASH), and I congratulate Hon. Twaambo Mutinta and the Zambian National Assembly on that effort.

On behalf of our Global Advisory Council, we offer a few concrete ideas to the water sector:

- 1) The water sector needs to improve its efforts of asking legislators to join us at these political meetings. Whatever cynicism some hold about politicians, we must engage elected leaders. These UN Water meetings are political meetings, so our call to action is to bring national and local political leaders to these platforms in a far more coordinated way.
- 2) But it is a two-way street, so we ask legislatures to: Convene the private finance community in your countries on an institutionalized basis to roll up their sleeves with you and better understand the solutions they can catalyze in the water sector. Topics could include:
 - missing financial incentives and legal / regulatory reforms to create a conducive environment to attract investors
 - underperforming utilities
 - ability / willingness to pay (tariff reform) – all entities for profit and non-profit need predictable revenue streams

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- 3) Answer this question: Which water financing problems could be solved through legislative action? New laws? Increased budgets? Updated tariff structures? Who pays, and for what quantity and quality of water, in a way that a changing climate and population growth are addressed properly?
- 4) Ask ourselves: Are there parts of the water sector that are underweighted by private finance that could be made more attractive by legislative encouragement on bundling, blended finance, or credit risk guarantees? For example a PPP on water supply for a bundle of healthcare facilities?
- 5) Use the multiple legislative tools available. Should every province in Tajikistan have a small business administration dedicated to offering loans to water utilities and entrepreneurs? Should every municipality have a Water Revolving Fund — privately financed, with risk guarantees — making capital available at a reasonable rate?

The more local political leadership there is, the more likely international investors are to respond with credit risk guarantees and other innovative tools that unlock additional private finance.

We are optimistic at the Global Parliamentary Water Network: Once the initial challenges to financing water are overcome, it has proven a very stable and resilient asset from an investment perspective.

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