



Manitoba Metis Federation

Report on UN Water Conference – New York City March 22-24, 2023

REPORT – UN Water Conference, March 22-24, 2023

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Summary

1. **Attended Indigenous Water Ceremony** on behalf of MMF at start of Conference on UN Headquarters grounds, led by Anishinaabe women and water holders, and attended by Canadian delegates, PS Duguid, and Ambassador Bob Rae
2. **Met with PS Duguid as head of delegation**, Michael Goffin at ECCC, and Curtis Burgeron and Joanne Wilkinson at ISC on behalf of MMF (though not advised that ISC and ECCC would be attending)
3. **Negotiated MMF review** of Canada's national statement on water and MMFs' proposed amendment was adopted by Canada
4. **Provided opening remarks** at Canadian reception on behalf of MMF with Ambassador Bob Rae
5. **Attended a number of side events** respecting Indigenous peoples and water, including with US Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland
6. **Attempted to intervene** in Interactive Dialogues 2, 3, and 4 on Wednesday and Thursday but did not make the list until Interactive Dialogue 5 on Friday
7. **Made intervention in Interactive Dialogue 5** on behalf of MMF based on MMF briefing note, though comments were not reflected at all in Co-Chairs' summary of dialogue
8. Through Canada, **attempted to negotiate** establishment of working group of Indigenous peoples from all seven socio-economic regions to meet with Co-Chairs of Conference to co-develop report of Conference, but was unsuccessful
9. **Followed up with PS Duguid by email** to thank him and reiterate appreciation for his friendship to MMF
10. **Followed up with Michael Goffin, ECCC staff and Mission staff** to thank them for their support during the Conference

I. Background

The UN 2023 Water Conference sought to develop innovative and transformative ideas and a “beyond business as usual” approach. The Conference, also referred to as the UN Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the 2018-2028 International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development,” was hosted by Co-Chairs the Netherlands and Tajikistan.

Delegates met throughout the three days in plenary and five interactive dialogues. Plenary was almost entirely inaccessible by Indigenous peoples as plenary statements were focused on domestic policies, priorities, and national commitments. Ultimately the plenary was focused on accelerating implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene.

I attended the Conference on behalf of MMF. I want to thank President Chartrand and Ambassador Chartier for your support in attending and, specifically, I want to thank Marci Riel and her team for providing an incredibly helpful briefing note prior to the Conference [attached as Appendix A].

2. Outcomes

- a) The UN 2023 Water Conference closed on Friday with the adoption of the Water Action Agenda, a “milestone” action plan containing almost 700 commitments to protect “humanity’s most precious global common good”.
- b) Another key outcome of the conference will be a summary by the UN General Assembly President, capturing the many ideas, recommendations, and solutions to protect and support “our world’s lifeblood” that emerged during five interactive dialogues, four special events and hundreds of side events:
 - i. Plenary commitments by member states were summarized in an annex to the report of the conference;
 - ii. Interactive Dialogues interventions by discussants were summarized in an annex to the report of the conference.
- c) Member states announced the establishment of a UN Special Water Envoy, though mandate and budget were not established.

3. Meetings

- a) **Attended Indigenous Water Ceremony** on behalf of MMF at start of Conference on UN Headquarters grounds, led by Anishinaabe women and water holders, and attended by Canadian delegates, PS Duguid, Special Rapporteur Francisco Cali Tzay, and Ambassador Bob Rae

I was invited by AFN to attend a water ceremony at 7:30am on the grounds of UN Headquarters, led by Anishinaabe women and water holders. I did not provide remarks though I met Lenape Nation Chief Dwaine Perry who welcomed us to his territory.

b) **Meeting with Parliamentary Secretary Terry Duguid as head of delegation, Deputy General Michael Goffin at ECCC, and Director Curtis Burgeron and Assistant Deputy Minister Joanne Wilkinson at ISC**

I asked for a thirty minute meeting with PS Duguid as head of delegation and was not advised that ISC and ECCC would be attending.

I prepared an agenda for our meeting [attached as Appendix B] but had to abandon the first half of the agenda due to PS Duguid making opening remarks for half of our meeting time. I focused on two issues related to the operation of the delegation: MMF not being able to see and contribute to Canada's national statement on water, and how to improve Indigenous peoples participation in the work of the Conference.

Regarding the national statement, I made an unflattering observation that Canada had not been very collaborative or communicative and suggested that I had experienced better under the Harper government. This was true and was not meant to be provocative. I had asked on March 7 whether Canada intended to make a statement and stated MMF wanted to contribute if so, but was advised Canada was not making a statement. On March 23, the entire delegation received a notification that Canada was delivering their national statement on water later that afternoon. I inquired again regarding the statement and was advise that ECCC communications had denied our request to even see it.

I gave the staff at ECCC a heads up that I was going to raise it with PS Duguid. After diplomatically restating my request in the room, MMF was provided the statement by email an hour after the meeting. I made one amendment to the text of the statement and it was adopted by Canada and read in plenary.

Regarding Indigenous peoples participation at the Conference, I observed that I tried to make a statement on behalf of MMF in each of the three Interactive Dialogues and each time I didn't make the list of speakers. I proposed a process, permissible under the Rules of Procedure of the Conference, that would allow Indigenous peoples, including MMF, to weigh in on the conference report of the Co-Chairs. Canada shared they had no experience at international meetings and had no idea how to implement the proposal. I left it with them and it did not result in any tangible outcome.

c) **Negotiated MMF review** of Canada's national statement on water and MMFs' proposed amendment was adopted by Canada

See above.

- d) **Provided opening remarks** at Canadian reception on behalf of MMF with Ambassador Bob Rae

I asked to bring greetings on behalf of MMF at a reception (held at Canada's Mission to the UN for Canadians attending the Conference) upon learning AFN was set to do the same. My remarks were very positive and responsive to Canada accommodation my request for contributing to the national statement [remarks attached as Appendix C].

- e) **Attended a number of side events** respecting Indigenous peoples and water, including with US Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland

Summary of side events available upon request.

- f) **Made intervention in Interactive Dialogue 5** on behalf of MMF based on MMF briefing note, though comments were not reflected at all in Co-Chairs' summary of dialogue

I drafted and made an intervention on behalf of MMF [intervention attached as Appendix D]. Again, I was very positive about Canada's investment with MMF.

In the Co-Chair's summary of this Interactive Dialogue, none of the elements of the intervention were reflected, though they noted member states needed to forge transformative partnerships, including with Indigenous peoples.

The video of the intervention is here:

<https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1y/k1ypv52hs3?kalturaStartTime=8803>

- g) **Followed up by email** with PS Duguid [attached as Appendix E]

4. Connections

- a) R. Wayne Jenkinson – Executive Director, National Hydrological Services, ECCC

Wayne noted he used to work with MMF in the International Joint Commission, and spoke highly of the work of Marci Riel and her team.

- b) Michael Goffin, Director General, ECCC

Michael is going to be heading up the new Canada Water Agency. He will be an important ally in continuing to access funds on modernizing the Canada Water Act and the operation of the Canada Water Agency (now headquartered in Winnipeg).

- c) Marie-Eve Castonguay, First Secretary (Development), Permanent Mission of Canada to the UN

- d) Marie-Helene Rivard, Diplomat, Permanent Mission of Canada to the UN

Marie-Eve was very kind in our conversation at the reception and, after I followed up with thanks, has offered to make herself available if MMF needs assistance. This could be useful at the upcoming UNPFII meeting and other NYC meetings, as the Mission staff facilitated a number of conversations for Canada's inexperienced ECCC staff.

Let me know if you require any further information.