



IUCN  
World  
Conservation  
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# Water and Climate Change Debate: What use is nature for people and development?

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World Conservation Congress

.Climate change is a current reality and its long-term impact will have an impact on water resources. However, other more immediate global change such as deforestation, mining, agriculture, and urban sprawl in watersheds, are threatening water resources for more than half the world's people. The Water and Climate Change Debate poses some controversial questions around investment in climate change vs. development, and types of adaptation strategies such as building engineered infrastructure and rehabilitating natural systems

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# Water and Climate Change Debate: What use is nature for people and development?

## **About the World Conservation Congress**

The World Conservation Congress is organised by the IUCN – the world's leading conservation body representing governments and environmental organizations from around the globe. It takes place every four years and is the key event in the international calendar.

The 2008 Congress will bring together over 8,000 people, including Heads of State and Ministers, and leaders from business and non-governmental organizations. The focus over the 10 days of the Congress will be on bringing together citizens, the public and private sectors around a shared vision of sustainability.

## **Water resources development and climate change adaptation strategies**

Climate change will significantly impact the hydrological cycle and investment in adapting to these impacts is imperative. At the same time, the importance of climate change may seem less significant in light of more pressing water resource development issues, such as providing water and sanitation for increasing populations, and ensuring adequate water for agriculture.

The Water and Climate Change workshop will examine the debate surrounding immediate investments in development vs. climate change adaptation. The second part of the debate will delve further into engineered vs natural adaptation solutions to climate change impacts. The objective is for participants to consider that climate change and development are interlinked and must be viewed and dealt with in this context, not as stand alone issues. In addition, the aim is to broaden the scope of dialogue on adaptation strategies for climate change to include both engineered solutions as well as natural infrastructure

## **Investment in climate change versus investment in development**

The first part of the Water and Climate Change Debate examines whether we should

be heavily investing in adapting to climate change as there are more immediate and pressing needs, such as providing water and sanitation for increasing populations, and ensuring adequate water for agriculture. There is the view that investment in development to alleviate poverty (i.e. water and sanitation and agriculture) should be a priority rather than investment in climate change. The opposing argument is that climate change will make poverty worse and action on climate change is integral to poverty reduction and development.

## **Adaptation with engineered infrastructure versus natural infrastructure**

The second part of the debate will focus on how can society manage adaptation to climate change impacts. Is it best to apply engineered solutions or use natural infrastructure? One side will argue that adaptation measures to climate change impacts should invest in engineered infrastructure solutions to ensure a water secure future. The counterposition will debate that rehabilitating natural infrastructure to maintain essential ecosystem services would buffer both the environment and people from the impacts of climate change.

## **Expected Outcomes**

The debate will provide recommendations from the speakers which will be used as input to the 5<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum Ministerial meeting as well as background papers for the climate change track. In addition, the information generated during the debate will be used in forming policy briefs and communication material relating to water, climate change and adaptation.

## **Want to know more?**

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