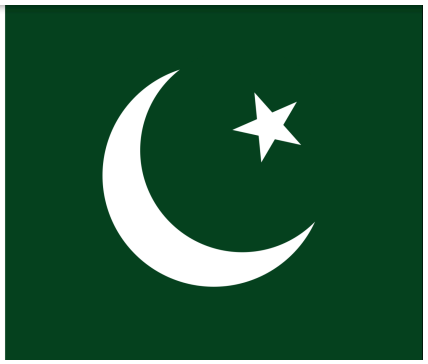
United Nations
Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Islamic Republic of Pakistan

By Sean Bischofberger

POSITION OF PAKISTAN REGARDING WATER FLOW CRISES WORLDWIDE



General information

The Indus River System is Pakistan's lifeline: the Indus, Jhelum and Chenab (the "Western Rivers") and the Kabul. The Indus River basin covers ~65% of Pakistan's territory and is home to ~80% of its people.[1] It irrigates ~80% of farmland in a country where farming supports two-thirds of the population,[2] while the Tarbela and Mangla dams generate most of the Hydroelectric energy, which is ~30% of the nations total Power.[3] Yet according to official Sources Pakistan can only store about 30 days of Water.[4]

Pakistan is in an acute water crisis with India. The 1960 Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) gave Pakistan the Western Rivers and India the Eastern Rivers (Ravi, Beas, Sutlej).[5] Since April 2025 India has held the treaty in abeyance, stopped data-sharing and fast-tracked new Chenab dams which will lead to energy crises.[1,6]

Position on the matter

Pakistan stance is firm: the IWT remains fully in force and cannot be suspended unilaterally. The Court of Arbitration in The Hague confirmed this unanimously on the 31st of August 2026.[6,7] India denies the courts Jurisdiction.[7] For Islamabad, every drop is a red line.[6] In addition, cooperation has collapsed: the Indus Commission has not met since 2022 and flow data is withheld.[6] Global safety nets built to encourage communication have also failed as neither state has joined the 1997 UN Watercourses Convention.[9] And even if both Nations upheld the IWT, the 1960 treaty ignores climate change, while the basin lost 24.8% of its snow and ice cover between 2001 and 2021.[1]

Proposed solutions

Pakistan should urge ECOSOC to:

- Affirm that water treaties cannot be suspended unilaterally and that water is never a weapon.
- Create a UNESCO-IHP / WMO Transboundary Data Platform that requires real-time flow and flood data to be shared, even during crises.
- Endorse the Court's awards and the Neutral Expert, and allow independent inspection of upstream dams such as Ratle.[7,8]
- Promote accession to the 1997 UN Watercourses and UN Water Conventions.[9]

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- Fund climate adaptation for downstream states, including glacier monitoring, storage and efficient irrigation.
- Revive the Permanent Indus Commission with World Bank / UN help.[5]

Potential Blocks

Allies: China (potentially since India is in the Commonwealth of nations and Brics and grants china soft power and money) , Türkiye (ties with Erdogan have significantly improved) , Azerbaijan, the OIC and downstream states : Bangladesh (Ganges treaty with India expires Dec. 2026),[10] Egypt, Iraq. Against: India, which calls the IWT outdated, and upstream states (e.g. Ethiopia) wary of binding limits.

1. ISAS – The IWT a Year After Pahalgam
2. NPR – Pakistan Braces for Water Woes
3. Profit – WAPDA Hydel Supplies 30% of Power
4. Eco-Business – Only 30 Days of Water Reserves
5. World Bank – IWT Fact Sheet
6. Al Jazeera – Pakistan Wins at The Hague
7. ASIL – Court Finds IWT Remains in Force
8. Express Tribune – Pakistan Urges UNSC
9. Just Security – UN Watercourses Convention
10. Khaleej Times – Ganges Treaty Expiry

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