Global Governance in Water and Sanitation Management: The Role of Bali Water Forum in Achieving

SDGs 6

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Abstract

Water insecurity has become an increasing global threat in recent decades due to population growth,

rising inequality and climate change, increasing competition over water resources, and unsustainable development. In relation to these issues, global governance plays a crucial role, one of which is to facilitate

dialog and negotiation among policy makers. This research aims to explain the role of the Bali Water Forum,

the 10th World Water Forum held in Bali, in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) number 6,

which is to ensure the availability and sustainable management of clean water and sanitation for all. This

research uses a qualitative approach with primary data sources consisting of official documents and formal press results and secondary data consisting of books, journal articles, news portals, and reports from

related institutions. Using the basic assumptions of liberal institutionalism theory, namely reciprocal and

interdependent relationships realized through cooperation, this research explains how the Bali Water

Forum acts as a forum that facilitates actors from all levels and fields to work together, discuss, and

exchange information regarding knowledge, experiences, and problems related to water and sanitation so

that joint solutions are obtained.

Keyword: World Water Forum, Bali, Sustainable Development Goals, Water and Sanitation, Cooperation.1.

1. Introduction

Clean water and proper sanitation are basic human rights and are crucial elements in

supporting sustainable development. Based on data from the World Health Organization and UNICEF

(2013), nearly 1 billion people in the world have limited access to clean water and about 2.5 billion

people lack proper sanitation [1]. Global attention to environmental issues began with the Summit in

Stockholm, Sweden in 1972. Concern for the environment was then continued through the Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs) program.

The SDGs have principles that focus on achieving human progress while preserving the natural

systems. This principle aims to ensure that current human needs are met without compromising the

ability of future generations to meet their own needs, by balancing economic, social and environmental

aspects [2]. The SDGs have 17 points, one of which is point number 6 "Ensure the Availability and

Sustainable Management of Water and Sanitation". The 6th SDG aims to ensure that every individual

has safe and proper access to clean water and sanitation. Countries around the world still face

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challenges in achieving SDGs 6 including increased water demand due to population growth, urbanization and climate change impacts that affect water availability and quality [3].

Water problems in a country cannot be solved only on a national and regional scale. Water issues are increasingly linked to other development issues as well as to social, economic, environmental, and other issues, requiring efforts at the global level [4]. This growing awareness of the global water crisis is the major reason for the creation of the World Water Council in 1996 with the vision of promoting sustainable and equitable water management and ensuring adequate access to water for all amid global challenges such as climate change, pollution, and urbanization. The World Water Council provides a forum for various parties, including governments, international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations. The World Water Council's mission is to elevate water issues to the political agenda and advocate for equitable water management practices around the world. Its goal is to mobilize action on critical water issues by encouraging dialogue among stakeholders at all levels [5]. The World Water Council has collaborated with various international entities such as the UN, World Bank, and various research institutes to seek innovative solutions that support water resources management.

One of the World Water Council's greatest contributions has been the organization of the World Water Forum, first held in 1997 in Marrakesh, Morocco. At this Forum, the World Water Council was mandated to develop a vision for Water, Life and Environment in the 21st Century. The Forum takes place every three years and has become one of the largest global meetings on water issues [6]. The World Water Forum meeting mechanism is divided into three interrelated processes, namely the political process, thematic process, and regional process. The Political Process is then divided into five segments, namely heads of states/government, ministerial, parliamentarian, local authorities, and basin authorities. The thematic process discusses steps and solutions in overcoming the water crisis. Meanwhile, the regional process discusses perspectives on water from all regions based on local needs [7].

The 10th World Water Forum was held in Bali, Indonesia, from May 18 to 25, 2024, under the theme "Water for Shared Prosperity." This theme is based on the philosophy that water for the Balinese is not just a resource, but also a component of spirituality and culture. Bali itself is a model of water management, namely the Subak system as one of the world heritage treasures that has been recognized by UNESCO [8]. This forum also has sub-themes namely: water security & prosperity, water for humans & nature, disaster risk reduction & management, governance cooperation & hydro-diplomacy, sustainable water finance, and knowledge & innovation. This is the first time the World Water Forum

has been held in Southeast Asia, highlighting Indonesia's important role in global water governance discussions.

Indonesia was chosen to host the 10th World Water Forum because it has more than 17,000 islands and diverse water resources, and it faces major water management challenges that require innovative and collaborative solutions. The 10th World Water Forum included a segment for heads of state for the first time, to enhance political commitment to water issues and foster diplomatic relations among participating countries. This high-level engagement is expected to strengthen water diplomacy and encourage innovative cooperation [9]. The World Water Forum is in line with efforts to fulfill SDGs number 6, especially in achieving targets 7 and 8, which emphasize the importance of international collaboration and support to strengthen the capacity of developing countries and strengthen the participation of local communities in water and sanitation management. The Forum provides a platform for governments, experts, international organizations and the private sector to discuss solutions to global water issues and make policy recommendations.

Several previous studies have examined the importance of cooperation through international institutions used as a forum in an effort to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Research by Mariani, et al (2022), Murphy, et al (2022), and Zhao, et al (2022) emphasized that cooperation is the main key in facilitating sustainable development efforts where cooperation across various sectors can be a forum for economic exchange and technological innovation, building a global culture of sustainable development, and coordinating various resources and policies [10,11,12]. In addition, research by Horan and Leal Filho, et al (2022) emphasized that the complex challenges facing society, such as climate change and COVID-19 have increased the demand and need for international partnerships that are considered capable of achieving the SDGs and offer a framework for overcoming various challenges during the process [13, 14]. Diverse partners enable problem-solving and generate new solutions that are shaped by their competencies and resources. Therefore, according to research by Breuer, et al (2023), there is a need for coherence and integrated implementation, namely with institutional innovation to achieve sustainable development goals [15].

Based on previous research, there are research gaps that can be identified, namely previous studies focus on explaining the role of international cooperation in achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs) in general and have not specifically explored and explained the role of cooperation in achieving SDGs number six regarding clean water and sanitation. In addition, previous studies did not specifically explain the international institutions used as a forum to achieve common interests, namely

the SDGs, while this study will explain the role of the Bali Water Forum in achieving SDGs number six on clean water and sanitation.

To understand the role of the Bali Water Forum in achieving Sustainable Development Goal number 6 by using the theory of liberal institutionalism, which is an approach that emphasizes global governance and international institutions as a way to explain international relations. Liberal institutionalism theory assumes that although states are the main actors, in reality, states are interdependent on each other, which encourages cooperation, namely through the formation of international institutions that are used as a forum to achieve common goals and interests [16]. In addition, states are rational actors and will choose to cooperate if it brings greater benefits in the long run compared to competing confrontationally. Therefore, this theory believes that cooperating through international institutions can facilitate a better life [17].

According to liberal institutionalism theory, cooperation between states through international institutions plays an important role in achieving stability and peace, by regulating state behavior through rules, norms, and institutional monitoring mechanisms. International institutions create the ability for states to cooperate in a mutually beneficial way because adherence to rules makes states' behavior more predictable. Through international institutions, states achieve collective benefits through negotiations to address common problems under the same rules, encouraging each state to maintain its reputation and honor by monitoring government compliance with their commitments. The rules agreed upon in international institutions cannot be entirely *ad hoc* but must conform to generally accepted rules and principles. The consent of many countries is required for policies to be effective so even powerful countries need to negotiate for international consent or in other words, international institutions help shape actors' expectations [16].

Using the Bali Water Forum as the main unit of analysis, this research will describe how the Bali Water Forum is utilized by the government, NGOs, and communities in an effort to achieve SDGs number 6. This research will be divided into several sections where after the background section, this research will discuss the role of the Bali Water Forum in efforts to achieve SDGs 6, namely how this forum is used by the government, NGOs, local communities, and other stakeholders to work together in sustainable water management and sanitation provision. The next section is the conclusion which discusses the main findings related to the role of the Bali Water Forum in achieving SDGs 6. Then at the end of this research will include a *conflict of interest* section that emphasizes that the research is independent and not influenced by external factors that can affect the results of the research and *acknowledgment* as a form of gratitude to those who have contributed to this research.

### 2. Research Method

This research about *Global Governance in Water and Sanitation Management: The Role of Bali Water Forum in Achieving SDGs 6* will be conducted using qualitative-descriptive methods. Using primary and secondary data for sources, such as: official reports from international organizations not limited to *World Water Council, World Water Forum, UNICEF* and other relevant international organizations that have correlations with the topics. Secondary sources of data consist of article journals, books, news, and other credible sources from the internet. These sources will provide contextual background and analysis. This combination of sources will enhance the reliability and validity of the research findings, allowing for a thorough exploration of the role of the Bali Water Forum in promoting sustainable water and sanitation management. By triangulating data from multiple reputable sources, the study aims to present a better perspective and understanding on the effectiveness of global governance initiatives in achieving SDG 6.

### 3. Result and Discussion

Sustainable development goal (SDG) 6 seeks to ensure access to clean water and sanitation for all, especially in marginalized and vulnerable areas [18]. Water and sanitation are fundamental to the well-being and survival of people and the planet. Water in sufficient quantity and quality is essential for all aspects of life, including sustainable development, such as food security, economic growth in agriculture, industry and energy generation, and maintaining healthy ecosystems [19]. However, disparities in access to clean water resources and services are still widespread due to rapid demographic expansion, economic growth, pollution, environmental degradation, climate change, and inefficient resource management [20].

According to the United Nations, by 2050, if environmental pressures continue and there is no effort to manage water wisely, it is estimated that 45 percent of global gross domestic product, 52 percent of the world's population, and 40 percent of global grain production will be threatened. In addition, poor and marginalized populations will be disproportionately affected, further exacerbating inequalities [19"]. Thus, the issue of water and sanitation is becoming a global problem where countries realize that it will be difficult for them to address this issue alone. Therefore, cooperation between countries and other actors is very important to achieve common goals related to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6 on water and sanitation, one of which is realized in organizing the Bali Water Forum.

With the theme *Water for Shared Prosperity, the* Bali Water Forum emphasizes the importance of water as a vital resource that must be managed equitably, sustainably, and collaboratively to ensure prosperity for all. It aims to promote water security worldwide at all levels, advocate for wise use of water,

enhance nature-based solutions, strengthen national laws on water rights, create a financial coalition for water, prioritize water in the allocation of climate funds, and encourage hydro diplomacy with a governance system based on multilateral cooperation [20"].

The Bali Water Forum highlights the three pillars of effective water management: knowledge, finance, and governance. The Bali Water Forum meeting mechanism is divided into three processes, namely regional process, thematic process, and political process [21]. The three processes are interrelated based on the conditions faced by water communities as well as shared visions and driving factors. The regional process discusses transboundary water issues, encourages the exchange of innovations, and develops joint strategies for sustainable water use. The regional forum was divided into five major regions. The Asia Pacific region highlighted smart water management, sustainable agricultural water management, sanitation improvement, as well as disaster reduction and resilience, accelerating Early Warning for All (EW4ALL) implementation, and strengthening water accounting systems. The Americas region emphasized the need to increase resilience to climate change and discussed integrated management of surface and groundwater, as well as efficient water use in the urban and agricultural sectors and the establishment of the Latin American Water Council. The Mediterranean region emphasized the urgency of addressing water stress exacerbated by climate change. This is done by advocating for strategies and EW4ALL and harmonizing multinational cooperation by developing solidarity-based and digital financial models. The Africa region emphasized the need to improve water and sanitation services and water quality while addressing water scarcity with local solutions. In this process, each regional coordinator presented the results of discussions and disseminated ideas to address the region's water challenges. The forum also provided an understanding of aspects of water priorities that often differ from region to region [22].

In the thematic process, more than 300 working group members developed and prepared 125 thematic sessions. These sessions involved a wide range of actors from different sectors, including water experts as well as civil society. More than a third of the thematic working group members were from civil society. Their participation ensured that the voices of local communities and vulnerable populations were heard. In all Forum processes, civil society actively participated in providing solutions that contributed to the Forum's inclusiveness and provided in-depth analytical perspectives to address pressing water challenges, including; the launch of the Grey- Green Infrastructure Compact and the Global Multi-Sector Center to reduce consumptive water use and water savings, the launch of a new strategy for the Water Protection Partnership for Africa and enhanced partnerships for Freshwater Challenges Committed to the One Water Summit, the Online Synthesis System for sustainability and resilience to strengthen the

International Flood Initiative and the Asian Water Cycle Initiative, a working group for Hydro Governance and Diplomacy to continue efforts to integrate water as a political issue during the preparation of the UN Water Conference 2026, the establishment of a Global Water Fund framework and task force for collective action on financing water security and basin resilience, a Global Water Education Network and the creation of a "Finance for Water" expert coalition to develop a smart water management community of practice and the launch of "The Bali Coalition to strengthen Training in Water Sector" [21"].

In the political process, a strong governance and policy framework is needed to ensure efficient and equitable water management and distribution. This process resulted in the Ministerial Declaration, which reflected substantial input from the thematic process and regional process. The Ministerial Declaration was one of the forum's major achievements and was adopted by more than one hundred countries. The Declaration represents an urgent call for and strong political commitment from Ministries such as water security and the development of transboundary cooperation. At the Bali Water Forum, for the first time in WWF's history, the Ministerial Declaration was made without negotiation, but in the form of consultation. There were four points that were agreed to be the Ministerial Declaration. First, the proposal for World Lake Day where this determination must be made through the United Nation mechanism, in the form of a proposed resolution that is adopted. Second, the establishment of a Center of Excellence on Water and Climate Resilience to develop capacity, share knowledge, and utilize excellent facilities. Third, Water Management for Small Islands, which encourages strengthening the capacity of outer islands in producing clean water, so that the issue of water management still needs to be contextualized in a global scale issue that is not only limited to small island countries and islands. The final point is the listing of water projects as a Compendium of Concrete Deliverables and Actions. This point is inclusive but voluntary and contains a list of projects, initiatives and collaborations managed by national, regional and international water stakeholders [23].

A key achievement of the forum is diplomatic progress and cross-border cooperation. Countries sharing rivers, lakes and forests engaged in dialogue, building cooperative structures to promote solutions, protect catchments, restore rivers, reduce pollution and conserve water. These efforts underscore the power of diplomacy in resolving water-related conflicts and fostering regional stability, including a trilateral meeting between China, Japan, and South Korea to discuss climate change and building resilient water infrastructure, a meeting between UNESCO and the International Center for Water Security and Sustainable Management (i-WSSM) to discuss integrated urban water management and gender equality for water security, implementing 120 strategic projects worth US\$9.4 billion, including a follow-up to Indonesia's 2022 G20 initiative, the Global Blended Finance Alliance [24]. Not

only investment claims, this forum also opens other cooperation, such as cooperation between Indonesia and the United Arab Emirates, namely the groundbreaking of the construction of the International Mangrove Research Center (IMRC) on Kura-Kura Island [25]. Commitments to increase cooperation along the Mekong River basin to promote cross-border peace and development, the proposal to build a Sabo Training Center in Yogyakarta as a center of excellence (CoE) for water and climate resilience in the Asia Pacific and build Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) on small islands, and agree on the "Bali Basin Action Champions Agenda" which contains new commitments to support watershed management to achieve SDGs number 6 [26].

The Bali Water Forum reflects an important tenet of liberal institutionalism theory, namely how international institutions help shape countries' expectations and adherence to international commitments [27]. Countries' participation in this forum not only resulted in stronger political commitments through ministerial declarations, but also encouraged the implementation of concrete water projects. This management involves various stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels. The forum creates incentives for countries to undertake water conservation actions by adhering to commitments agreed at the global level [28]. It encourages greater adherence to sustainable development goals, especially those related to clean water and sanitation.

The Bali Water Forum provides an opportunity for stakeholders, including international organizations, governments, academics, local authorities, civil society, and companies to exchange ideas, proposals, and commitments to address global water challenges, including identifying challenges and risks related to water and sanitation provision and management [29]. Through this forum, stakeholders voice their perspectives and share their knowledge to seek joint inclusive solutions that focus on expanding access to clean water, increasing water storage, improving water quality, and enhancing the quality of water services while promoting shared prosperity, i.e. prosperity especially for the poorest to achieve a more equitable society [20"]. The forum incorporates a multilateral approach, where countries sharing a river or water basin, such as countries in the Mekong or Asia Pacific regions, engage in diplomatic dialogue to maintain transboundary water stability as well as reduce the risk of conflicts that could arise from the struggle for water resources [30]. The Bali Water Forum acts as an institutional platform to discuss and seek solutions to global water challenges that cannot be solved through unilateral action alone. Challenges such as water scarcity, climate change, and pollution require collaboration across countries due to their global and interconnected nature [31].

Overall, the implementation of the Bali Water Forum conforms to the principles of liberal institutionalism. The forum serves as a multilateral arena to bring together various state actors,

international organizations, NGOs, and the private sector to work together, negotiate, and create collective solutions to global water challenges. The success of the Bali Water Forum in mobilizing political commitment, hydro diplomacy, and collaborative projects shows how international institutions can serve as an effective mechanism in achieving common goals, as outlined by SDG 6, while prioritizing cooperation and collaboration between countries under mutually agreed rules and norms [16"].

#### 4. Conclusion

The Bali Water Forum is a concrete manifestation of the principles of liberal institutionalism that emphasize the importance of international institutions in facilitating cooperation between countries. The Forum serves as a platform where countries and various stakeholders can work together to address global challenges related to water and sanitation, especially in order to achieve SDG 6. In accordance with the theory of liberal institutionalism, the Bali Water Forum encourages countries to comply with international commitments and maintain their reputation through declarations and concrete actions that focus on sustainable water governance.

Through structured mechanisms, such as regional processes, thematic processes, and political processes, the forum assists countries in maintaining transboundary water stability and encourages the implementation of policies that support the fulfillment of access to clean water and sanitation globally. The forum strengthens water diplomacy and encourages countries to collaborate in solving problems that cannot be addressed unilaterally, such as water scarcity, pollution, and climate change, by promoting dialogue and mutually beneficial multilateral cooperation.

The Bali Water Forum reflects the key role of international institutions in shaping countries' expectations and adherence to global commitments, in line with the liberal institutionalist theoretical view that emphasizes collaboration as the path to achieving sustainable development goals.

## 5. Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest that arise or have the potential to influence the research process, writing, and publication of this article. Each stage in the research process is independent and not influenced by external interests that could affect the results or interpretations. In addition, the authors also did not receive support or funding that could bias the results of the research. The research results containing the views and findings presented are based entirely on scientific evidence obtained through an objective research process. Therefore, throughout the process of preparing this article, scientific integrity and academic honesty were maintained in accordance with the principles of research ethics.

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