

# IDWS 2025 Opens in Jeddah With Global Industry Leaders Charting the Future of Water and Innovators Demonstrate Solutions

JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA, December 8, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- His Highness Prince Saud bin Abdullah bin Jalawi, Governor of Jeddah, inaugurated the Innovation Water Sustainability (IDWS) Conference 2025, in Jeddah on Monday, under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Khalid bin Faisal bin Abdulaziz, Advisor to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and Governor of Makkah Region, and on behalf of His Royal Highness Prince Saud bin Mishal bin Abdulaziz, Deputy Governor of the Region.

The opening day of the much-anticipated 4th edition of the Innovation Driven Water Sustainability Conference at The Ritz-Carlton Jeddah set the stage for global partnerships and groundbreaking solutions that aim to shape a more sustainable future for the water sector. The three-day event is bringing together policymakers, engineers, scientists and innovators to share discoveries and expertise to address one of the most pressing global challenges: the sustainable use, conservation, and management of water.

With participation from 139 countries, 107 exhibitors, and 10,000 attendees, this year's conference showcases the vital role of innovation in advancing water sustainability. More than



Global Industry Leaders Charting the Future of Water



IDWS 2025 Opens in Jeddah

188 speakers will deliver crucial insights and direction, while 76 scientific papers will be presented, reflecting a strong international commitment to developing knowledge and solutions that will support a secure and resilient water future.

## 'WATER – A CRITICAL DRIVER OF THE GLOBAL ECONOMY'

His Excellency Eng. Abdullah bin Ibrahim AlAbdulkarim, President of the Saudi Water Authority (SWA), delivered the opening keynote address ahead of a thought-provoking day of discussion and direction for the future of water safety. In his address, His Excellency outlined Saudi Arabia's leading role on the global stage in shaping the direction of water security, regulation, and innovation partnerships.

"The discussions held today will set the foundation for 21st Century-thinking at a time when the challenges of water scarcity and stress have become universally acknowledged," he said. "Despite progress over the past decade that has enabled more than 960 million people to gain access to water, the challenges of this century remain significant, with more than two billion still lacking - a quarter of the world's population - access to safe water sources for either the entire year or part of it."

"Seven hundred million people on Earth are at risk of displacement due to water scarcity. The challenge of the 21st Century is water. Water is one of the most critical drivers of the global economy, with 60 per cent of global output linked in some way to water-dependent sectors. While US\$58 trillion of economic activity relies on water availability, investment in innovation within the environmental and climate sectors remains below one per cent, underscoring the need for collaboration, new policy models, and innovative financing frameworks."

His Excellency, who noted 90 per cent of innovations fail due to the absence of effective business model development, recognised advancements across different regions of the world: Europe's



Innovators Demonstrate New Wave of Game Changing Solutions



Three day event is bringing together policymakers

progress in water patents, innovation and regulatory frameworks, Asia's leadership in reuse and recycling; North America's focus on digitalisation; South America's advances in circular economy models for water; and Africa's pioneering of small-scale, low-cost solutions.

"Such developments reflect the collective momentum of the global community, gathered today in Jeddah, the city where the desalination industry first emerged in Saudi Arabia," His Excellency said, adding that "this moment represents a renewed commitment to leading a global movement that champions equal opportunity in innovation and fosters worldwide collaboration."

#### GLOBAL PRIZE FOR INNOVATION IN WATER (GPIW) – DAY 1 FOCUS □

Underlining Saudi Arabia's role in championing water safety innovation, the opening day of IDWS 2025 also honoured industry changemakers with the Global Prize for Innovation in Water Award, recognising leading projects across production, treatment, reuse and digital solutions. A total of 12 projects were awarded, including two grand prize winners. Guihua Yu, Centennial Energy Chair Professor and Director, University of Texas, Austin, was the grand winner of the Discovery Award, while the Breakthrough Award was won by HanQing Yu, Professor, University of Science and Technology of China.

#### WASHINGTON DC DETAILS FOUR-STEP STRATEGY □

The IDWS 2025 main stage played host to a plethora of industry thought leaders, disruptors and decision makers for a range of insightful discussions on the future roadmap for water safety, with the day one content examining how public-sector leadership and international collaboration can advance water resilience.

David Gadis, CEO and General Manager of District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority, explained in his keynote how DC Water is addressing scarcity risk in the United States capital. "We have a four-pronged strategy," he said. "Firstly, we have to protect our primary source by updating governance around the [Washington] Aqueduct and regional water supply. Secondly, we need to advance feasible solutions, and we're casting a wide net, including re-use, desalination, groundwater, and ways to boost public support for our water distribution system."

The third step, noted Gadis, includes the need to ensure any solution is a subset of a regional Water Resources Development Act feasibility study, an in-depth evaluation of water problems authorised by the US Congress. "It is possible that the federal government may help fund a regional solution," he said, before concluding "finally, we must improve our water distribution system, including expanded storage, interconnections with neighboring utilities, and emerging digital tools."

In the day's opening panel discussion titled 'Global Innovation Leadership: Driving Progress Through the Public Sector to Achieve Water Sustainability,' discussions centred around how innovation is a global endeavour, with countries around the world striving to address critical challenges through cutting-edge research, advanced technologies, and strategic collaboration.

Professor Trevor Bishop, Managing Director at H2Outcomes Ltd & Former Director of Strategy and Policy (UK) at Ofwat, said: "I always ask what is your best innovation? There is a lot to choose from, but what I think is important is to start looking at semi-closed loop systems that can deal with contaminants in a more efficient way. Also, anything related to non-revenue water. It is a very important issue, both for water scarcity, sustainability, and economics, but also for customer trust."

Denis Bilodeau, President, Orange County Water District, highlighted how core messaging around projects is key to gain public trust and buy-in: "We began a wastewater treatment process back in 1998 and, as a result, we received broad support from legislators, professionals in the health and science community, elected officials, civic groups, the business community, and members of the public. We had to directly address the public and explain to them why we were going to treat wastewater as opposed to desalinisation. In our case, treating wastewater was much more inexpensive than ocean desalinisation. Our core message was that it tastes like water because it is water, and this is what helped us overcome any public opposition."

In a specially curated panel, co-organised by SWA and the World Bank Group, industry leaders discussed navigating water and environmental challenges in their respective countries and the frameworks used to encourage innovation in tackling them. Moderated by Adnan Ghosheh, Senior Water and Sanitation Specialist at the World Bank Group, other panellists included Eng. Mohammed Al Sheikh, Deputy President for Strategic Partnerships and Local Content, Saudi Water Authority; Richard Cheruiyot, Ag. Chief Executive Officer, Water Services Regulatory Board, Prof. Trevor Bishop, Managing Director, H2Outcomes Ltd. And Prof. Vera Eiro, CEO / Chair, ERSAR.

#### SWA LEADERSHIP IN ADVANCED TECH RECOGNISED WITH WORLD RECORD

Meanwhile, the opening day also saw SWA officially recognised by Guinness World Records for operating the largest water innovation oasis in the world, an accolade reinforcing the Kingdom's leadership in desalination, advanced water technologies, and sustainable water management. This recognition highlights Saudi Arabia's expanding regional and international role in shaping the future of water innovation, driven by national priorities, long-term investment in infrastructure, and a commitment to scientific excellence and digital transformation.

The award joins a growing list of Guinness titles earned by SWA for its breakthroughs in desalination, energy efficiency, and strategic water systems, strengthening the Kingdom's position as one of the world's most influential contributors to water innovation.

The Oasis, measuring 33,395.88 square meters, provides a cutting-edge environment for critical activities, including next-generation desalination testing and certification; development of treatment technologies and brine management solutions, along with optimisation of municipal and industrial water systems using AI and digital twins.

#### IDWS IS A PLATFORM TO INSPIRE AND ACCELERATE ACTION

Muhaideb Al-Muhaideb, Vice President for Financial Affairs, at SWA, said: "In a country where ambition is our baseline, we're building solutions that match the pace of the Kingdom's

transformation. IDWS encapsulates Saudi Arabia's future-forward optimism and reaffirms our country's role as a global driver of innovation in water, new technologies and solutions for a better future. This year's conference is the epicentre of action for impact, where collaboration becomes legacy, and where every idea has the power to change lives."

Basma Dawwas, Event Director at Tahaluf, said: "IDWS 2025 is designed to be a catalyst for solutions that matter. We've created a dynamic environment where ideas both inspire and accelerate action. By connecting innovators, investors, and policymakers, we're driving collaborations that can shape the future of water sustainability and set new global benchmarks."□

IDWS 2025 powers into day two on Tuesday with a laser focus on the Water Academy programmes and a series of high-impact technical briefings, offering a deep dive into the innovations reshaping how the Kingdom and the world use water. A diverse range of industry changemakers will again take to the main stage to deliver the insights needed to drive the worldwide water conversation forwards – all with the ambition and precision for which Saudi has quickly gained a global reputation and further elevating the Kingdom's role in connecting the world and addressing global challenges. Day two will also mark the kickoff of the Miyahthon – SWA's groundbreaking 'water hackathon' – uniting innovators, engineers, researchers, and entrepreneurs to co-create next-generation technologies and solutions that tackle the most pressing challenges faced by the water sector, and the world.□□From the heart of innovation and the house of creativity that has become the global benchmark for water excellence, Saudi Arabia is not responding to water challenges. The Kingdom is redefining what is possible through innovation and global collaboration, establishing the Kingdom as the definitive destination to host, implement, and publish the innovations that will shape our water future.

For more information and to register for a complimentary conference pass, please visit:

<https://idwsc.com>

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About the Saudi Water Authority (SWA)

The Saudi Water Authority is the national entity responsible for regulating, developing, and sustaining the water sector in the Kingdom. The Authority works to ensure water security through integrated planning, the application of global best practices in water resource management, the promotion of research and innovation, and the strengthening of public-private partnerships. The Authority aims to achieve high operational efficiency and improve service quality in alignment with the environmental and economic sustainability goals of Saudi Vision 2030.

About the Innovation Driven Water Sustainability Conference (IDWS)

IDWS is the leading event in the Arab region and the Gulf, bringing together policymakers, experts, and innovators to accelerate sustainable water solutions through investment, policy development, and innovation. The conference has become a key platform for international cooperation and showcasing advanced technologies, with hundreds of speakers and thousands of participants from around the world.

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