

# “Ambassador for Water” shares vision for tackling water crisis



*“When I was a **kid**, we would have our vacations by the **ocean**. My mom put a little harness on me because I always wanted to **run to where the water was**,” recalled [Henk Ovink](#) with a smile.*

In 2015, he was appointed by the Dutch Cabinet as the **First Special Envoy for International Water Affairs for the Kingdom of the Netherlands**. He is responsible for **raising awareness about looking after water around the world**.

As “**Ambassador for Water**”, Henk Ovink spoke to the **Tec community** during “**Impactful Dialogs: Reimagining the Future of Water in Nuevo León**” about the importance of **leadership and commitment in young people** for tackling the **challenges of climate change**.

Henk Ovink, conversatorio sobre crisis del agua en campus Monterrey width="900" loading="lazy">

*“These types of **commitments** must come from **all over the world**. This is where we speak truth to power.*

*“It’s where we must **lead by example** and where we must show the world that we really care about the promises we’ve made to future generations,” he said.*

***“What can we do that we know works? Then we scale it up, so that water becomes a reflection of the change.” - Henk Ovink***

He stressed that it's necessary to **come together** as a society in order to achieve significant change.

*“I think it's important we come together as a **global society** to create impactful **commitments** and **actions**.*

*“We have to ask ourselves, **what is it that we can do that we know works?** Then we scale it up, so that **water** becomes a **reflection of the change we're observing**” he said.*

Alumna de campus Monterrey en conversatorio Henk Ovink width="900" loading="lazy">

**Mario Adrián Flores**, Vice President of the Monterrey Region and General Director of the Monterrey campus, introduced this conversation by saying that it's necessary to take action regarding climate change.

*“Climate change is apparent across the globe, and we need to make urgent changes today. To do so, we need to reimagine the future of our cities,”* he said.

The interviewer was **José Antonio Torres**, Director of Urban Planning and Sustainability at the Tec.

### **Paving the way to solving water shortages**

During his seven years as Ambassador for Water, Ovink has been responsible for **building institutional capacity** and **coalitions between governments** and multilateral organizations and initiating innovative approaches to provide **solutions to water scarcity** around the world.

Furthermore, he is Sherpa to the **UN/World Bank High-Level Panel on Water**. He served on President Obama's Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force, where he led long-term reconstruction plans.

***“You have to have the courage to take off your suit and shoes, roll up your sleeves, and get to work along with everyone else.” - Henk Ovink***

He also developed the **“Rebuild by Design”** contest and initiated the National Disaster Resilience Competition in the United States.

**2023: A decisive year for water**

**Henk Ovink** will participate in the next [United Nations Water Conference](#) in March 2023 in New York.

*“It’s a **moment of truth**. If we don’t yield results, we’re showing that we can’t do what we set out to do. If that happens, no one will take action,”* he shared.

In the same way, he highlighted what future generations need in order to face these issues.

*“**Leadership** across everyone in society, from a little Samaritan girl to the president.”*

*“You have to have **the courage to take off your suit and shoes, roll up your sleeves, and get to work** along with everyone else. It’s a type of leadership that is sorely lacking,”* he shared.

He also said that nowadays, people are afraid of complex challenges, due to how overwhelming the consequences can be.

*“Providing opportunities with alternatives and an agenda for the future where **we look at possibilities** is something we can **connect** with to motivate ourselves and work efficiently,”* he said.

## **The three pillars of real change**

Henk Ovink explained that, together with his team, he has developed a program with **three pillars** to **tackle the water crisis**:

### **1. Raise awareness of the true complexity of the water crisis.**

*“Make the world understand the negative impact that a lack of water would have, not only for personal use, but for the global structure,”* he pointed out.

### **2. Bring about systemic change.**

*“Don’t just have a mindset of repairing damage when dealing with the issue, so that infrastructure and the quality of services accessible to all may prosper,”* he said.

### **3. Manage water in a transparent, inclusive, and equitable way.**

*“So that this resource may be universally available to everyone without any obstacles and thus avoid barriers to progress,”* he said.

Henk Ovink vistiendo jersey de Borregos Tec width="900" loading="lazy">

## **Students spend time with Henk Ovink**

**Aldo Ramírez**, a research professor at the School of Engineering and Sciences, ended the talk with a **reflection** on the topic of water.

*“Thank you, Henk, for sharing your **vision and experience** of the water crisis with us, letting us know that it goes beyond not having water for a day or two.*

*“It involves **organizations, governance, geopolitics, financial issues, and higher-level issues,**” he shared.*

The conversation was attended by students from different university courses and there were even **students from the Netherlands** on international Tec programs in the audience.

Alumnos internacionales Holanda con Henk Ovink en Campus Monterrey width="900" loading="lazy">

*“It’s quite interesting to see and listen to (Henk), because he gave us a perspective that we didn’t know about either, and to see the differences between now and then. It was interesting”* said Wensen, an Industrial Engineering student.

This dialog took place thanks to the collaboration of the [FEMSA Foundation](#), the **Monterrey Environmental Fund**, and guests from the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

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