

UN High Level Meeting on Water

18 March 2021

Joint Statement

Sustainable management of water resources is a major global challenge of the 21st century. Water as a vital resource is facing unprecedented challenges. Given the centrality of water, sustainable water resources management and water cooperation at all levels are essential for achieving all Sustainable Development Goals, for ensuring stability and peace and promoting and protecting human rights, including the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation.

Despite the complexity of the challenges, and because of its fundamental importance, water can become a starting point for collaboration and can be transformed from a source of potential crisis into an instrument of peace, cooperation and development.

The fact that the world is not on track when it comes to meeting SDG 6 and the sense of urgency that we need to accelerate our actions, led to the decision of the General Assembly to call for a Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action in 2023.

The second UN Water Conference in history should be much more than just a mid-term review of the UN Water Decade. What we should be striving for is to instil a comprehensive approach to water that includes all relevant aspects, including the reference to peace and security. And by this we primarily mean the relevance of water for human security, livelihoods and economic improvement.

One of the SDG6 Accelerator Framework's guiding principles is conflict sensitivity: "All activities need to be conflict-sensitive and risk-informed, informed by conflict and risk assessment." We need conflict-proofing of water interventions, particularly in regions prone to conflicts.

The lack of global water governance structure or rather the fragmented water governance landscape can be supplemented by strengthening of UN Water and by appointing a UN Special Envoy for Water, like UN Special Envoy for Oceans as the result of the UN Oceans Conference.

In order to implement SDG 6 and successfully address the mounting water-related challenges, we must redouble our efforts. We need a transformational approach, and therefore should not miss the opportunity of the 2023 conference to define one.