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Statement by

**H.E. Ms Tanja Fajon,**

**Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs**

at the

**UN General Assembly – Side Event: Supporting gender equality in the Water Action Agenda with Global Multi-stakeholder effort**

**Thursday 23 March 2023, 17.00-18.15, Room 6**

New York, 23 March 2023

*Excellences,*

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

Existing data show that women are disproportionately affected by the water crises, and yet they remain largely excluded from the relevant decision-making processes.

We believe in the convening and motivational power of coalitions. Slovenia was among the first to join the Multi-stakeholder coalition and support its Call to Action to Accelerate Gender Equality in the Water Domain.

We have engaged in several Coalition's activities since. I am happy to see that together we reached a point when we can present game-changing commitments and the roadmap to implement them.

Slovenia is proud to support the game-changers through the development and launch of a "community of practice" digital platform dedicated to the communication of initiatives and for interaction between Coalition's members.

I call upon countries and stakeholders to join this coalition and our efforts to make sure that when decisions on water are taken, women's voices are heard.

Our gender determines not only our roles, responsibilities and opportunities in society, but also our relationship with environment and natural resources. Our needs, access, use and benefits differ. If we exclude women from natural resources management, we lose crucial insights, knowledge and practices. We perpetuate the inequalities. We risk failure.

Promoting the political participation and representation of women in decision-making would significantly contribute to reducing poverty, strengthening food security, and to better management of natural resources, conservation efforts and climate resilience.

In so many countries, there is a great demand for water professionals; it can only be met if more women join the profession. It is crucial to encourage women to enter vocational training or STEM oriented studies.

To make capacity building more accessible for all, Slovenia and other members of the Green Group are developing an on-line Water Knowledge Hub. This platform will offer cost-free e-learning on different aspects of water management.

We believe that women water diplomats should be in the frontline of the efforts to advance cooperative and inclusive transboundary water governance. They should be at the table when peace agreements are negotiated.

A recent survey of 117 transboundary river basin organisations worldwide found that fewer than one-third of their staff and fewer than one-fifth of the highest leadership positions are women. Women in Water Diplomacy Network has done valuable work that can serve as guidance on mainstreaming gender equality in transboundary mechanisms.

As the first female foreign minister of my country, I am very proud to say that we are currently preparing a national Feminist Foreign Policy Strategy. The Strategy reinforces the notion that women and girls are active and essential agents of change for the achievement of the Agenda 2030 globally.

The thematic focus of the strategy will be women’s leadership and political participation, economic empowerment, ending violence against women, and peace and security. The Strategy will support women's and girls' meaningful involvement in decision-making processes related to climate change and sustainable water management.

We will not implement it in isolation but rather through strengthening partnerships bilaterally, within the multilateral fora, and in coalitions such as the Multi-stakeholder coalition for gender equality in the water domain.