

Statement by

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

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

at the

**UN Security Council Arria Formula Meeting on Protection of Civilians: Achieving a better protection of water-related essential services and infrastructure for the civilian population during armed conflicts**

New York, 22 March 2023

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank Switzerland and Mozambique for organizing this important discussion, which adds value to the ongoing deliberations at the UN Water Conference.

Increasingly, water and sanitation infrastructure is considered a strategic target in armed conflicts, although destroying objects, indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, is banned by the international humanitarian law.

Various provisions of the international law call for protection of water infrastructure, drinking water and sanitation services in armed conflicts and in post-conflict situations. Nevertheless, implementation remains a challenge, particularly from non-state actors.

The UN Security Council should pursue a more active role within protection of civilians also regarding water resources and installations.

The Council's Resolution 2573 was a welcome step in this direction. Slovenia was among its co-sponsors and calls for its full implementation.

Security Council should call, where appropriate, for water supply ceasefires and for the deployment of water specialists in peacekeeping and post-conflict operations.

Future considerations of sanctions regimes should also pay greater attention to the unintended effects of sanctions on the water sector.

In our view, mutually reinforcing humanitarian, development and peace actions are essential to:

1. ensure the protection of water resources, personnel and infrastructure;
2. develop secure, sustainable and resilient water supply;
3. ensure peaceful and equitable access and use of water.

We must bear in mind the complex impacts of climate change on water resources and infrastructure, both in peace times and – even more devastatingly - in armed conflicts.

Water and climate are increasingly among drivers of global conflicts. We must respond to the changing nature of conflicts and avoid humanitarian consequences, also by focusing on the most vulnerable - women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities and forcibly displaced persons.

It is important to cooperate with local communities. Slovenia has supported several projects in this regard, in partnership with NGOs and ICRC, thus helping to alleviate the water crisis in war- and conflict-torn countries.

Finally, it is vital to ensure full, equal and meaningful participation of women in these processes. As a candidate for the Security Council for the period 2024-2025, we will continue to contribute towards our shared goal of securing a peaceful future for all.

Thank you.