



ECOSOC

UN 2023 Water Conference

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Statement

by

H.E. Lachezara Stoeva, President of the Economic and Social Council

Your Majesty Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands,

Mr. President of the Republic of Tajikistan,

Mr. President of the United Nations General Assembly,

Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to thank the Governments of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Republic of Tajikistan for co-hosting this historic Conference and for their leadership throughout the process.

It is an honor and a privilege to be here with you today and to be part of this landmark gathering.

Water is the essence of life. It is being described as the dealmaker for the Sustainable Development Goals, and for the health and prosperity of people and planet.

In 1977 in Mar del Plata, Argentina the world leadership gathered for the first ever global water conference and the Mar del Plata Action Plan was born. Now, 46 years later, we are gathered here today to assess progress and the challenges we face. 46 years is an era when it comes policy - a lot has been achieved,



however, we are off-track on water-related goals and targets.

Since the last UN Water Conference the world's population has doubled. There are now eight billion of us, and demand for water has dramatically increased. For many parts of the world access to clean water and sanitation remains simply an aspiration, this is particularly valid for low-income countries and marginalised communities. Over 2.2 billion people do not have access to safe drinking water and 4.2 billion lack access to basic sanitation facilities and hygiene.

It is clear that action is needed and it is needed NOW! We need a bold, new, ambitious Water Action Agenda if we are serious about achieving Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. This Conference is our opportunity.

How do we leverage water for delivering on the sustainable development agenda?

First, through inclusion of marginalised or disadvantaged groups in decisions about water. Access to water and sanitation has an important gender aspect. It bears on the wellbeing of women and girls who ought to have a say on how water is used and conserved. We also need to be attentive to the perspective of youth and the solutions they can bring in conversations about water management.

A significant proportion of water resources is situated in areas inhabited by indigenous peoples who are the guardians of nature conservation. This should be recognised and the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples should be cherished and preserved.

Second, education. Water education is needed at all levels - education that goes beyond training hydro scientists, engineers and professionals, and beyond capacity-building. Water knowledge should be embedded in all parts of society



and at all levels of decision-making.

Third, financing. The revalorisation of water in all production and consumption processes would transform sustainable development. It could potentially lead to a new economics of water that would ensure its equitable and sustainable use. Water use should be managed more holistically and integrated with climate, trade and other policies.

Revalorising water would result in new revenue streams that would help close the financing gap for the implementation of SDG6.

Fourth, water needs continuous advocacy if our transformative agenda is to succeed. And the Economic and Social Council has a role to play in the follow-up on the outcomes of this conference.

The implementation of SDG6 will be reviewed in-depth at the ECOSOC High Level Political Forum on sustainable development in July. Prior to that, the ECOSOC Youth Forum would provide the space for young people to focus on SDG6 among others and advocate not only for what they need but also highlight the solutions they can bring. In the same way, the ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development follow-up is an opportunity to discuss issues of financing and public-private partnerships on water.

Distinguished Delegates,

Let us join forces now to ensure that water is well managed and clean water is available and accessible to all, now and in the future. We simply can't afford to wait for another 46 years!

Thank you.