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Statement

by

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United Nations Under-Secretary-General

Executive Secretary

of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

at the

Water Dialogues for Results Bonn 2021:

Accelerating cross-sectoral SDG 6 implementation

11 March 2021

09:00 – 10:30 (Virtual event)

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the launch of the SDG progress brief last Thursday by UN-Water has shown **we are not on track** to achieve SDG on water and sanitation for all. We must speed up.

This is exactly the goal of the SDG 6 global acceleration framework launched last year by UN-Water. This framework needs to be filled with life. I therefore welcome initiatives such as the water dialogues and high-level event on water organized by Germany on 1 July 2021.

UNECE is contributing to the SDG 6 global acceleration framework through several commitments and particularly to the governance, data and information and capacity-building accelerators.

SDG 6 will not be discussed at this year's HLPF and regional forum, but the other SDGs under discussion have a clear link to water: poverty alleviation (goal 1) requires water for all, growing food is impossible without water and globally 70% of water is used for irrigation, many illnesses are related to water or can be prevented by better water supply, sanitation and hygiene (goal 3). With regards to goal 8, nearly 80% of the jobs constituting the global workforce are dependent upon having access to an adequate supply of water and water-related services, including sanitation, according to the 2016 World Water Development Report. 80% of all climate change impacts are transmitted through the water cycle, so water is crucial for both adaptation and mitigation. Also SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions is related to water since transboundary waters are often a source of conflict, but more frequently a

source of cooperation.

In this regard, UNECE is supporting peace through water by promoting further development and implementation of transboundary agreements through guidance, projects on the ground and capacity-building in the framework of our Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, known as the Water Convention.

For acceleration, in addition to increased transboundary cooperation, we need increased intersectoral cooperation- following a nexus approach. Germany was a pioneer spearheading this approach in 2011. Ten years later, the term is now widely used, but practical nexus actions are lacking.

For the nexus approach to strengthen practical transboundary cooperation, tools such as a participatory assessment methodology have been developed and disseminated in the framework of the Water Conventions. By applying these, countries can increase resource use efficiency, capitalizing on regional complementarities and improving natural resource governance. This approach provides for identifying jointly opportunities to reduce trade-offs and externalities, improve strategic decision-making for better valuing and effectively managing natural resources and helps support progress to most other SDGs. Ultimately, inter-connected water, energy, environmental and food security can be greatly enhanced by implementing packages of nexus actions, developed in several basins, including the Drina and the Syr Darya River Basins, as well as the North-Western Sahara Aquifer.

We also need integrated approaches across water and health. The crisis of COVID-19 has further shown that safe and sufficient water, adequate sanitation and hygiene can save lives. The Protocol on Water and Health, jointly serviced by UNECE and WHO-Europe, provides a practical tool for implementing the

2030 Agenda: principles such as inclusiveness are helping to realize the human rights to water and sanitation. Its progressive target setting and national reporting on all aspects of water, sanitation, hygiene and health are mechanisms to accelerate progress. It supports countries in recovery from COVID-19 and preparedness to this and other infectious diseases. I call on countries to ratify and implement the Protocol and use its many tools.

UNECE is committed to working with all interested states and partners, including UN-Water and Germany, to strengthen international water governance and accelerate the implementation of SDG 6. We are planning to organize an event at the regional level next year as part of the preparations for the Midterm review of the Water Action Decade in 2023. I call on all actors to contribute to these collective efforts: countries, basin organizations, international financial institutions, UN agencies and NGOs.

Let us jointly strengthen our collective efforts to achieve SDG 6.

Thank you.
