

Speaking notes, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland Mr. Pekka Haavisto, Water and Peace, High level panel on transboundary water cooperation as a key for regional peace and stability, MOP9

Question 1 (3 min to respond): How do you see the links between water, conflict and peace based on your experience in peace mediation in Sudan and Ethiopia? What is needed to make water a cooperation tool, including from the United Nations and other actors?

The latest IPCC report reminded us about the speed and impact of climate change, which is primarily felt through changes in the hydrological cycle, in other words water. The tensions and conflicts over water, caused by increasing water scarcity, are on the rise. It is clear that there are strong linkages between climate, water, peace and security.

Finland has a long history of promoting both transboundary water cooperation and peace mediation. For decades, we have been actively participating in the development and implementation of the two Water Conventions, namely the Helsinki Convention and the New York convention. We remain committed to working for the nexus of water and peace – also included as one of the three pillars of our national water strategy jointly implemented by five different ministries. Our focus is on transboundary water cooperation as well as water diplomacy.

Also our Centre for Peace Mediation at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has “*water diplomacy as preventive peace mediation*” as one of its objectives.

Over the past year, I have been mandated by the EU High Representative Josep Borrell as an Envoy on the Horn of Africa, including the *Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam* (GERD). The GERD is an example of a complex political dispute over water infrastructure. With its abundant water resources the river Nile is highly important for all three eastern Nile riparian states. As the climate changes in the Horn of Africa the hydrological changes in the river system are unavoidable.

The three Eastern Nile countries continue to be engaged in an active water diplomacy process, facilitated by the African Union with EU, US and South Africa as observers. Importantly, the complex negotiations have been based on the principles of the Water Convention. Discussions around GERD have the potential to lead to a preventive peace mediation effort that can attract international investment for all three countries and the region.

At a global level, the UN needs to take a stronger role to lead cooperation on water issues and to advance the water and peace agenda. The UN system should be

stronger in its efforts to promote water and peace, as it lacks a common strategy, vision and clear leadership on water. Building capacity on water, especially water resource management and water negotiations, in all agencies and programmes, and in peacekeeping missions, is one step to strengthen water cooperation. Another is to take steps to strengthen UN-Water to enable it to more effectively address water issues. We also need to more strongly link the climate and security and water and peace agendas.

Question 2 (2 min to respond): [Based on your and Finland's experience, what can we learn from evidence from basins and regions, where water has become a catalyst for peace between neighbours?](#)

As an example, the Finnish-Russian Agreement on the utilization of transboundary watercourses, signed in 1964, is still functional after over 50 years. The agreement sets out the principles for the management of shared transboundary rivers. The parties cooperate on the various uses, management and protection of the waters. Finland is an upstream country, however, it benefits from the cooperation. Sharing of hydrological and water quality data, among others, has contributed to building trust and allowed to more effectively address complex issues. This experience and progressive development of the solid institutional framework provide building blocks also for other regions to find solutions and sustain peace. In Central Asia, Finland has provided practical assistance to Governments in monitoring of waters and in inter-sectoral (nexus) cooperation.

The Water Convention has played a pivotal role in supporting water cooperation by providing practical tools, such as guidelines on monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters, the Handbook on Water Allocation and the nexus assessment methodology. Finland has contributed to these tools' development with its rich experience and by taking Lead Party roles.

With its opening for accession by all United Nations Members States, the Water Convention offers a global platform for exchange on transboundary water issues and for supporting the implementation of international water law. I encourage all countries to join the agreement. We remain committed to continue to support the water and peace agenda together with governments and other partners.
