

High Level Segment on Water and Peace
9th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations in Geneva

I would like to thank the panelists for their important interventions. This morning, we heard how disputes regarding the uses of transboundary watercourses may threaten regional and international peace and security. Growing water scarcity, coupled with rising demand and unsustainable use of water as well as climate change are further aggravating the situation, threatening the lives, livelihoods and food security of millions. As one of the most heavily populated, water scarce countries in the world, Egypt is particularly vulnerable in this regard.

We believe that effective transboundary water resources cooperation, through adaptive and collaborative approaches, is a critical precondition for the prevention of conflict.

However, achieving international cooperation is much easier said than done. It requires genuine political will to respect the different interests of all concerned States and the needs of dependent populations. It requires a commitment to genuine, good faith negotiations, which are not mere formalities to camouflage a *fait accompli*. It requires an authentic belief that a State must ensure that activities within its jurisdiction do not damage the environment of other States and avoid causing significant harm. It requires respect for applicable international law, including relevant treaties.

Egypt is committed to the peaceful settlement of all differences related to the use of transboundary watercourses, and to achieving SDG 6, in **all its aspects on an equal basis**. This includes **access to safe drinking water and sanitation, improving water quality, addressing water scarcity, and implementing integrated water resources management, including through transboundary cooperation**. We find attempts to focus almost exclusively on safe drinking water and sanitation - and disregard other aspects of SDG 6 - concerning.

Although the links between water, peace and security have been established beyond doubt, the UN is still not sufficiently empowered to address disputes regarding transboundary water uses or the global water crisis. More needs to be done to overcome the current fragmented approach, and the lack of ownership over water issues by any single UN entity. It is inconceivable that resolutions of the Human Rights Council consider the right to safe drinking water and sanitation “without prejudice” - and therefore subordinate - to the law of watercourses. The 2023 Mid-Term Review of the Global Action Decade on Water presents a golden opportunity to address these issues and achieve a more effective, coordinated, system-wide approach to the root challenges to transboundary cooperation.

Given the absence of effective mechanisms and the lack of compulsory dispute resolution, Egypt has and will continue to avail itself of all peaceful methods to address water-related disputes, including negotiation, mediation, resort to regional and international organizations, most recently the Security Council. We count on the international community to play its part to prevent conflict, sustain peace and develop the necessary international architecture to address the water, peace and security nexus.