

UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting for the UN 2023 Water Conference

Session 4: “Strengthen climate resilience, reduce risks of floods and droughts and strengthen cooperation among water using sectors (agriculture, energy, etc.) to reconcile competing needs”

12 April | 16:30 – 18:00

4-minute opening remarks by Mr Octavian Bivol

Chief, Regional Office for Europe & Central Asia

On behalf of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the UN Economic Commission for Europe for organising this Regional Preparatory Meeting for the UN 2023 Water Conference.

I would also like to thank the Governments of Tajikistan and the Netherlands, both countries with frontline experience in managing water-related risks, for co-hosting the 2023 Water Conference, and for their close collaboration and engagement with Member States, the UN system, and partners in the run-up to the event.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the UNECE for inviting me to take the floor to share opening remarks in this session.

UNDRR works closely with the UNECE to bring disaster risk reduction, integrated water management and climate change adaptation closer together.

The last twenty years have seen a sustained rise of frequency and intensity of climate-related disasters such as floods and droughts. Water related hazards are therefore at the core of the disaster risk reduction efforts undertaken in our region.

International basins represent nearly half of the Earth's land surface and are home to 40 per cent of the world's population. Risks and challenges

associated with their management are frequently shared by neighbouring countries.

As we have experienced with COVID-19 and climate- and water-related disasters, such as the major 2021 floods in Europe, or melting of glaciers in Central Asia, disasters have increasingly compound and cascading impacts that are felt across geographies and sectors.

It is critical that we accelerate our efforts on climate resilience, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction by working through transboundary, multi-hazard and systemic approaches across all levels.

UNDRR will continue to accelerate actions for triggering more solid risk knowledge by stakeholders, better governance mechanisms through National Platforms and DRR strategies, and a package of support tools for improving and increasing investments for disaster risk reduction.

Ahead of the 2023 Water Conference, I would also like to emphasize the Global Platform for DRR in May and the Dushanbe Water Conference in June, as key milestones to advocate for risk-based discourse within the Midterm review of the Water Action Decade in 2023, and its alignment with the Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework, which will also culminate in 2023.

We encourage Member States to capitalize on the synergies between both Midterm Review processes, as they offer a unique opportunity to identify adjustments that promote risk-informed development while sustainably managing water resources and associated ecosystems, as well as to bring lessons and best practices across disaster risk management, integrated water resources management and climate adaptation closer together.

We also encourage Member States to advocate for risk considerations to become an integral part of the midterm review of the Water Action Decade, the UN 2023 Water Conference and its preparatory meetings, given the profound transformation of the risk landscape witnessed during the Water Action Decade.

Including a systemic risk-based discourse can also provide a connecting tissue between, *inter alia*, the 2030 Agenda, the Sendai Framework, the

Paris Agreement, the post-2020 biological diversity framework, as well as across SDGs and sectors - such as energy, food and agriculture - promoting a transition from siloed approaches to water issues.

With that, I would like to thank the Member States and partners - in particular the UN Economic Commission for Europe - again for hosting this hugely important preparatory meeting.