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**Statement**

**by**

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**United Nations Under-Secretary-General**

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**at**

**the High-Level Opening**

**of the**

**Global Workshop on Source to Sea Management**

**14 December 2022**

**10:00-10:45 (Geneva time)**

**Geneva, Palais des Nations, Salle XXI, and online**

**Statement/Intervention limited to 5 min**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be here today to address this global workshop on Source-to-Sea management.

The majority of the ocean's pollution, including toxic metals, oil, persistent organic pollutants and tens of millions of tons of plastic waste every year, originates from land-based sources and is washed into the ocean through rivers and other waterways. This shows how land, freshwater, and ocean ecosystems are closely interlinked and interdependent. So must be the response to existing problems.

It is key to tackle marine pollution at the source, upstream. Protecting rivers, creeks, drainage systems and groundwater through improved waste and wastewater management is critical to defend the health of the oceans.

Against this background, the importance of transboundary water cooperation is immediately evident considering that 286 river and lake basins worldwide are shared by two or more countries and that 6 of the 10 rivers contributing 90 percent of the plastic waste to oceans are transboundary.

Turning the tide on marine pollution certainly requires breaking the silos and coordinate action among sectors and countries. Cooperation over shared waters forms part of the much-needed solution.

The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, known as the Water Convention, which UNECE has the honour to service, is a powerful global instrument to advance cooperation, helping to balance diverse interests, involve multiple stakeholders and institutions and

provide policy advice, where needed. It aims at protecting the environment of transboundary waters as well as the marine environment influenced by them, as stated in its article 2.6.

From its adoption 30 years ago, the Water Convention has significantly advanced transboundary water cooperation in the pan-European region and beyond. Since 2016, the Convention is open to all United Nations Member States. More than 20 countries are on their way to accede it. I call upon all countries sharing transboundary waters to join the Water Convention.

From the time of its adoption, almost all countries of the pan-European region have established cooperation on their shared basins and concluded more than 90 bilateral and multilateral agreements on shared waters, also including provisions to protect the recipient sea and coastal areas. This is the case for the Danube River the Dniester, the Rhine, just to mention few of them.

Some of these and other good examples will be discussed in the coming days. We will hear and learn from the experiences of countries, river basin organisations, financial institutions and other UN agencies and bodies working to tackle marine pollution by connecting the ecosystems' management from source to sea.

There is still a lot to do: 88% of Parties reported in the second reporting exercise in 2021 that they do not cooperate with non-riparian coastal states. This shows the need to enhance the understanding and implementation of the requirements of the Water Convention with regard to protection of the marine environment influenced by transboundary waters. This workshop is therefore very timely.

I encourage you to bring the key messages from these three days discussion to the 2023 UN water conference to be held in New York on 22-24 March 2023 and to submit concrete commitments there. The source-to-sea approach is expected to be discussed in the interactive dialogue on “Water for Climate, Resilience and Environments” at that occasion. Last week, we have launched the transboundary water cooperation coalition, along with more than 30 countries, international financial institutions, academia and other organizations from the UN system and beyond. The coalition aims to communicate, cooperate and accelerate action by mobilizing commitments for the UN- water 2023 conference and beyond.

To conclude, I would like to thank the lead Parties Estonia and Slovenia, together with Germany and Sweden which funded the workshop, and all the partners, namely UNEP, IOC UNESCO, SIWI, GWP, GEF and its International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network with which we organised it.

Let us all jointly promote transboundary cooperation and source-to-sea management in the run-up to and after the UN Water conference.

Thank you.