

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) for convening this important and pertinent meeting.

Water and food are fundamental to human survival and have become growing sources of concern as the world is facing a looming food crisis.

Water has been integral to all human progress throughout history. However, human progress itself, in addition to population growth, have intensified pressures on water resources. Thus, securing a global freshwater supply has become one of humanity's most pressing challenges.

Securing the water needed for food production occupies centre stage in this water security challenge. Food production consumes about 70% of water worldwide and more than 85% of water in developing countries. Furthermore, by 2050, we expect that about 60% more food will be needed to feed the world; this figure goes up to 100% in developing countries. Therefore, food security has been and remains one of the most arduous features of our global water security challenge.

Climate change has compounded these interlinked challenges. The links between water, food and climate change are many, complex and region specific. However, it has now become recognised that climate change impacts on water cycle and the subsequent consequences on agriculture will augment and intensify risks to food security and livelihoods in the most vulnerable countries and populations in arid and semi-arid zones. Climate change has already slowed the agricultural productivity growth over the past 50 years globally. Moreover, it is expected that it will mainly further negatively affect the mid- and low latitude regions

Unfortunately, Egypt is one of the countries impacted most by this compound water-food-climate challenge.

Egypt is a hyper-arid low-latitude country that depends almost entirely on the Nile for its existence. Egypt has a water-dependent economy, whose water-stressed agriculture sector sustains the livelihoods of more than half its population. Climate change is predicted to result in increasing crop-water stress, as well as salt water intrusion, and salinization of about 15% of the most fertile arable land in Egypt. Furthermore, being the most downstream country on the River Nile, Egypt is affected by climate change impacts, not only within its borders, but also within the whole basin which it shares with 10 other riparian countries.

Thus, Egypt has maintained a comprehensive strategy aiming to exploit the synergies of the Water. Food. Climate Nexus and to mitigate its trade-offs.

With a firm commitment to achieving SDG6, Egypt has maintained successful water and food policies, despite being challenged by a limited freshwater supply^ a rapidly growing population^ and a growing economy. Egypt has adopted a water policy that combines an efficient use of renewable water resources with a growing reliance on non-conventional water sources. This water policy has been coupled with a food security policy balancing between food production and imports. Despite being strained by international conflicts, disruption of supply chains and increasing fuel prices, these balanced water and food policies have allowed Egypt to maintain water and food security in these critical moments.

Regionally, Egypt holds a firm belief that inclusive cooperation over shared water resources is essential to improve the adaptation to water-related climate risks. It prevents maladaptation that might unfold through unilateral measures and their potential negative impacts. Thus, Egypt has always led intensive discussions with other Nile Basin countries in order to apply the principle of equitable and reasonable utilization and no significant harm in a win-win manner and with the objective of maximizing the benefits from our shared water resources.

Internationally, Egypt has engaged actively in all initiatives, activities and fora dealing with the issues of water, food and climate. Egypt has been actively participating in the preparations for the UN 2023 Water Conference that will focus on a mid-term comprehensive review of the implementation of the International Decade for Action. We assume a leading role in supporting the UN Secretary General's initiative and the related initiative of Global Alliances for Water and Climate to establish early regional warning systems over water and climate. Within the framework of its COP27 presidency, Egypt intends to launch two flagship Presidency initiatives aiming to catalyse inclusive cooperation and address the links among water, food, and climate change: These are "Action for Water Adaptation and Resilience (AWARe)" and "Food and Agriculture for Sustainable Development (FAST)". Both initiatives have been formulated based on the large consultations and multiple with the our partners and stakeholders

AWARe aim to achieve three principal goals: to decrease water losses worldwide and improve water supply; to propose and support implementing mutually agreed policy and methods for cooperative water-related adaptation action and its co-benefits; Promote cooperation and interlinkages between water and climate action in order to achieve Agenda 2030, in particular SDG 6. The principal delivery mechanism of the initiative is ensured through regional geographical hubs. The first of this regional hubs will be the African Climate Water Hub and will be hosted by Egypt.

The aspirational goal of FAST is improve the quantity and quality of climate finance contributions to transform agriculture and food systems by 2030 and to support adaptation and mitigation pathways whilst supporting food and economic security. The FAST initiative will be a multi-stakeholder partnership acting as an accelerator to transform agri-food systems. FAST will establish a COP-to-COP engagement with successive COP presidency team to ensure FAST remains high in their respective

agenda. A multi-stakeholders Partnership hosted by FAO, will ensure the initiative is active and supporting countries.

The compound water-food-climate challenge can be overcome, but it requires a holistic response and inexorable commitment in order to fully grasp these interconnected issues and address them. Major changes in policy and management are needed to ensure best use of available water resources in building a sustainable food system in cooperation with development partners including multilateral development banks, UN agencies and other relevant organizations. In tandem, the renewable freshwater resources utilisation must be in line with the applicable international law, which recognizes the vital human needs for water and food.

We believe that COP27 comes at a critical juncture. We need a true watershed moment in the COP to become the moment when the world moved from negotiation to implementation in order to face the existential threat of climate change and ensure water and food security for all.