

PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Statement

by

Ms. Olga Algayerova

United Nations Under-Secretary-General

Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

at

the Opening Session of the

Second International High-Level Conference on the

International Action Decade “Water for Sustainable Development” 2018-2028

7 June 2022

9:00-10:30 (Dushanbe time)

Dushanbe, Kokhi Somon, Large Plenary Hall, 4th Floor

Statement/Intervention limited to 5 min

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me, first of all, thank the Republic of Tajikistan for organizing the Second Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference.

Despite considerable progress, water-related challenges persist throughout the world. While the COVID-19 pandemic and its social and economic consequences have called attention to the importance of access to water, sanitation and hygiene, they have also hampered progress.

So let me highlight five issues which require urgent attention and action.

First, transboundary cooperation is crucial. Shared basins are home to more than 40% of the world's population. Effective transboundary water cooperation, including on shared aquifers, is therefore a requirement not only for achieving SDG6, but also for protecting human and environmental health, ensuring food and energy security, preventing conflicts and promoting peace.

The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, which UNECE has the honor to service, is a powerful global instrument to spur the development of agreements where they are missing, and to strengthen the sustainable management of shared resources. In the past 30 years, in the Pan-European region only, more than 90 agreements on shared waters have been put in place thanks to the Convention. These agreements have brought benefits in terms of sustainable development, regional integration and conflict prevention.

Second, to accelerate progress towards SDG6, we need increased intersectoral cooperation. We need to look at interlinkages and trade-offs between resource use, in particular water, energy, food, and the ecosystem. By applying a nexus approach,

countries can decrease resource use, allocate them in a more efficient and sustainable manner, and increase circular economy efficiency. UNECE has supported the development of the Transboundary Basin Nexus Assessment methodology, in order to carry out participatory water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus assessments in transboundary contexts as well as application in various basins, like the Drin and Drina river basins and the North-West Saharan Aquifer System.

Third: We need to accelerate access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene, as they save lives. The Protocol on Water and Health, jointly serviced by UNECE and WHO-Europe, provides a unique legal framework for setting and achieving national objectives on water, sanitation, climate and health in line with the SDGs. The Protocol is a practical tool for translating into action the human rights to water and sanitation.

Fourth: We need to make sure that water is adequately addressed in the climate debate and mainstream it into National Action Plans, Nationally determined contributions, and climate change and disaster risk reduction actions, policies and plans, including transboundary ones. In order to strengthen regional resilience, UNECE supports countries in developing and implementing adaptation strategies in several transboundary basins, through guidance, projects on the ground, and exchange of experience.

Finally, governments, national and international financial institutions need to improve targeting and effective use of existing funding, mobilize domestic resources, and attract additional investment from private and public sources to achieve SDG6, including for transboundary water cooperation and basin development.

These were also the important messages from the Pan-European Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations 2023 Water Conference, which UNECE organised in cooperation with UN-Water in April. But their relevance goes far beyond the UNECE region.

UNECE is committed to continue to offer legal instruments, technical and policy support, and a multistakeholder platform to States, and to basin and regional organisations, in order to jointly accelerate implementation of the water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda, protect our planet, and the lives of future generations.

Thank you for your attention.