

**UNICEF Statement for the Preparatory Meeting of the United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028 – 25 October 2022**

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Office of the President of the General Assembly for organizing this preparatory meeting. I’d also like to thank the co-hosts of the 2023 UN Water Conference, the Netherlands and Tajikistan, for proposing the themes that we are discussing today. These themes will define the legacy of the 2023 UN Water Conference – a milestone occasion for the sector and the world.

At UNICEF, our mandate is to protect the rights of children.

And when it comes to our progress in reaching SDG 6, children stand to gain – or lose – tremendously.

We can see the impact of safe water, sanitation and hygiene on children through all of the conference tracks.

With water for health, we are ensuring children’s survival. WASH in healthcare facilities will deliver children safely into the hands of healthcare workers. As they grow, safe WASH will protect children from life-threatening diseases like cholera, typhoid, and even diarrhoea – which still, in 2022, is a leading cause of death for children under 5.

With water for development, we are supporting children’s growth. Water is not only essential for food security, but also critical for nutrition. Without safe WASH, children are more susceptible to malnutrition and stunting, which increases their vulnerability to waterborne diseases.

With water for climate, we are protecting children’s futures. Children are the least responsible for climate change and yet bear the greatest burden of its impacts. Climate-resilient WASH will not only protect children and communities from floods, droughts and other climate-induced disasters, but will also contribute to climate change mitigation.

With water for cooperation, we are saving children’s lives. When tensions over water resources escalate, children are exposed to violence and forced migration. In protracted conflicts, children under 5 are *20 times* more likely to die from diarrheal diseases linked to unsafe WASH, than from bombs and bullets. Solid coordination is crucial to successful cooperation, and water can become a vehicle for cohesion and peace.

With our current rates of progress, the future for children looks bleak. Today, 2 billion people do not have safe drinking water. Nearly half of the global population lacks safe sanitation. And nearly a third do not have a place at home to wash their hands with water and soap. For many aspects of WASH the solutions are known, but we do need to strengthen existing mechanisms to deliver better, faster, as well as sustainable gains, especially in humanitarian crises.

UNICEF works in 130 countries to help provide access to clean water and reliable sanitation, and to promote basic hygiene practices in rural and urban areas, including in emergency situations. We are committed to supporting governments and stakeholders in reaching our shared objectives for the conference and in achieving SDG 6, as well as helping to deliver on the Water Action Agenda commitments.

Let us use the occasion of the 2023 Water Conference to urgently increase our efforts to protect the human right to water and sanitation. And let us give all children a future worth living.

**ENDS**