# Inputs of Belarus to the draft concept paper on the theme

"Water for Sustainable Development: Valuing Water, Water-Energy-Food Nexus and Sustainable Economic and Urban Development (SDG 6.3, 6.4, 6.5 and SDGs 2, 8, 9, 11, 12)"

- I. Introduction
- II. Overview of the challenge, current status and interlinkages
- III. Overview of opportunities for progress and transformative solutions

Belarus has approved the National Strategy of Water Resources Management in the Context of Climate Change until 2030 (the Water Strategy).

The Water Strategy is aimed at improving the efficiency of the use of water resources to ensure the sustainable economic growth of the country in a changing climate and create conditions for the conservation of aquatic ecosystems. The need to adopt the Water Strategy is related to one of the objectives of the Programme of Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2021-2025.

As part of the Water Strategy, an assessment of the current potential of water resources and trends in water use, including a breakdown by the main types of economic activity over the past five years, was conducted; and evidence of the impact of climate change on water resources and its possible consequences was collected; problems of water resources management requiring solutions in this area were identified, and a corresponding action plan was developed.

When the objectives and targets of the Water Strategy were defined, their compatibility with the indicators of progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals was ensured.

The expected results of the implementation of the Water Strategy are as follows:

- o an increase up to 75 per cent of the share of surface water bodies that have been assigned the ecological status "good and above" by 2025, up to 85 per cent by 2030;
- o establishment of the index of discharge of insufficiently treated wastewater into water bodies (compared to the level of 2015) at the level of no more than 30 per cent by 2025, and 0 per cent by 2030;
- o progress in the introduction of comprehensive water resources management at least 80 per cent by 2025, and 100 per cent by 2030;
- o an increase in the share of the area of transboundary river basins in respect of which international agreements on cooperation in the field of protection and use of transboundary waters are in force at least 78 per cent by 2025, and 100 per cent by 2030.

Belarus is implementing the State Programme "Comfortable Housing and Favourable Environment" for 2021-2025, one of the subprogrammes of which "Pure Water" focused on supplying consumers with drinking-quality water; providing the population with centralized water supply and water disposal (sewerage) systems; improving the quality of wastewater treatment and reliability of water supply and water disposal (sewerage) systems.

According to the document, by 2025, it is planned the following:

- o to provide all consumers (100 per cent) with drinking-quality water supply (currently 95.9 per cent);
- o to transition to supplying all residents of Minsk (100 per cent) with drinking water from underground water supply sources (at the end of 2021 60.4 per cent);
- o to cover 93.2 per cent of the population with centralized water supply systems and 79.3 per cent of the population with water disposal (sewerage) systems "(at the end of 2021 91 per cent and 78.8 per cent, respectively);
- o to construct and reconstruct 70 wastewater treatment facilities;
- o to replace water supply and water disposal (sewerage) networks with expired service life annually at least 3 per cent of the total length of water supply and water disposal (sewerage) networks with expired service life.

As for the preservation of the water potential of Belarus, the strategic goal here is to increase the efficiency of the use of water resources and improve their quality with account of the needs of the population and potential climate change. This goal is achieved through a comprehensive approach to solving organizational, legal, financial, and economic problems related to water use and water protection.

## 1. Financing

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda required the revision and concretization of national plans and mechanisms to achieve sustainable development of society. The main strategic documents in the sphere of development of the national water policy are involved in the achievement of SDG 6.

The activities within the strategic documents on water are financed from the national and local budgets with attraction of international partners.

Risks associated with poor management of financial, labour and material resources, as well as macroeconomic, financial and cross-border risks, may influence the effectiveness of achieving SDG 6 targets. In order to manage risks and minimize their impact on the effectiveness of SDG 6 targets, it is necessary the following:

- o timely adjustment of activities of the strategy to changes in socio-economic development parameters;
- o clarification of the amount and sources of financing of the activities of the State and national programmes related to the use and protection of water resources, and search for alternative sources of financing;

o timely planning and monitoring of the implementation of policies, as well as response to gaps and violations.

### 2. Data and information

Goals, objectives, tools and mechanisms for the implementation of key strategic directions that ensure sustainable development of Belarus are formulated considering the achievement of SDGs. The Strategy on the Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus until 2035 reflects specific objectives of SDG 6 that address sustainable water management. Almost all indicators of targets 6.3-6.5 of SDG 6 have been included as indicators of achievement of specific tasks of the Water Strategy.

In order to raise public awareness of the main directions of development of the water complex and the decisions taken by the authorities in the field of water protection and management, it is necessary to implement a set of information measures using affordable and public relations technologies that have been introduced to date.

## 3. Capacity development

An important goal is to create conditions for multilateral dialogue, as well as to involve the population and the public in solving the problems of rational use and protection of water features. The implementation of this target is facilitated by the creation of so-called «basin councils» on five main rivers flowing through the territory of Belarus.

The «basin councils» include representatives of local and environmental authorities, water users, as well as public associations and scientific organizations. They function as coordination and advisory bodies and develop recommendations for the rational use and protection of water features within river basins.

### 4. Innovation

On a programme basis, research should be carried out to find innovative solutions in the field of water treatment and wastewater treatment technologies, and research on technology for monitoring and forecasting the environmental status of the aquatic environment, including emergency response. There is also a need to develop modern systems for effective operational monitoring of industrial effluents into water.

Addressing scientific challenges requires building the capacity of research organizations and enabling young scientists and professionals to maintain and develop existing science schools.

#### 5. Governance

The Water Strategy focuses water resources management both on achieving longterm water security, providing drinking water of normative quality, and reliable water supply to the economic sectors in the required volumes and safe disposal of industrial wastewater. Also, an important task in the field of protection of surface water features is its rehabilitation to their «good ecological condition».

Water management should be carried out at various levels, including international transboundary cooperation. In Belarus, all major river basins are transboundary. Belarus is a party to the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and the Protocol on Water and Health. In 2020, Belarus updated national targets for the implementation of the mentioned Protocol.

For the development of human resources in the field of water management at various levels, it is necessary to increase the professional competence of existing personnel to ensure innovative development of the sphere, as well as targeted training of specialists and scientists for the sphere.

#### IV. Recommendations

- This goal is achieved through a comprehensive approach to solving organizational, legal, financial, and economic problems related to water use and water protection.
- o Addressing scientific challenges requires building the capacity of research organizations and enabling young scientists and professionals.
- As part of adaptation to climate change, the current monitoring system for surface waters should be revised to focus on observations in the most climate-sensitive zones.
- Water management should be carried out at various levels, including international transboundary cooperation.