

## **PLENARREDE:**

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**Mr. President, Honorable Chairs,  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

- **At the outset, I would like to thank the Co-hosts – the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Republic of Tajikistan – for presiding over this Water Conference.**
- **Bringing together all stakeholders in the water sector for the first time in nearly half a century is a historic and an important milestone in order to accelerate multi-level action on SDG 6 and all the other sustainable development goals.**
- **As we all know, and as pointed out this morning by the Secretary-General, the world is far from achieving the SDGs including SDG 6.**
- **Even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century some 2 billion people around the world lack access to safe drinking water and almost half of the global population lacks access to adequate, safe and equitable sanitation and hygiene.**

- **To put it simply: we are not on track.**
  - **On the contrary – for the second year in a row, progress on the SDGs is stagnating.**
  - **With only seven years to reach the 2030 Targets, renewed and urgent action is more important than ever.**
  
- **At this important juncture, one significant step would be to establish a Special Envoy for Water to strengthen global coordination, to give water a voice, and to give those 2 billion a voice who have no access to clean water.**
  
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**
  
- **It is clear that we all depend on access to safe water to fulfil essential needs. Without water, there is no food security, there is no safe sanitation or health.**
  
- **Water is an enabler for all other SDGs and without it there is no survival.**

- **Austria, in the heart of the Alps, is fortunate to be blessed with rich natural water resources. Yet we are facing the consequences of climate change.**
  - **We owe it to current and future generations to look after this natural treasure and manage water resources responsibly.**
- **For us, this responsibility means investing into a set of four criteria:**
  - **First, invest in awareness raising of the population, especially amongst the youth to learn about the responsible use of water and treatment of its sources;**
  - **Second, invest in innovations to deploy state of the art technologies in fresh water and wastewater infrastructure;**
  - **Third, invest in early warning systems and monitoring mechanisms to detect and prevent water-wastage, pollutions and natural disasters such as floods;**

- **Fourth, explore and invest in opportunities where water can be an enabler of reaching other SDGs, such as the transition to renewable energy systems.**
- **What underlies all these four criteria is cooperation at all levels and increased levels of finance.**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. President,**
- **Water has the power to divide. But it has also the power to unify!**
- **In the case of Austria, water has put us closer together with our neighbours through cross-country cooperation in international river programmes, including the Danube Water Programme.**
- **Given our success story, Austria is fully committed to further supporting the Danube Water Program in the upcoming years. We also made this commitment in the Water Action Agenda.**

- **Austria stands ready to join hands and deliver as one on water.**
- **Through the Austrian Development Cooperation, we are doing exactly that – supporting developing countries in setting up sustainable water supply and sanitation facilities.**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. President,**
- **I very much appreciate the momentum created by this Water Conference.**
- **It is my sincere hope that through our discussions and deliberations over the next days we can create new ideas and identify synergies to truly deliver on the 2030 Agenda.**
- **On this World Water Day, I wish us all the strength and energy to focus on what is required.**
- **Let's do this together. Let us embark on the commitment to take bold action.**

**I thank you Mr. President!--**