PLENARREDE:

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\textsuperscript{st} 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.
  o On the contrary – for the second year in a row, progress on the SDGs is stagnating.
  o 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 waste-water 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!--