



**Statement by His Excellency, Gilberto Silva Minister of Agriculture and Environment of the Republic of Cabo Verde at the occasion of United Nations 2023 Water Conference  
New York, March 23 2023**

**General Debate**

First, I would like to congratulate the United Nations, the Governments of Tajikistan, and the Netherlands for organizing this important Water Conference.

The right of peoples to access drinking water in quantity and quality equal to their needs is still a great challenge for Humanity. Cabo Verde is one of the countries that are facing major challenges in what the access to drinking water is concerned.

We are a small island state located in the Sahel region, where the arid climate average rainfall is less than 300mm. Droughts are becoming more frequent and are an effect of climate change. Moreover, the IPCC estimates that, in our case, rainfall could decrease by 10% during this century, which makes us more exposed to the impacts of climate changes.

Given these natural conditions, the availability and access to drinking water in quality and quantity for people and for economic activities has always been one of the country's highest priorities. The paradox is that we are a large ocean state and 99% of our territory is salt water. This means that we have an inexhaustible source of water, but we have to desalinate it first and make it drinkable and accessible to the population.

We started using this practice around 50 years ago and today, more than 70% of the water distributed to the population is desalinated. The technological solution exists and is therefore available. However, the starting point for securing the water supply system is different, much more complex and much more expensive. Due to the arid climate and



insularity, my country Cabo Verde must make greater investment effort than the vast majority of countries.

Despite this reality, we are very committed to complying with SDG 6. Our country has made important achievements in the water and sanitation sector in recent years:

- We established a legal and institutional framework and strengthened the governance of the sector in accordance with best practices to ensure the sustainability of water and sanitation services.
- We carried out important investments in water mobilization, storage and distribution infrastructure and equipment. In recent years, water consumption per day per person has increased from 38 liters to 64 liters on average and access to the public network has increased from 73% to 86%. By 2026, the target set by the Government is 90 liters per person per day and access to public supply network should be around 100%.
- We are working towards the implementation of the circular economy approach to water, through the safe reuse of treated wastewater in agriculture. We will also start soon building water desalination plants for irrigation.

We are convinced that in order to achieve SDG 6, we must adopt a holistic approach in planning and implementation of measures and seek synergies with other SDGs. We must strengthen the water, energy, food security and environment nexus and speed-up the implementation of policies related to health security and poverty reduction.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We need to bolster funding to accelerate investments in the water sector. Island developing states like Cape Verde need strong partnerships to implement innovative mechanisms of finance. I refer to green and blue bonds, as well as debt swap, just to mention a few.

Before finishing, allow me to share with you that Cabo Verde and FAO, in partnership with Switzerland, successfully held the second Forum on Water Scarcity in Agriculture, last February in Praia. In addition to sharing knowledge and practices, the main outcome



of the conference is the Praia Call for Action. It summarizes the main measures to deal with this issue that is challenging an increasing number of countries.

I take this opportunity to invite leaders, countries, organizations and experts to join this important initiative.

Thank you for your attention