



Statement by the Republic of Cyprus at the UN Conference on Water for Sustainable Development, New York, 22 to 24 March 2023

Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to thank the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Republic of Tajikistan for hosting this long-overdue conference.

We all agree that a water crisis is approaching, or is already there in different parts of the world, and it will affect economic development, food security, health, ecosystems, but mostly it will disproportionately stress the poorest and the most vulnerable. We are at a critical juncture since the world is increasingly affected by climate change and a growing population.

These key challenges need to be addressed at a global level; a more inclusive and comprehensive water governance is needed, with a strong focus on human rights. We need to scale-up our level of consciousness on the interdependencies and the complexity of water challenges across sectors and find ways to integrate the right to a healthy environment, as well as the right to water and sanitation. In that regard, Cyprus fully supports [the central role that the UN](#) can play in addressing water related challenges around the world. We need a system-wide approach of the UN and for that we need to see soon the appointment of a UN Special Envoy for Water.

The importance of water safety and conservation is evident to Cyprus, since water scarcity has always been a major challenge. Cyprus is among the European Union Member States with the least available water per capita. The region of [the Eastern Mediterranean](#) and [the Middle East](#) has been classified as a Global Climate Change Hot Spot and Cyprus is already witnessing the impacts of climate change, including a significant decrease in precipitation and an increase in average temperature. Projections estimate an exacerbation of the current situation with adverse effects on many sectors, including forest ecosystems, water resources and biodiversity. Urgent and sustained action is needed to preserve the health, prosperity, and well-being of people in our region and all over the world.

Cyprus' water policy has been driven by the European Union legislation, which provides a framework for sustainable water management and for achieving a good status of inland surface waters, coastal waters and groundwater.

In order to address the problem, Cyprus promotes the use of non-conventional water resources, such as desalination and water reuse. Specifically, with the use of desalination units, large urban, suburban and tourist centers do not depend on rainfall for their water needs. Moreover, water reuse provides significant protection against drought and reduces the dependency of the water supply on rainfall. It also contributes to the country's strategic goal regarding climate change adaptation and risk prevention.

Furthermore, water pricing incentives have been in place for many years now, contributing to the optimum use of water.

I would also like to mention that through the European Neighborhood Policy and the European Union Enlargement Policy, Cyprus is supporting third countries in water management and sanitation through bilateral assistance programmes or regional initiatives.

Given our long-standing and continuous commitment to sustainable development, we are ready to strengthen our cooperation and partnership at all levels in order to achieve water related goals such as those included in the 2030 Agenda

Both, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, highlight the cross-sectoral role of water and the strong interlinkages between water and many policies, including inter alia, climate change, security, energy, health, and food. Furthermore, the implementation of the objectives of the International Decade for Action 2018 – 2028, as declared by the UN General Assembly, provide a greater focus on sustainable development and integrated water resources management, in order to achieve the internationally agreed water-related goals and targets.

The need to secure the necessary financial resources for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals is urgent. Priority should be given to financing the construction, operation, and maintenance of robust infrastructure for the provision of water and sanitation services, in a climate -resilient manner.

Financing, nevertheless, is more effective when it is based on data, facts, and information. There is therefore a need to strengthen forecasting and early warning systems, as well as to invest in disaster risk prevention and reduction.

Innovation in technology is also critical. To ensure a water-balance in drought affected regions, it is necessary to adopt more effective and climate-resilient water and sanitation management solutions, by incorporating the optimum use of non-conventional water resources, such as desalination and the reuse of treated urban waste water.

Cyprus is optimistic that by acting collectively and by fostering cooperative approaches to address common challenges, we can address the challenges of the effects of climate crisis. Our vision is for a water secure world with global access to water and sanitation and a socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable future.

Thank you.