

National Statement of Finland

UN Water Conference

Plenary

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Delivered by

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State Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland

Dear Colleagues,

The Universal Declaration on Human Rights states that everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person. This fundamental right cannot be realized without realizing the human rights to water and sanitation. These are the prerequisite for a dignified life, for our health, wellbeing and prosperity. Yet, these essential rights are not being realized in large parts of the world.

As countries we must all continue to strengthen and implement national policies and programmes that are supported by targeted and effective financing. We also need mechanisms for improved accountability, transparency, regulation and performance of duty-bearers, with legal protection of water supplies for personal and domestic use, where necessary.

The rights to water and sanitation are not realized equally. That is why we need to take a gender transformative approach to accelerating water action, with adequate participation of girls' and women's groups, human rights defenders and indigenous peoples. Water and sanitation services have to be designed and implemented in a way that meets the needs of vulnerable groups such as indigenous peoples, minorities, rural poor, and persons with disabilities.

Realizing the rights to water and sanitation can only be done if all countries work together. We must accelerate the worldwide transboundary water cooperation, including across sectors, and especially in parts of the world where climate change is escalating water scarcity. In addition, we need to work together towards a clean, healthy, and sustainable aquatic environment.

Finland considers that the UNECE Protocol on Water and Health is a powerful legally binding instrument to progressively realize the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation.

We also need to ensure that development partners step up to the plate. In our own cooperation with our partners we commit to reaching 1,350,000 beneficiaries with basic water supply in 2023-25, as well as to working towards the sanitation and ODF targets.

Colleagues,

The global water agenda needs a transformative change. This UN Water Conference is an historic opportunity to change direction. We know where inaction leads; already many cities and communities are struggling with water crisis or even facing Day Zero. We do not even want to imagine the implications of a whole country or basin facing such insecurity.

Finland firmly believes that recognizing and defining the concept of Water Security is the key to building a Water Secure future for all. Here we have seen progress towards defining the theme, and we invite the whole international community to actively engage in further discussion.

In order to guarantee continued political leadership and commitment we need annual intergovernmental water meetings at the sidelines of the High-Level Political Forum. We also think we should to come together for the next UN Water Conference in 2028 to assess the impacts of the UN Water Decade and then use wisely the last years of the SDG era.

Meanwhile we need to follow through the realization of Water Action Agenda and make sure that water features prominently in the normative work of the UN.

At the global level, the water governance architecture remains inadequate, but is gradually improving. The UN Special Envoy for Water is an important step for drawing political attention to water affairs and cooperation.

Solving the global water crisis is exactly the type of purpose the UN was created for. We, the member states, need to work together here at the UN to take decisive action on water. We also need to support and enable the UN system to provide both political leadership and technical support for water action. It is of great important that we galvanize the UN system, member states, key financial institutions and all other relevant stakeholders. Given the transformational spirit of the conference it is clear that an immediate follow-up is needed. Finland aims to build on the momentum of this conference to catalyse on the outcomes as of next week and we will work with all others to deliver concrete results by the SDG Summit.

We are all in this together.

Thank You.