



Hellenic Republic

**2023 UN Water Conference
National Statement by Greece
Plenary**

**Mr Petros Varelidis, Secretary General for Natural Environment and Water
Hellenic Ministry of Environment and Water, Greece**

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Colleagues, Distinguished representatives, Ladies and gentlemen,

Water security determines the sustainability of our economic future. Water, instead of an enabler, might become an impediment for growth, energy and food security due to increasing scarcity driven by unsustainable consumption, pollution and climate change.

In Greece, water resources are of very good quality. More than 60% of surface water bodies have good ecological status, while 90% of surface and 85% of groundwaters are of good chemical and quantitative status. Compliance with drinking water standards is very high. 90% of wastewaters are already treated in urban wastewater plants while full coverage for all settlements with a population of at least 2.000 people is expected till 2030.

Still, tourism in the arid Aegean islands, diffuse pollution and water abstraction for irrigation remain key pressures.

The legislation on costing and pricing has been a key point of progress. We aim to further improve the accountability and co-ordination of water providers and the assessment of utilities' performance to ensure that water prices cover the full cost, including environmental and resource cost. To that end, we have set up an Independent Regulatory Authority to ensure the proper implementation of the cost and pricing policy for all water providers.

However, sustainable use of irrigation water and reduction of illegal water abstractions still remain a challenge.

Our Water River Management Plans have a strong climate dimension and are the main tool to promote sustainable water use by means of a variety of measures such as optimization of irrigation and the proper evaluation of the resource and environmental costs.

The National Adaptation Strategy and the 13 Regional adaptation strategies also integrate water adaptation action into sectoral policies such as agricultural production, tourism, and ecosystems' conservation, taking into account the local specificities.

To deal with water scarcity today through circular solutions, we also set standards for the irrigation of crops with reclaimed water from treated urban wastewater to reduce abstractions.

Greece also supports water research and innovation: we participate as a funding member at the Horizon Europe "Water 4 All" partnership with a total commitment of 1 mil EUR.

Another priority is the promotion of the holistic Source-to-Sea management approach that can have benefits for the entire water cycle. This is a concept we aim to promote also in the context of the international 9th "Our Ocean Conference" to be organised in Greece in 2024.

Finally, allow me to stress the importance of cooperation across boundaries. With $\frac{1}{4}$ of surface runoff coming from upstream riparians, Greece gives emphasis to cross-border cooperation.

A successful example is our cooperation with Albania, North Macedonia and the EU for the implementation of the Agreement on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park Area, aiming to boost sustainable local development based on the wise management of the unique Prespa ecosystem, through a multi-stakeholder approach. The Prespa example can provide a model for other areas in the world.

By working together, more ambitious goals can be set and achieved. Therefore, we advocate for the enhanced implementation of the two global UN Water Conventions.

Thank you for your attention.