



**STATEMENT BY**

**THE MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY SECURITY OF**  
**ITALY**

**GILBERTO PICHETTO FRATIN**

**AT THE UN 2023 WATER CONFERENCE**

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL**

**(NEW YORK, 22 MARCH 2023)**

Mr Presidents (Netherlands and Tajikistan),

Excellencies,

Colleagues,

Distinguished Delegates,

When, almost a half a century ago, our Countries met at Mar del Plata, the echoes of the drought that affected Africa were still loud and clear, putting the world square in front of the enormity of a true scourge of our time.

Much has changed in terms of knowledge, instruments and strategies. Yet it is clear that we have not done enough to combat what is still today one of the most serious planetary emergencies.

No one can feel removed from this tragedy, not only for a sense of solidarity towards other peoples, but also for the direct impact it has on our Countries.

Italy is witnessing increasingly recurrent periods of drought, as it is the broader Mediterranean area, which, according to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is one of the areas most at risk. The IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report clearly points to the need to keep the temperature rise below 1.5°C to avoid irreversible damage.

In this context that spares no one, let me say that, beyond any rhetoric, this Conference represents a historic moment to renew the commitment of the international community to protect water as a pillar of sustainability for the human society. Sustainability also entails working together to prevent entire populations from being forced to move in search of water and acceptable living conditions.

Italy resolutely upholds the Water Action Agenda, placing the theme of water at the core of its cross-cutting climate change strategies, following the WEF E Nexus (Water Energy Food Ecosystem) approach and the principles of the 2030 Agenda.

We are called to act and give an effective response to all of the different scenarios, starting off with lessons learned. This action is undergirded by a few important elements: the Key Messages shared of the European Union for the Interactive Dialogues; the Integrated Management of Water Resources and the WASH approach to Water and Health, and the strengthening the wider UN coordination system. The establishment of a UN Envoy for Water.

Faced with the challenge of the very survival of our planet, we have the duty to put into action ambitious policies and timely interventions.

We must start from our own home.

Italy is determined in its response to the water crisis in our Country. For this reason, under our Recovery and Resilience Plan

we have allocated funds for water resources equal to 4.38 billion euros - over the course of five years – and we set up a coordination board to respond to the crisis, including using new legal and operational instruments.

There are special projects, of which I will only mention a few. Among the priorities for intervention in Italy, we have, for example, bolstered - with an overall investment of 600 million euros until 2026 – our monitoring capacities of waters and risk prevention, including through innovative

systems, such as the advanced systems for monitoring and forecasting environmental and anthropogenic risks – SIM.

Under the Integrated Water Resource Management – IWRM and Nature-based Solutions (NBS), is the work we are carrying out on the largest Italian river. With the project “Renaturation of the Po River” we invested 357 million euros focusing on the quality of water and biodiversity.

Our international efforts are no less earnest than our national ones.

We are working, firstly, within the framework of the commitments of the European Union. I am referring in particular to the themes of Water for Health, to restoring biodiversity and to the approach of the “Zero Pollution” Strategy.

In Climate Finance, Italy has equipped itself with a new instrument – the Italian Climate Fund – which will soon be up and running – and which will rely on 840 million euros a year until 2026.

We are also engaged in specific actions in the most vulnerable regions through projects in keeping with the 2030 Agenda, particularly Goal 13 (Climate Change), Goal 7 (clean and accessible energy), and Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation facilities).

In 2022, our Ministry of the Environment allocated 69 million euros for international cooperation projects through multilateral channels, and 5 million through bilateral agreements. We have currently approved more than 50 bilateral cooperation projects in prioritizing the Sahel and Sub Saharan Africa, the Mediterranean and the Small Island Developing States.

In the Sahel, for example, with the Convention on Desertification, we are implementing projects to enable the recovery of degraded lands land creating economic opportunities for local communities.

Just a few weeks ago, Italy and Ethiopia signed an agreement for more than 30 million euros for a project aiming to improve water and land management and to create jobs.

In recent years, the share allocated to water against the total budget for interventions of the Italian Development Cooperation has grown consistently.

Water is a sustainable development goal – SDG 6 – on its own and is directly linked to 10 of the 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda. I trust that this reflection on the Water Action Agenda in these days proves to be a critical step in preparation for our work in September on the occasion of the SDG Summit.

I would like to conclude by recalling something that goes added to our commitment to concrete initiatives.

I am referring to the responsibility that we each have in making water a mainstay at the top of our agendas. With Italy's G20 Presidency and in the Conclusions on climate and the environment adopted in Naples, we added the commitment to adopting integrated approaches in the sustainable management and use of water resources.

In this building, today, we presented the 2030 World Water Development Report to disseminate information and raise awareness. It is an annual report realized by UNESCO for the Assessment of World Water resources hosted in Perugia, and which we support since 2006. The Report offers important

guidelines and I encourage everyone to look through it and find the wealth of information and the vision it contains useful.

“Without water – Nelson Mandela said, “there is no future...” Today, we must take up the challenge we are faced with from this historic crisis, knowing that this battle must be fought and won precisely in the name of future generations.

Thank you.