

Remarks

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At the General Debate of the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of
the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable
Development", 2018 - 2028 (UN Water Conference 2023)

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Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

At the outset, I would like to extend my appreciation to the Netherlands and Tajikistan, as co-hosts of the Conference, for their joint efforts in making this auspicious Conference a watershed moment for the world. My special thanks also go to the Conference Secretariat for excellent arrangements made for this event.

As we are well aware that water and water resources are a vital essence for the survival of all living beings, it must be managed carefully to ensure its sustainability. Limited in supply and unequally distributed around the world, increasing water demand due to population growth and the needs for social and economic development have made water resource management even more challenging. Combined with climate change causing more frequent and severe natural disasters, it further poses direct impact on water and water resources' sustainability.

On this note, this UN Water Conference 2023 comes at the right moment - a time of multiple fragilities and vulnerabilities, to call for a strong message and identified actions from the international community to contribute to and address the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It especially presents a great platform that gathers us here to recognize the importance of water resources, to share lessons on how we address the challenges faced in managing this asset, as well as to explore solutions that need scaling up to achieve one of the 17 SDGs (SDG6) for sustainable use and water management.

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

The Lao PDR, despite being a landlocked, is one of the countries that is abundant in water and water resources. With more than 60 river basins across the country, these contribute more than 40% of the total water volume that flows into the Mekong River and become a driving factor for the country's socio-economic development. This indicates in 75% of employment generating from subsistence agriculture, which is heavily dependent on rainfall and rivers across the country. However, as aforementioned, increasing demand for water, especially in the dry season puts pressure on our water resources. Climate change is also affecting our country with water quality impacted by rising temperatures and water infrastructure at risk from increased flash flooding.

Recognizing this paramount importance of water and water resources, the Lao Government has adopted a number of appropriate strategies and management plans in order to manage and utilize these water resources in a most beneficial and sustainable manner. At a national level, the Lao PDR has been implementing a series of water reforms, including developing a National Water Resources Strategy and Action Plan 2016 - 2020 and major amendments to the Water and Resources Law that were approved in 2017, with better focuses on better protection of water resources and sustainable use to support national economic development.

In relation to implementing the SDGs, remarkable progress has been made for water related SDG6. This significantly includes, as presented in our 2nd Voluntary National Review (VNR), the improvement of water supply coverage to over 80% of the population and the increased proportion of population using an improved drinking water source which stands at 71%. Despite progress, there remains some challenges, especially in water pollution which increase in both urban and rural areas where no wastewater treatment facilities are sufficiently in place.

Against this backdrop, the Lao PDR would seize this opportunity to call for cooperation and support in the areas of managing integrated, green and sustainable-led water and water resources through multidimensional and multisectoral approach. We also sees that it is important to promote research and development cooperation on science and technology in water and water resources development and management. Another area would be building capacity and resilience to respond to unforeseen challenges relating to water utilization and water resources, namely natural disasters (floods and droughts).

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The Lao PDR highly values this moment to call for a coordinated effort from all stakeholders - individuals, private sectors, governments, and international organizations to work together to conserve, protect and maintain this scarce resource for current and future generations. We firmly believe that all the bold actions in “Water Action Agenda” as water-related voluntary commitment made by the international community will further reinforce and accelerate progress in the second half of the Water Action Decade 2018 - 2028 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to express my sincere appreciation once again to the Netherlands and Tajikistan for organizing this valuable Conference as well as to the United Nations system and Development Partners for continued support and assistance accorded to the Lao PDR in implementing our water-related frameworks over the past years. I wish our deliberation registers a meaningful contribution for the successful outcome of this Conference.

Thank you!