

2023 United Nations Water Conference

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Statement by Mrs. Vandana Segobin- Maulloo, Chargé d'affaires, a.i., Permanent Mission of the Republic of Mauritius to the United Nations

Mr. President,

At the very outset, I would like to thank the UN Secretary General for convening this historic United Nations Water Conference and the Republic of Tajikistan and the Kingdom of the Netherlands for co-hosting the conference.

This conference is not only a unique opportunity for the world to come together to accelerate and scale up the collective action to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6 and all other water-related goals and target but also a once-in-a-generation chance to get the world on track for a water-secure world.

At the 1977 Water Conference at Mar del Plata, we recognised that, “all peoples, whatever their stage of development or social and economic conditions, have the right to have access to drinking water in quantities and of a quality equal to their basic needs.” While progress has been made towards the achievement of SDG 6, the trends and current status of access to water and sanitation remain a cause for concern. Despite numerous pledges, undertakings and commitments, nearly 2 billion people still lack adequate access to water supply and around 3.6 billion people lack the basic sanitation and hygiene.

There is an urgent need to devise solutions that accelerate progress and ensure that no one is left behind.

Mr. President,

Water is indeed the critical natural resource which underpins all social and economic activity. Without water food production stops, cities cease to function, economic activity halts, forests turn to desert.

As a Small Island Developing State, Mauritius faces a lot of challenges linked to climate change and global warming. These have serious impacts on the water systems with the rapid shifts between wet and dry, flood and drought combined with severe weather events. These have greater impacts on the availability of freshwater resources. Unless we adapt to rapid environmental change and slow down greenhouse gas emissions, the risks to biodiversity, water security, food production, infrastructure stability, and health will only get higher towards the end of the century.

Mauritius has taken concrete measures to implement SDG6. These include a multi-pronged strategy ranging from:

- Various infrastructural measures to ensure that the access to clean water and sanitation prevails in the future;
- Water Quality Surveillance Programme being carried out to ensure that our water resources are fit to provide safe water;
- Reinforcement of legislation in order to preserve existing water quality in Mauritius; and
- Implementation of afforestation programme for forest expansion in order to increase the possibility of rainfall.

Mauritius is also building its resilience against water-related natural disasters by adopting the Sendai framework which recognises that States have a primary role to

reduce disaster risks. The aim is to substantially reduce disaster risks and loss of lives.

Mr. President,

Mauritius is deeply committed to this goal and it was an honour for Mauritius to chair the High Level Panel on Water set up by former Secretary General Ban ki Moon in 2016.

Finance, partnerships, knowledge sharing, early warning systems, and science-based policy advice are key mechanisms for building and strengthening the resilience of societies for the global response to climate change.

During the remaining 5 years of the “International Decade for Action – Water for Sustainable Development”, Mauritius will continue to keep a greater focus on the sustainable development and integrated management of water resources for the achievement of social, economic and environmental objectives and on the implementation and promotion of related programmes and projects. We will continue to work on the furtherance of cooperation and partnership at all levels in order to help achieve internationally agreed water-related goals and targets.

Thank you.