



**Statement by
His Excellency Mr. Max Hufanen Rai, OBE
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of Papua New Guinea to the United Nations**

to 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]**

24 March 2023, New York

"Check against delivery"

Co-Presidents, Excellencies and distinguished delegates;

On behalf of my delegation, let me begin by recognising with appreciation the able leadership and commendable global rallying efforts of the distinguished Co-Presidents of this Conference, The Netherlands and Tajikistan, for bringing the international community together, after over four decades, to address one of humanity's most fundamental needs, yet greatest and increasing challenge - the right to water for life, in all its forms.

As Secretary-General Guterres so rightly recognised in his opening remarks, which we fully endorse, "Water is the lifeblood of humanity". Without water, there is no life.

Mr. President,

The noteworthy turnout and the array of rich activities, exchanges and partnerships forged, is indeed a clear testimony, not only to the success of this Conference but also underscores that this has been long overdue. Let us learn from this and do better, going forward.

For us, the importance and timeliness to place the water action agenda front and centre, not just for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at a critical juncture, but at the ground or personal level, cannot be overstated.

Papua New Guinea is one of the countries in the world that faces extremely high water related vulnerabilities, compounded by capacity constraints, high population growth, infrastructure challenges, and data gaps that makes evidence-based policy making and planning for service delivery challenging at all levels. Our rural villages and communities are often disproportionately affected by lack of safe, accessible and clean, drinking water, proper hygiene and sanitation facilities.

More work is needed for us to deliver on SDG 6 and other related Goals and Targets despite considerable strides made through our National WASH Policy 2015 – 2030.

Mr. President,

Around 60 percent of our population do not have access to safe and clean drinking water and improved sanitation services. In the rural areas, only 39 percent of the total population have access to some form of safe and clean drinking water and 15 percent have access to improved sanitation facilities compared to 86 percent of the urban population having access to safe and clean drinking water and 65 percent with access to improved sanitation facilities.

My Government's objective in this sector is to ensure that 70 percent of the population have access to clean, safe, and sustainable drinking water in rural areas; with 95 percent of the population having access to clean and safe drinking water with access to adequate sanitation facilities in urban areas. We recognize that ensuring healthy hygiene practices is a critical catalyst to support overall national development.

Mr. President,

To deliver on the promise of SDG 6 for my country, my Government is addressing this through the WASH Policy 2015 to 2030 and the Fourth Medium Term Development Plan 2023 to 2027.

Under the WASH Policy, we are targeting significant investment in the components of water, sanitation and hygiene programs, with 66 percent investment targeted for rural water supply; 94 percent urban water; 68 percent rural sanitation; and 84 percent on urban sanitation.

Under our five-year Medium Term Development Plan, over US\$260.7 million is projected investment funding for our national WASH agenda, from this year with to 2027, with support from our development partners, including the European Union, Australia, UNICEF and UNOPS.

The investment priority for the sector will focus on four key programs. First, the National Water and Sewerage Infrastructure Development Program at provincial level; second, the District Towns Water Supply and Sanitation Program; third, the Rural WASH Intervention Program; and fourthly, the establishment of the National WASH Authority. This will also involve support for capacity building and development of policy and legislative frameworks, promote desalination, development of peri-urban WASH roll-out and coordination of implementing partners in WASH.

Mr. President,

Development partnership for the water agenda is highly important for us, given our capacity constraints. It is in this spirit that we pay special tribute to our development partners for their valued contributions to improve our people's wellbeing and country's development, with respect to the challenges posed in the water sector.

A noteworthy example is the four-year WASH project, in my country, known as the “Klinpela Komuniti Projek”, facilitated by UNICEF through funding support from the European Union. This has positively impacted the productivity, health and wellbeing of around 200,000 people, including 40,000 children in 200 schools, 36 health centres and 800 communities in 4 Districts, and for which Papua New Guinea is so grateful to the EU, UNICEF and UNOPS.

We encourage such positive partnerships that help support our national foundational building blocks to achieving SDG 6 and other related Goals and Targets.

Mr. President,

Before concluding, as an integral part of the Blue Pacific Continent, we underscore our Pacific Leaders declaration that climate change remains the single gravest threat to our people’s lives and livelihoods, and security. This is a serious concern that is impacting adversely on our ecosystem, including water resources, our culture, economy and development aspirations, which is fundamentally intertwined with the use of water resources. For us, taking the right water action is welcome climate action.

Finally, we align our remarks with those delivered by the distinguished delegations of Cuba on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; Samoa for the Alliance of Small Island States; Fiji on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF); and Tuvalu for the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS).

Thank you, Mr President.