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Statement for Interactive Dialogue 4 - Water for Cooperation: Transboundary and International Water Cooperation, Cross Sectoral Cooperation, including Scientific Cooperation, and Water Across the 2030 Agenda

Water is a basic human right which some, but not all, enjoy. In 2010, the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted Resolution 64/292, declaring water as a basic human right. Yet, today, one in three people worldwide still do not have access to safe drinking water. The burden of the lack of access disproportionately affects women and girls. In fact, in 80% of households that lack water, women and girls are responsible for collecting water. It is estimated that collectively, women spend a total of 200 million hours per day collecting water. Every day, they stand in long lines for water or walk long distances to collect water. An additional 266 million hours per day are spent searching for a place to defecate. That is time lost from schoolwork, time lost from providing for their families.

We face a growing global water crisis. Cooperation is often the key to resolving specific crises, but crisis itself fuels conflict that dims the prospects for cooperation where it is needed most. Water diplomacy aims to defuse such conflicts, however, these efforts are often blunted by two factors: weak processes for engaging non-traditional stakeholders in decision-making, and different understandings of the issues and different perceptions held by myriad of stakeholders at the table, i.e., differences in perception and understanding of the water cycle itself to the global connectivity of water. Thus, a basic, scientific understanding of where water is and how it moves that is shared by the parties to a conflict, as well as inclusive processes, are important to get this right. Inclusive process and a shared understanding among the parties to water conflicts would help those seeking to defuse water conflicts and facilitate integrated (local to global) action to address the increasing need for water.

We recommend a deeper understanding of water, engagement of more women in decision making and people to people diplomacy as critical for water security.