

2023 United Nations Water Conference
General Debate
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General Assembly Hall, UNHQ New York

Statement by H.E. Ms. HAN Wha-jin
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(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)

Honorable Presidents,
Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

It has been forty six years since the first UN Conference on Water was held in 1977, and here we are at this critical juncture to assess our progress on SDG 6 and call for urgent global action for water.

Water is the most essential resource directly linked to our lives and economic activities.

Yet, the world is experiencing devastating water crisis worsening every year due to floods, heatwaves, and droughts caused by extreme weather.

Access to clean and safe water, especially amid this climate crisis, is the most fundamental human right that should be protected to ensure a

sustainable future of humanity.

However, the world is not on track to achieve SDG 6 and climate change-induced water disasters are expected to become more frequent and intense.

We should speed up our action before climate change outpaces us, as this year's theme of World Water Day "Accelerating Change" indicates. Business-as-usual cannot be our option and we need better solutions that can bring about a transformational change.

Korea also experienced water pollution and water scarcity during the course of rapid industrial growth. Korea has continued to take science-based policies to tackle water pollution and build water infrastructure, resulting in 99 percent of tap water supply rate.

Furthermore, Korea has new vision for water that will guide us to accelerate our action for SDG 6, and today I would like to share that vision with you.

First, Korea will ensure universal access to clean water.

Since all people should be able to use safe water anytime wherever they are, we will

use the best possible means to provide clean water for all communities including remote islands and rural areas

Second, we will build a climate-resilient water management system.

To be prepared for severe droughts, we will develop a closely connected water supply network nationwide and secure alternative water sources through sewage reuse and desalination of sea water.

We will also build infrastructure such as deep underground tunnels or drainage systems for urban flood resilience.

Third, we will harness our leading information technologies for smart water management.

AI-based forecasting along with dam management using big data and digital twin will enable us to prevent unexpected flood damages. We are also building up a real-time monitoring system from source to tap for safe drinking water.

Excellencies,

Korea is keen to share such experiences with the rest of the world and closely work with international organizations to support developing countries' capacity building to tackle water-related challenges.

In line with such effort, we are co-hosting a side event on “Science-based Global Water Assessment,” in partnership with UNESCO during the conference.

We are also scaling up Green ODA to provide necessary resources for partner countries’ effort to tackle water challenges and promote green transition.

In fact, later today, Korea is hosting the global launch of the Green Transition Initiative, a multilateral cooperation platform to provide targeted support for countries’ green recovery.

Distinguished delegates,

In this post-pandemic era, we must renew our commitment to multilateralism and show the power of solidarity to overcome climate and water crises.

Korea stands ready to be an active part of such concerted effort to achieve SDG 6 and bring a sustainable future for all.

Thank you very much.

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