

National Statement by St. Kitts and Nevis

By

Honourable Konris Maynard, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Energy and Utilities, Domestic Transport, Information, Communication and Technology and Posts

Mr. President, your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

“Water is Life and every drop counts”. This is the motto of the Water Services Department of my proud Federation of St. Kitts & Nevis, the smallest independent country in the Western Hemisphere with a population of just 50,000. Despite our size, St. Kitts and Nevis is a country known to outperform expectations, even as we seek to address the challenges of climate change, COVID-19, global conflict and economic uncertainty, which, we must emphasize, are more acute in the case of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). In St. Kitts & Nevis, we have a local saying: “We small but we TALLAWA.” This means we might be small, but we have great strength to overcome. It is therefore my distinct honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Government of St. Kitts and Nevis who aligns itself with the statement made by Cuba on behalf of the Group of 77 and China as well as the statement to be made by Samoa on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States. We welcome this Water

Conference and we thank the co-hosts of the Conference, Tajikistan and the Kingdom of the Netherlands for their indispensable support to this process.

St. Kitts and Nevis is among the most water-scarce countries in the world, with no rivers or lakes, and less than 1,000 cubic metres of freshwater resources per capita. At present, all our freshwater water on the island of St. Kitts is supplied by rainfall with 30% from surface water and 70% from ground water. Over the past ten years alone, climate change has resulted in an almost 20% decrease of our annual rainfall. Consequently, with decreased rainfall, combined with continued expansion in tourism, agriculture, and urbanization, in addition to a water infrastructure lacking modernization, our water demand now exceeds our ability to supply. As a result, we are unable to provide 24 hr water service to all residents forcing us to ration water in our heavier populated centers. This situation is compounded by the expectation that the demand for water is expected to double over the next 10 years.

Our Federation also faces challenges with respect to water distribution due to aging infrastructure, and high Non-revenue water. Even more alarming is that our Aquifers, that supply 70% of our water, are on the brink of uselessness, as we grapple with increasing saltwater intrusion

due to sea-level rise coupled with the inability for adequate recharge owing to decreased annual rainfall.

Therefore, we must act NOW to preserve our future and the survivability of our generations yet to come. It is easy to take water for granted until most of us, not just some, turn the tap, and nothing comes out. By then it will be too late. As such, we cannot afford to allow another forty-six years to pass before decisive action is taken. It is our hope that a commitment to the Water Action Agenda, as an important outcome of this conference, will lead to accelerated implementation of the Water Action Decade 2018-2028, the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goal 6.

St. Kitts and Nevis has never been daunted by immense challenges. In fact, we are prepared to leverage our small size as an advantage. St. Kitts and Nevis is 'small enough' to do what we must to be the best example of sustainability that the world has to offer, which is consistent with our vision to create a model 'Sustainable Small Island State'. Therefore, St. Kitts and Nevis commits to aggressively implementing pro-active and adaptive measures that will build capacity and resilience, guided by the principles of Integrated Water Resource Management. Important for us is the water-energy-food nexus as we strive to return to twenty-four-hour access to water by 2024, transition to 100% renewable energy sources by

2030 using solar, wind and geothermal energy, and reduction of our food import bill by 25% by 2025 in the first instance. If we solve energy, then with energy, we solve water, and with water, we solve food.

Over the next 5 to 10 years, we will invest over EC\$200 million in sustainable and resilient water infrastructure including drilling additional wells, investing in desalinated water, upgrading pipelines, improving storage reservoirs, and introducing modern technology to optimize the use of our resources. We will also invest in our people to increase institutional and technical capacity.

Work has already begun to develop green building codes which we hope will spark a paradigm shift in the way our citizens and residents utilize water. Just this month, we announced the Affordable Smart Homes Initiative which will be utilizing sustainable construction practices including the installation of solar panels, water cisterns and water conserving fixtures. Sixty-nine schools, community centers and health centers have already been retrofitted with water storage tanks. We continue to work closely with the Green Climate Fund and Global Environment Facility to introduce climate-smart water supply and distribution mechanisms for potable water and for hundreds of farmers.

We recognize that our outlook is ambitious. However, we are confident that by leveraging multi-stakeholder partnerships, with the support of an

accessible and concessionary financing architecture that considers our unique vulnerabilities, we will succeed!

Mr. President, Excellencies, remember 'we small but we Tallawa' and so we will continue to seek out partnerships and investments that will allow St. Kitts & Nevis to fully realize SDG 6.