

## **Head of the Saudi Delegation Statement at the "United Nations Water Conference"**

**Held at United Nations Headquarters in New York 22-24 March 2023**

Mr. President', Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

First, I would like to thank the United Nations for organizing this important conference, the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Water Action Decade. I would also like to thank both the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Republic of Tajikistan for mobilizing international action and organizing several meetings in preparation for this conference and for making sure that the world moves towards achieving the goals of sustainable development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The water sector represents the cornerstone of comprehensive economic prosperity and a strong nexus of the strategies of other economic sectors. The problem of water scarcity in the world in general and in our region in particular has become a source of major concern currently and in the future.

This conference provides a good opportunity to exchange expertise and experiences along with knowledge, and it represents a decisive moment in mobilizing Member States, the United Nations Organization and stakeholders to take the necessary measures and provide successful solutions for sustainable development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As part of its efforts to reach a more sustainable economy, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia launched its Vision 2030, with its goals aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to pave the way for a better future by diversifying the economy, reducing the state's dependence on oil, and developing the public sector to be more dynamic, flexible and

sustainable, and among the most important of these sectors is the water sector, where the limited natural freshwater resources and the ever increasing demand posed a challenge to the sustainability of the country's economic development; Therefore, the Kingdom's government adopted the National Water Strategy 2030 in 2018, whose vision is “a sustainable water sector that develops and preserves water resources, preserves the environment, and provides safe supply, high-quality and efficient services that contribute to economic and social development.”

The National Water Strategy 2030 has been prepared based on the principles of integrated water resources management, which aims to restructure the water sector into a more sustainable and efficient sector, by launching many ambitious initiatives and programs, the most important of which are: restructuring and developing integrated water resources management capabilities, and developing and implementing The Water Law, integrated water planning, development of renewable and non-renewable groundwater resources and surface water, development of sustainable desalination capabilities, promotion of the contribution of the private sector and the third sector, and adherence to environmental regulations and requirements, as well as improvement of irrigation efficiency.

The objectives and indications of the National Water Strategy 2030 are largely consistent with the sixth goal of the SDG's performance indicators in ensuring the availability of water supply and sanitation services and its sustainable management, as the Kingdom's government seeks to provide safe and affordable drinking water for all, and seeks to recycle and manage water resources in an integrated manner and reduce environmental impact for the sector.

In the field of water supply security, the Kingdom leads the world in the production of unconventional water through desalination of seawater production and is also working to reduce

the environmental impact of this through what is known as Zero liquid discharge brine which has registered several patents.

Furthermore, the Kingdom is working to reduce carbon emissions from fossil energy consumption by 56% by 2024, which represents 26% of the Kingdom's entire commitment to the Paris Agreement. The remainder will be managed to reduce emissions to 100% by 2030, and in recognition of the water challenge facing the world, the Kingdom has opened its technical arm to the world by holding several scientific conferences concentrating on the exchange of ideas and experiences.

Aside from that, desalination of seawater has had a significant impact on raising the quality of drinking water as well as protecting non-renewable groundwater sources. The Kingdom is moving towards assessing the feasibility of using reduced seawater for food security, establishing sustainable agricultural cities that promote local economies and rural communities, and supporting women through the development opportunities offered by non-traditional water sources, such as the Sustainable Agricultural Rural Development Program.

In the Kingdom's endeavor to achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all, a huge budget of more than \$80 billion has been allocated for hundreds of projects to be implemented in the coming years in order to achieve the objectives of the National Water Strategy 2030.

Moreover, in order to improve the efficiency and sustainability of the water sector, work is constantly being done to assess the water sector and its governance, and to restructure the sector by establishing various institutions that represent the supply chain components of the sector and stimulate private sector investment, research and development, and build local capacities.

Furthermore, the Kingdom aspires - in its endeavor to provide sanitation services to all - to increase the percentage of the population covered by the sanitation services network to be more than 95% by 2030. The Kingdom also aims to use the triumvirate treated wastewater, reuse it for irrigation, industrial and environmental uses, and consider it an important source of water to reduce stress on non-renewable water resources, as the Kingdom plans to use the full amount of treated wastewater.

The Kingdom has also established the National Center for Water Efficiency and Rationalization, which aims to rationalize water consumption, by developing laws and regulations to achieve the goals set in the field of water efficiency and conservation and maintain water efficiency objectives along the supply chain, implementing awareness campaigns, working with public and university educational sectors, to change water consumption behaviors, raise water awareness, and achieve water resource sustainability, by providing rationalization solutions in a unified and integrated manner, in order to reduce the rate of consumption.

It is important to note that the Kingdom seeks to manage its limited water resources in an integrated manner by integrating water resources to meet the demand for water, taking into account the various users and uses of water, with the aim of enhancing positive social, economic and environmental impacts at all levels.

Moreover, as part of the Kingdom's efforts to strengthen international collaboration, promote coordination and cooperation and share experiences on water issues in the international community, and being a member of the G-20, the Kingdom sought to include the issue of resilient and sustainable water management for the first time within the G-20 action map during its presidency of the group in 2020, and introduced the Dialogue on Water, which is being held this year for the fourth time within India's presidency of the group, and to gather the best

practices in the Group countries in an online platform hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and is accessible to all, as the Kingdom seeks to ensure the continuity of the water topic within the G-20 in the coming years, through cooperation and coordination with the partners in the group in order to agree on that.

The Kingdom also aspires to strengthen international cooperation in the fields of water with other friendly countries, by supporting projects related to water, to help achieve the goals of sustainable development, as the Kingdom - represented by the Saudi Fund for Development - has provided billions of dollars in funding many water infrastructure projects in developing countries to, for example, build dams, Well drilling, water supply networks, sewage networks, rainwater drainage, and water desalination and treatment plants.

In conclusion: We in the Kingdom are confident that we are on the right path to achieve the indications of the Sixth Goal of the Sustainable Development Goals to raise the level of the water and sanitation sector, armed with the unlimited support of our leaders, and we reiterate our sincere call to all countries of the world to work on cooperation, exchange experiences, and face challenges to achieve the goals of sustainable development, among which is the sixth goal, to have a secure future for us and for future generations.

Allow me to repeat my thanks for organizing this conference, and we wish you all success.

Thank you.