

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to start by thanking the convenors of this conference, the Governments of Tajikistan and the Netherlands as well as the United Nations, for your efforts on bringing the world together to act on these pressing issues.

We are facing multiple challenges of an insecure world with accelerating climate change. Simultaneously, a large share of the world's population still lack access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities. These challenges need to be approached together to create resilient, prosperous, and secure societies.

Now we must let the graveness of the situation give us the strength to accelerate our work and enhance the momentum, brought forward by this conference. The world we experience in the future depends on our decisions now – we must be insightful.

On that note, I am excited about the agreement on sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction that was negotiated here in New York just a few weeks ago. It shows us that we can create the change we need. We can reach agreements leading to positive change.

Access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities is a human right. The fulfilment of this human right is a cornerstone for eradicating poverty. The objectives of Swedish international development cooperation are better living conditions for people living in poverty and a democratic development.

Women and girls around the globe face serious health risks due to inadequate access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities. It is vital that everyone have the same opportunities to access, use and manage water services and resources. Increased gender equality is key to more effective and sustainable water governance.

The recent sixth assessment report of IPCC concludes that climate change severely affects water. We all need to set policies ensuring that we collectively limit temperature increase by seriously cutting emissions in the next few years. Sweden aims to be climate neutral by 2045 at the latest, with negative emissions beyond that. My challenge to all of you is to reach net-zero before us.

Our way of reducing the emissions is by incentivising the innovative spirit of the Swedish business community. Policy makers need to go hand in hand with strategic business leaders, demanding customers, and investors sceptical of business exposing themselves to climate risks. The transition to net-zero brings growth and new jobs. All development should always be sustainable development.

Transboundary water cooperation is central to sustainable water management. To foster this, Sweden is submitting voluntary commitments to the Water Action Agenda. One of the commitments is to further support the work of the UNECE Water Convention.

Accession to the Water Convention is an important tool for sustainable use of transboundary water resources by facilitating cooperation and preventing conflicts. It is important to have a holistic approach and work in a continuum, from the source to the Sea. That generates greater benefits for the whole system.

Sweden also joins the call for appointing a Special Envoy of water to strengthen the coherence of water efforts in all sectors, as well as in the UN-system.

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and fulfilling the promises of the Paris agreement are crucial building blocks to navigate the multiple crises our world is facing. This direction must be the same, across all sectors and organisations of our societies.

International cooperation is core to ensuring security, sustainability, and welfare in the long term. We now have the momentum to work multilateral, particularly with the climate and environmental agenda. We must all enhance our joint ambitions!

I am humbled to stand here in front of you at the UN Headquarter today and I'd like to finish with a quote from the former UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld:

“Life only demands from you the strength that you possess. Only one feat is possible; not to run away.”

Thank you for your attention.