

**United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive
Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International
Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028**

(New York, 23 March 2023)

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Vahit Kirişci,
Minister of Agriculture and Forestry of the Republic of Türkiye**

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Representatives,**

We are very pleased to participate in this important Conference where we come together to discuss all aspects of water and to look for ways to ensure access to water and sanitation and sustainable management of water for all, which constitute our Sustainable Development Goal 6.

I would like to take this opportunity to convey the **thanks of our President H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan** to the Governments of Tajikistan and the Kingdom of Netherlands, the United Nations family and to all those who contributed to the organization of the Conference.

The earthquakes that occurred in our country on February 6, 2023 caused severe damage in a wide geographic area including 11 provinces, 110 thousand square kilometers and 13 million people, deeply impacting our entire country.

These earthquakes also caused loss of life and damages in Syria.

I would like to take this opportunity to once again ask Allah to have mercy on our people who lost their lives in this devastating disaster, and a speedy recovery to the wounded.

We firmly believe that we will promptly overcome these difficult days in unity and solidarity.

We are grateful to the international community and our friends for making us feel not alone in these difficult times.

This disaster has once again demonstrated the importance of global unity and solidarity in all disasters faced by humanity.

Dear Participants,

In addition to climate change, the pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war and natural disasters have reminded us once more the importance of **food supply security**.

In this context, we have all witnessed the importance of international solidarity, which laid the basis for the "**Black Sea Grain Initiative**", achieved through the joint efforts of our President and the UN Secretary-General.

Thus, the necessity of global efforts accompanying individual solutions has once again become evident.

Dear Participants,

Water is an indispensable source of life and unifies social, cultural and economic values.

Our country, located in the Mediterranean basin, which is most affected by climate change, experiences floods and droughts in a more frequent and intensive way.

As a water-stressed country, Türkiye is **establishing basin management systems in order to manage water resources** in a rational and integrated manner for sustainable development.

We are preparing **river basin management plans and sectoral water allocation plans**, including flood and drought management.

In this context, we prioritize **the development of hydrological and climate-based water observation networks on a national scale**.

We are taking decisive steps to **increase water efficiency** in all sectors, particularly in agriculture.

We have made progress in **transition to closed systems in irrigation and recovery of wastewater**.

We carry out our efforts within the framework of the "**Water Efficiency Initiative**" that we launched on January 31, 2023.

Dear Participants,

We believe in the importance of **mobilizing additional financial resources and increasing technical cooperation** in order to achieve our global targets by 2030.

I would like to re-emphasize the importance of **financial and technological support** provided by developed to developing countries for the efficient use of water.

In this context, we attach importance to the initiative to appoint a **UN Special Representative for Water**.

We believe that it would be appropriate for this Representative to be mandated to raise awareness on Sustainable Development Goal 6 and to focus on water-related investments.

We are of the opinion that the Special Representative **should adopt an impartial approach that takes into account the perspectives of all countries** and, most importantly, **not interfere with transboundary waters issues and not play the role of a mediator**.

Dear Participants,

Türkiye approaches the water issue solely from a humanitarian perspective, and considers transboundary waters as a source of cooperation rather than conflict among the riparian countries.

Türkiye has always considered the needs of downstream countries. Even though our country is also seriously affected by climate change, thanks to our water infrastructure, we are able to release more water than the natural flow to the downstream countries. As a matter of fact, as of last week, we are releasing more water to Iraq by overstraining our limits.

We believe that these favors made by Türkiye will serve to build mutual trust with the riparian countries. In this context, we are open to constructive cooperation.

We believe that approaching complex water issues creating the perception that directly threaten international peace and security will harm good neighborly relations, contrary to the spirit of cooperation and mutual trust.

As each transboundary river basin has its own characteristics and dynamics, we are of the opinion that the related issues should be solely addressed among riparian countries. We do not concur that third-party mediation approaches or international compulsory measures in this regard would positively contribute to the common goals of cooperation on transboundary waters.

I would like to emphasize that the **UN Water Conventions** are far from reflecting a common understanding within international community.

In transboundary rivers, not only upstream countries, but also downstream countries have responsibilities.

Therefore, it **should be kept in mind** that all riparian countries need to use water in an efficient and rational manner.

Distinguished Participants,

As one of the countries providing the highest humanitarian assistance as a percentage to national income, Türkiye has implemented various projects in the field of water in different parts of the world, particularly in Africa.

Since 2005, 1.85 million people are provided drinking water in African countries by means of 512 wells drilled.

We also constructed the "Friendship Dam" in Djibouti.

Türkiye will continue to contribute to the global efforts for access to safe and clean drinking water and share its experiences and best practices in water management to the extent of its capabilities.

Thank you.