



وزارة التغير المناخي
والبيئة
MINISTRY OF CLIMATE CHANGE
& ENVIRONMENT

**H.E. Mariam Almheiri, Minister of Climate Change and
Environment
(UAE National Statement to the UN Water Conference 2023)**

- On behalf of the United Arab Emirates, I would like to thank the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Republic of Tajikistan for co-hosting the UN 2023 Water Conference – to unite the world for water.
- It is an honor to address you all today.
- The United Arab Emirates is committed to advancing progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 6 to ensure access to water and sanitation for all, and to accelerating progress throughout the Water Action Decade.
- Times of crisis demand the best of us. When warnings sound, concerted action must follow.

- Responsible water management is an issue of overriding importance to the United Arab Emirates. This is a must for a country with an average annual rainfall ten times lower than the global average, limited freshwater resources and both a growing population and economy.
- As our nation's founder Sheikh Zayed Al Nahyan taught us, water is not simply a commodity; it is our lifeblood.
- We therefore believe in an inclusive, action-orientated approach to water security, based on the three pillars of diversification, conservation and innovation.
- These pillars are captured in the UAE Water Security Strategy 2036, which aims to ensure continued and sustainable access to water. The Strategy addresses each of the supply, demand and emergency preparedness dimensions of the water supply chain. It seeks to reduce our potable water consumption by 20 percent and to increase the reuse of treated water to 95 percent.
- I am pleased to note also that the Strategy complements the UAE's Updated Second Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), published last September, as well as the UAE Net Zero by 2050 Strategy.
- Water sustainability is inextricably linked with our national and economy-wide roadmap to achieve net-zero emissions.

- The UAE has traditionally relied on desalinated plants to produce water.
- To reduce the environmental impact of desalination and its inefficiencies, the UAE is developing and scaling up independent water projects based on reverse osmosis (RO) technology, while expanding the share of clean and renewable energy in desalination.
- The increasing adoption of clean and renewable energy in the UAE will further decouple water consumption from the nation's economic and population growth, as evidenced by the launch of several of the world's largest solar power plants and the Barakah civilian nuclear power station, today the largest single source of clean electricity in the Arab world.
- At the same time, the UAE is making substantial progress in reducing water losses and water consumption through the promulgation of green building and product standards, building retrofit initiatives, water tariff reform, and public awareness initiatives aimed at both residential and commercial consumers.
- Advances in wastewater treatment are also playing a significant role, particularly in our agricultural sector, which saw a 46 percent increase in its water productivity between 2012 and 2018.

- Innovation is going to be key if we are to address the challenges water presents us with globally and to take advantage of the opportunities it offers.
- Currently, agriculture accounts for 70% of all freshwater withdrawal globally. If we are to shift to a more sustainable pathway, innovation and efficiencies will be inevitable. The UAE has positioned itself at the forefront of climate-smart agriculture and food systems, driving the adoption of modern farming solutions such as optimized greenhouse design, hydroponics and vertical agriculture.
- Through the Agricultural Innovation Mission for Climate, the UAE's joint initiative with the United States partners have committed 8 billion dollars for investment in climate-smart agriculture and food systems that will benefit the long-term water security of all nations.
- These innovative approaches to land and food systems are helping to bring down emissions, strengthen adaptation and resilience, and boost overall sustainability.
- Excellencies,
- The scale of these challenges demonstrate the transformative economic and technological changes that are needed today.
- The UAE is proud to host the 28th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) in November 2023.

- We hope for inclusivity to become one of the hallmarks of COP28, not only in terms of the stakeholders we aim to have at the table but also in terms of the agenda. It was only last year at COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh that water security for the first time featured centrally as a core part of the agenda and decided that water-related ecosystems must be prioritized in delivering climate adaptation benefits. The UAE during its presidency will be building on this crucial work.
- The Global Stocktake, will be one of the important outcomes of this year's COP as it will provide the first opportunity to evaluate our collective progress in delivering on the goals of the Paris Agreement. In light of the inextricable link between water and climate, water must be a central theme to address in the response to the Global Stocktake.
- At the same time, this Stocktake should not simply look back at what we have done. Rather, we need to provide credible pathways for how we shift trajectories and accelerate the transformations needed to achieve our goals by 2030. The Water Action Agenda and our deliberations during this event will serve as crucial contributions to the Stocktake and will inform the outcomes of COP directly.
- Excellencies,
- As an elected member of the Security Council, the UAE has also been a champion of climate, peace and security and the need for the Council to address emerging challenges. The stress on our water systems is contributing in ever-more concrete ways to food shortages, farmer-

herder tensions and displacement, ultimately undermining stability in the most fragile and conflict-affected areas.

With impacts of climate change manifesting most concretely through water – via droughts, flooding, and sea-level rise – these trends are only likely to worsen. The UAE will continue to work with its partners to ensure that the Council focuses on practical ways to ensure that climate risks inform its decision-making.

- We look forward to harnessing the positive momentum generated by the Water Action Decade, the UN 2023 Water Conference and the Water Action Agenda, when we welcome the world for COP28 in November.