

## ES plenary address at UN Water Conference General Debate

Mr President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies & Gentleman,

This conference has taught me a stark truth. A truth that needs to underpin all policy making and international` action going forward...

...and that is, *that we must work for water, for water to work for us.*

As an essential building block for existence, water is not only a personal and national security issue but an international one, that has the power to solve or inhibit our attempts at securing a resilient sustainable future for all.

It goes without saying that water and climate change are inexorably linked.

Water can provide the essential solutions we need to tackle climate change. It provides a significant carbon sink, as well as being the basis of many mitigation and adaptation solutions to the climate crisis.

But we can't rely on those solutions, unless we are willing to work together to protect its ability to deliver them.

Slowing climate change by cutting emissions eases pressures on water.

At COP28 this year the Global stocktake will assess progress on meeting the Paris Agreement, as well as look forward to where we need to go.

I am working with Parties to engage in this process so that it can provide the course correction moment that we so sorely need. Giving us the opportunity to deliver recommendations for how countries take forward the most ambitious implementation agenda possible.

We need a tangible roadmaps to 2030, in this critical decade, the final few years of being able to credibly protect life as we know it.

This roadmap must provide us with the recommendations across all sectors and areas, including water, to deliver on the commitments we have made and not yet translated into credible sufficient action.

So I have made my call on how others can deliver on the climate-water nexus this year at COP28 and I want to bring a couple of commitments of my own.

The UN Climate Change Secretariat will be establishing an **action pledge**.

This pledge, coming through our Nairobi Work Programme – the knowledge-to-action hub on adaptation and resilience.

The Action Pledge itself hinges on 3 major pillars: Knowledge, Innovation, and Action:

It aims at building new types of partnerships to bridge knowledge gaps and collectively accelerate water-climate adaptation action through:

- Catalizing and strengthening communities of practice to address knowledge gaps,
- Unlocking innovation, and

- Scaling up action to address the nexus of water-climate challenges in developing countries.

This will contribute to the Water Action Agenda and enhance implementation towards the Water Action Decade.

A major function of this pledge will be to ensure evidence-based and solutions-oriented integration of water-related climate change issues into UNFCCC-relevant processes. This includes National Adaptation Plans.

At the recent LDC Conference in Doha, I pledged to support countries in the development and delivery of national adaptation plans – in collaboration with other organisations such as the world bank and the GCF. These Adaptation Plans must reflect this climate-water nexus.

At COP27 – the Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan - re-emphasized the critical role of water for climate change adaptation and related co-benefits - urging Parties to integrate the protection and restoration of water and water ecosystems into their adaptation efforts.

Following up on this recent global momentum and decades of effort from your work, I commit to creating a water-climate nexus alliance – focused **on climate resilient water systems** - within the UNFCCC Secretariat.

This alliance will apply a whole-of-secretariat approach ... and build on existing mandates and initiatives to promote a “Water for all sectors” perspective in formulating and implementing national adaptation plans - and in the priorities of nationally determined contributions.

Further, we will work with the wider UN system and other stakeholders to:

- support member states’ efforts towards climate-resilient water systems management;
- facilitate access to finance, technology, capacity-building, and climate and water systems data and analytics; and
- support coordination of partners at multiple levels including those addressing the related areas of food, energy, health and biodiversity;

Personally I hope we can agree to short term accountability measures on our progress on this Water action agenda. This issue is just too critical to not be addressed rapidly.

Colleagues, friends, it is our collective call to address the various bottlenecks that hinder transformative action in the water-climate nexus.

Through:

- increased protection and restoration of water resources and ecosystems,
- shifting to a more sustainable model of water use and distribution in food and energy production;
- and a new paradigm in water and wastewater reuse, ...

... we can increase our resilience to a heating world, and utilize water as a solution to the climate emergency.

So, I repeat... Let's work for water so that water can work for us.

I thank you.