

## **UN 2023 Water Conference Interactive Dialogue 5**

Water Action Decade: Accelerating the implementation of the objectives of the Decade, including through the UN Secretary General's Action Plan  
24 March 2023

### **Statement by Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris, Assistant-Secretary-General for Human Rights Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**

At the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, we commit ourselves to making human rights a game-changer for water.

To this end:

We will support countries to accelerate implementation of relevant recommendations from the international human rights mechanisms, including from the UPR, the human rights treaty bodies, and the Special Rapporteurs' thematic and country visit reports, in particular the Special Rapporteurs on the human rights to water and sanitation, on the right to food, and on the right to a clean and healthy environment. Their recommendations are practical roadmaps for all actors to ensure non-discrimination and equality in water and sanitation – for States, UN Country teams, national human rights institutions and civil society organizations, but also, importantly, for communities who have been historically excluded.

We will advocate for climate action through advancing the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. All human rights depend on a healthy environment. Recognition of this right strengthens existing systems that are already in place to protect people from environmental degradation and its many human rights impacts, including on access to safe water and sanitation.

We will help States build new financial and economic models and systems at the service of people and their human rights. As untapped problem-solving tools, human rights have enormous transformative power for guiding public policies. Policy decisions related to water governance and financing, when made with a human rights lens, can underpin more inclusive and meaningful participation of those traditionally left behind, build more transparent, accountable and peaceful societies. Human rights need to be the anchor of the renewed social contract called for by the Secretary General in "Our Common Agenda", making our communities more resilient and prepared for adversity.

We will promote the use of human rights indicators to measure and monitor the implementation of commitments in the Water Action Agenda

We will continue working together with the private sector to apply the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which sets out international principles on State and corporate responsibility and due diligence to protect human rights.

Let me end by highlighting the role of human rights defenders and environmental defenders who are at the frontlines of water and environmental conservation. We will continue to guide and support countries to protect civic space, to uphold the right to effective participation of defenders, including through peaceful assembly, to protect them from reprisals, and to ensure their access to remedies and to guarantee effective accountability.

Thank you.