

## Co-chairs:

### Singapore, H.E. Mr. Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for Social Policies of Singapore

- *Water-related challenges – whether there is too much or too little, or whether it is dirty and unsafe – are already fuelling chronic food and health insecurity in entire regions.*
- *Water is not just about SDG6, but a connector and catalyst for the achievement of all the SDGs.*
- *Left unchecked, our chances of delivering on the Paris climate agreement, targets in the Global Biodiversity Framework, or universal safely managed water and sanitation will be at risk.*
- *But this can be a turning point, where we turn the tide on water*
- *it is within our power to undertake collective and complementary local and global actions to protect the global water cycle as a global common good*
- *Mobilising finance for water investments*
  - *Starts with valuing water properly - pricing water closer to its true value, and provide subsidies to the poor.*
  - *Redirect wasteful subsidies and free up resources for use to incentivise more efficient water use.*
  - *Bring public and private streams of finance together to lower the cost of capital for investments in the developing world.*
  - *Get moving on voluntary market actions to promote finance for sustainable water, while governments start working towards mandatory disclosure of water footprints by corporates and financial institutions.*
- *The latest science tells us that we have to manage the water cycle as a global common good – we will need global collaboration around local actions if we are to achieve more efficient and equitable water use.*
- *Reshaping Multilateral Governance*
  - *We need robust institutional arrangements – whether it is establishing a UN Special Envoy for water or strengthening UN-Water.*
  - *We need global, high-integrity data collection and analytical mechanisms – whether it is establishing a Global Water Information System or scaling up open data initiatives*
  - *We need to galvanise a community of like-minded countries, a group of friends on the to drive commitments championed on the Water Action Agenda*
  - *We need more regular intergovernmental conferences at the UN to keep the momentum alive, starting with holding the next conference by 2026*
- *Water is solvable; we can convert the water crisis to an immense global opportunity.*

### United States, H.E. Ms. Monica Medina, Assistant Secretary for Oceans, International Environment and Scientific Affairs, Department of State

Thank you for that kind introduction.

I am honored to co-chair this final interactive dialogue with Senior Minister Tharman, and I appreciate the close collaboration we have had in preparation for this pivotal discussion.

To the panelists and lead discussants: Thank you for being here and sharing your incredibly valuable insights. And, of course, we are honored to have Director General Qu Dongyu [CHOO Dong-you] of the Food and Agriculture Organization as our moderator, who will keep us focused and on track.

We all recognize the importance of this final dialogue: the world cannot continue with business as usual when it comes to water security.

It was Ben Franklin who said “When the well is dry, we know the worth of water.” It is a message we need to take to heart right now.

And how do we do that? First by acknowledging that sustainable development goal 6 – Water and Sanitation – is foundationally important. If we don’t achieve our water and sanitation goals, none of the other goals can be realized.

Water, as we know, is also closely intertwined with climate. Recent studies have confirmed the connection between rising global temperatures and extreme weather such as droughts and floods. As the climate changes, expect more extreme weather. We need to be ready.

Now is the time to discuss how to take the momentum and energy of the past two days and determine how to accomplish the goals of the Water Action Decade.

As individual countries we need to take major steps at home. I am happy to report the United States takes these issues seriously. As you’ve probably seen this week – our U.S. delegation is huge. It’s a clear sign that there is broad and high-level interest across the U.S. government to take action to solve this issue.

The United States has taken historic steps and made significant financial commitments.

Our approach to water policy is guided by two primary policy documents – the White House Action Plan on Water Security (WHAP) and the Global Water Strategy (GWS) -- as well as the Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act of 2014 (WfW Act).

Looking at water globally, the United States remains one of the most active international supporters for water infrastructure and WASH projects. We will continue this important work.

We also need to work together multilaterally, in the UN and elsewhere.

The concept note for our dialogue today offers a number of excellent proposals categorized according to the SDG6 Global Acceleration Framework: financing, data & information, capacity development, innovation, and governance.

The United States sees some of the proposals in finance and governance as particularly important.

First, finance: The United States supports reforming and streamlining the multinational development financing institutions to better integrate water and climate into their work.

Beyond that, finance ministers must recognize the value of water. It must be accounted for, conserved, and used in a sustainable manner.

Second, governance: The United States wants to underscore and emphasize the importance of including vulnerable and marginalized groups in decision-making at all levels. Projects must

consult with Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, and other often marginalized groups that have not always had a voice. This should greatly improve our chances for success. And then there is governance here at the UN. I've heard a lot of conversation about a UN Special Envoy on Water. The United States fully supports this proposal. We recognize how a special envoy on water could be a strong voice for water in a variety of venues that do not currently prioritize or even incorporate water issues into their thinking. The Envoy will be a champion of water across sectors and platforms.

Finally, there is an absolute need to mainstream water across the UN and international organizations. Water connects all the SDGs, and is the vector by which we feel and see the effects of climate change. Even after this Water Conference concludes, there needs to be ongoing work on water all across the UN system. And we can't wait another 50 years for the next Water Conference.

Creating a UN Special Envoy on Water, reforming the multilateral financial institutions to focus more on water and climate, and mainstreaming water issues across the UN system and in international organizations: These are the big changes that the United States believes will help us meet our water goals. We need big steps like these in order to accomplish what we need to do. Changes such as these demonstrate that we know the value of water before the well runs dry.

Thank you.

Now let me turn to our moderator Qu Dongyu, the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization. I look forward to hearing from all the speakers.

## **Moderator**

### **Mr. Qu Dongyu, Director-General of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**

- First of all, allow me to congratulate the Co-hosts of the UN 2023 Water Conference - The Kingdom of the Netherlands and The Republic of Tajikistan - for the excellent organization of the Conference.
- I would also like to thank the two Co-Chairs of this Interactive Dialogue number 5 - Singapore and USA - for having invited me to moderate this last, but key Interactive Dialogue on the **Water Action Decade**.
- The last two days have provided great opportunities to discuss, collaborate, co-design and co-lead solutions for effective action to realize water related goals and targets to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Through our new **FAO Water Journey** we are raising attention on the crucial importance of water for agriculture and food security, as well as to all other SDGs.
- Water is food, and food is water.
- Yet we are facing severe water challenges: droughts and water scarcity, floods and pollution.
- And climate crisis is increasing the frequency and intensity of droughts and floods.
- Agriculture accounts for 70% of global freshwater withdrawal, and therefore holds the key to achieving global water and food security, as well as the other sustainable development objectives set out in the 2030 Agenda.
- For this reason, many of FAO's priority initiatives are focusing on the interlinkages between water and agriculture across all production systems, including crops and livestock, forestry, as well as fisheries and aquaculture.

- FAO's new thematic strategies on climate change, and on science and innovation will equip us and guide us in supporting countries to find innovative and sustainable ways of producing more with less, while minimizing environmental impacts.
- FAO is also supporting countries in the development of tools to increase water productivity, or, more food per drop.
- These include through **WaPOR** – the Water Productivity Open-access portal; and **WASAG** - the Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture.
- And we should not forget that 50% of fish species depend on rivers, lakes and estuaries for their life cycle.
- This sector sustains 200 million people whose livelihoods are connected to freshwater systems.
- In this area, FAO is implementing new and innovative management support initiatives, for example in the Kafue river in Zambia, to develop watershed management approaches, where freshwater systems and their fisheries, forestry, and agriculture services, are managed collectively to minimize trade-offs and leave no one behind.
- FAO supports the country-led and country-owned **National Water Roadmaps**, as presented at the **Rome Water Dialogue 2022**.
- FAO supports Member countries in developing integrated coordinated solutions and actions to achieve SDG 6 and all the other SDGs.
- FAO also launched the **Global Dialogue on Water Tenure** to explore how to recognize informal and customary water users, which is critical for effective water governance.
- National Water Roadmaps is an important tool to address the growing complexities and competition around water, and can help achieve the 2030 Agenda.
- Members of the Africa region have engaged in the first regional workshop on how to establish such integrated and cross-sectoral National Water Roadmaps.
- Water is also the key theme of the General Debate to be held during the 43rd Session of the FAO Ministerial Conference in July 2023,
- At the critical point of the 2030 Agenda, all sectors must work together in an efficient, effective and coherent manner to co-create, co-design and co-advocate solutions,
- And to accelerate action on data and information, innovation, finance, capacity development and governance to implement the Water Action Decade and the 2030 Agenda.
- I therefore look forward to your strong leadership and innovative ideas leading at this session for concrete actions going forward.
- Thank you.

**Panelists (in speaking order)**

(Keynote) H.E. Ms. Tanja Fajon, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovenia

Co-chairs,

Your Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Water Action Decade was proclaimed to stimulate progress towards achievement of SDG 6. Secretary General's Report on the midterm review of the Decade recognizes progress has been made. However, we still need to quadruple our efforts to achieve universal access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene. This is unrealistic with acceleration only. We need transformation.

As in any transformation, a perceptual and cultural change is required: Water must turn from one of the most undervalued resources into what it should represent - a global public good, and a human right for all, but not free of charge.

Water is much more than a resource to satisfy the needs of humankind. It is the lifeblood of nature and a potential driver for transformational change in tackling the triple planetary crises.

Water can also drive change in our flawed economic system - a change towards inclusive growth and sustainable livelihoods, based on equity and justice, including environmental justice.

Only a water secure world is a world at peace. The "zero-sum" policy when it comes to water is unproductive. It may bring instability and conflict to our doorstep. The lack of cooperative agreements on shared waters, particularly groundwater, is of concern.

To help turn this challenge into an opportunity for a virtuous circle of benefits and progress, Slovenia joined the recently established Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition.

We believe in the convening and motivational power of coalitions. We joined the Multi-stakeholder coalition on gender equality in the water domain and its Call to Action to make sure women's voices are heard. Universal access to water cannot be achieved otherwise.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Some of the biggest challenges for this conference and the water in general have been:

- 1) the (in)visibility of water on our agendas, and
- 2) transcending the fragmentation and getting out of the water bubble.

We need more dialogue on water within the UN system and an enhanced UN system-wide approach to water.

It is high time for a clearly defined structure on water within the UN system.

We support strengthening the coordinative function of UN-Water, through a potential update of its role and functioning in the following areas:

- political advocacy role, ensuring the whole UN system speaks with one voice on water;
- ensuring coherence of UN effort by strengthening the engagement with the UN Regional Economic Commissions and the UN development system's country-level support, as foreseen in the Global SDG 6 Acceleration Framework;
- ensuring that all these efforts strengthen cross-sectoral approaches.

SDG 6 should be further mainstreamed into planning, work and reporting of the UN; for example in the ECOSOC reports, with a specific part on water in the next report. Include a "freshwater"

segment in UN sustainable development themes and international conferences on specific issues. In most of these, water is hardly mentioned, often just in parenthesis.

Tying-in water to other inter-governmental processes on climate, food security, energy, health, environment etc. should no longer be an uphill struggle. We succeeded at COP27; let us replicate this success in other processes.

This could be one of the tasks for a UN Special Envoy for Water. He – or preferably she - would ensure visibility of water on the global political agenda, galvanize political will, strengthen coherence of action, mobilize additional funding, and secure the follow-up of the outcomes of this conference.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We cannot afford to wait another 46 years for a third UN Water Conference. Regular bi- or tri-annual high-level intergovernmental meetings on water at the UN, clearly mandated, are needed to keep the momentum, mobilize action, garner new initiatives and ideas, and help change the practices and narratives that hinder progress.

We see a need for a close follow up of the conference and the Water Action Agenda to realize the transformative change of how we manage and value water. We propose to clearly outline the roles the Special Envoy, UN-Water, UNDESA and existing structures will play in the follow-up of the Conference and of the Water Action Agenda.

To facilitate this task, review the proposals made in the Interactive Dialogues and in the conference summary, and ensure follow-up through relevant UN processes, I call upon the UN Secretary General to come up with a Plan of Action.

The UN Water Action Decade will continue to serve as a platform for policy dialogue, exchange of good practices and building partnerships to address water issues at all levels. In five years, when we look back on the achievements of the Decade, we should be able to say that commitments made at this conference, have resulted in a transformational change on our common path towards a more water secure world.

I thank you!

H.E. Mr. Basuki Hadimuljono, Minister of Public Works and Public Housing of Indonesia

- *The relevance of Water Action Decade in addressing challenges of clean water.*
- *The importance of lake to maintain sustainable access to clean water.*
- *Integrated Water Resources Management and the 3R (Rewetting, Re-vegetation and Revitalization of peatland ecosystem 's restoration as two main strategies in advancing water conservation*
- *Areas to be strengthened for the advancement of Water Action Decade:*
  - *Promoting awareness on sustainable water, sanitation and public health*
  - *Integrating water and sanitation infrastructure in the national plan*
  - *Establishing avenue for innovative and creative financing strategies*

- *Providing appropriate technology as well as research and development to ensure the availability of water resources*
- *Capacity building or technical assistance for integrated water resources management*
- *Strengthening actions for implementation of the water-related Goals, such as through the hosting of high-level dialogues and meetings for water-related SDGs, World Water day, the triennial World Water Forum, which will be held in Bali in May 2024.*
- *Indonesia's submission for the Water Action Agenda:*
  - *Sustainable Lake Management through Rehabilitation and Community engagement;*
  - *Automated, Continuous, and Online Water Quality Monitoring (ONLIMO) for Effective Water Pollution Control;*
  - *Restoration of Peatland Ecosystem: Peatland Hydrological Restoration; and*
  - *Achieve safely managed water and sanitation for household and beyond household.*

H.E. Ms. Zulfiya Suleimenova, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of Kazakhstan

Ms. Usha Rao-Monari, Associate Administrator of the UN Development Programme (UNDP)

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Colleagues and friends,

We are already at the midpoint of the International Decade for Action —hoping that the exceptional nature of this Conference will help us to propel a decisive global commitment around the central role that water plays for the sustainable development of our shared Planet.

I have been glad to encounter many familiar faces in the GA hall, the Conference Rooms and the UN corridors this week: scientists, policymakers, government officials, academics, civil society and business leaders... Many of whom have spent decades investing their vast knowledge, efforts and focus advocating for water. But what makes me even happier is to see you all finally TOGETHER!

It was about time. The 2030 Agenda was adopted almost eight years ago. Yet, its spirit of universality, integration and global partnership still needs to permeate the way in which we approach humanity's most precious resource.

Distinguished delegates,

At UNDP, we believe that a global partnership for water equals partnership for development, social equity and leaving no one behind.

We work with our partners to achieve structural transformation around three crucial objectives: water access, water quality and water security.

Over the last five years, UNDP's water portfolio comprises 581 projects at a value of \$3.8 billion. This water portfolio features governance, strategic innovation and development financing as key enablers of the changes we want to see.

Our goal is to achieve equitable access to clean and sustainable water for all.

For instance, women and girls will benefit enormously from improved access to water, not least in terms of the hours of productive time currently spent on sourcing water. A UNICEF study of 24 sub-Saharan countries revealed that an estimated 3.36 million children and 13.54 million adult females are responsible for water collection that takes longer than 30 minutes each day.

Dear colleagues,

This Conference is too important to be just a single burst of activity. Let us build momentum in implementing the Secretary General's Water Action Plan.

As water practitioners, the urgency is clear. Approximately 2 billion people around the world do not have safely managed drinking water services, 3.6 billion people do not have safely managed sanitation services, and 2.3 billion lack basic handwashing facilities.<sup>1</sup> One of our tasks beyond this Conference is to generate an awareness of freshwater scarcity in wider society.

We should prioritize the following areas if we want to break the silos in water policies and action:

- Consolidate multi-value, multi-sector and multi-stakeholder approaches to water governance that ensure every voice is heard, and no one is left behind.
- We must also democratize good water data. Digital innovation can improve governments' access to accurate data and bolster political momentum with informed decision-making. For instance, we are working to digitize our extensive data sets of applied water solutions worldwide — we have physical presence in more than 170 countries and territories — so that our experience of what works and what does not can be more broadly shared.
- We must work with local communities to better manage their water ecosystems —focusing on improved resilience through nature-based solutions.
- We should focus on partnerships that enable impact at scale.
- We must treat water as an integral part of our larger conversation on sustainable development, climate and biodiversity —reaching back to the respective COP processes.

At UNDP we look forward to boosting water portfolio cooperation across the UN system and hope to see water given priority at the SDG Summit in September and at the Summit of the Future next year.

By working in partnership, we can also scale up to achieve the impact the planet's water crisis demands of us. None of us has all the answers, we must rely on one another.



We are committed to the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework, which seeks to mobilize action around five cross-cutting accelerators: financing; data and information; capacity development; innovation; and governance. These inter-dependent categories will continue to serve us well to monitor our progress against commitments in the years ahead.

But we must work with all stakeholders beyond the UN system. For example, fixing chronic under-investment is one of those major tasks that requires fiscal, financial and regulatory innovations involving a whole of society approach. Now, less than 10 percent of global financial flows for infrastructure focus on water.

Water is a sector where there is a real dearth of bankable, investor-ready projects in the pipeline. We can and must do better. The Secretary General recently called for an SDG stimulus plan, including a new financial architecture to support achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

UNDP is working closely with the World Bank and others on new financial mechanisms that will at last bridge the divide between public and private investment in water, enabling us to de-risk and crowd in diverse sources of finance to achieve impact at scale.

In short, we need to get collectively ready to pick up a spanner and really get into the plumbing.

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Let's not fall into the trap of treating water as a subsidiary to climate, biodiversity or sustainable development within the conflicts and multiple crises we are confronting today.

The water sector is historically conservative. It is correct to apply caution to how we handle water, the essence of human life, but we must also embrace innovation to improve its accessibility, security and quality with the highest of ambitions.

It took us more than four decades to get back together and reaffirm water's vital role for human development and planetary health. We trust that the current Water Action Decade will restore the course.

I thank you.

### **Lead Discussants (in speaking order)**

**Ms. Mina Guli, Founder and CEO of the Thirst Foundation**

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk to you today.

I'm here because a year ago I laced up my trainers and ran a marathon deep in the Australian outback. And then I ran another, and another, and another – until Wednesday when I finished my 200th marathon in 1 year, right here on the steps of the UN building.

It is the most challenging thing I've ever done, by quite a distance.

But it was worth it. My journey took me along the front lines of the global water crisis. To meet the people living there – the farmers and fishers, mothers and daughters, Indigenous Peoples and business leaders – to hear their stories, and to bring those stories here to the UN Water Conference. Along with their calls for action on water.

Their challenges – and the bravery and ingenuity with which they're approaching them – put my 200 marathons into perspective.

All over the world I've seen heartbreak and hope. Threats and opportunities. Problems and solutions. And everywhere, the people I've met living in the midst of this global crisis are calling for change.

And something needs to change. Because we're halfway through the Water Action Decade as well as at the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda - and there's been some progress, but nowhere near enough. All of us need to do so much more.

We need to recognise that getting back on track for SDG6 requires an inclusive approach. Water issues won't be solved until the most marginalised groups are actively involved in tackling the challenges they face.

They have a huge amount to contribute – Indigenous Peoples, women, the young – but too often they've been excluded from global strategies and policy processes.

That said, this UN Water Conference has been a great catalyst, a landmark moment for water. As we had all hoped, it has generated a huge amount of momentum and raised awareness and interest to levels we've never seen before. And resulted in significant commitments from governments, business and civil society that could transform global efforts to tackle our shared water crisis.

But when the events of this week are over, what really matters is how we build on the momentum to create transformative change. The pledges and promises that we've heard need to be translated into policies and practices, into real actions on the ground with a real impact on water and freshwater ecosystems, for the benefit of people, nature and climate.

So how can we keep water for all and the critical importance of freshwater ecosystems flowing through the halls of political power and the boardrooms of companies

We've got to ensure water stays at the top of the global agenda. At the G20, Climate and nature COPs, conferences on food and energy systems – and that means strong and consistent advocacy at the highest levels.

One immediate practical step we can take is to establish a UN Special Envoy for Water - a water champion who can reach out across sectors and political divides, to mobilise investment and accelerate action - taking water to a whole new global level.

I know a lot of people here support this idea, so I hope it's something that we can create together.

As for me, Wednesday's marathon was the last time I'll be running 42 km for a while. But I'm going to keep driving action on water - calling on governments and companies to live up to their promises here in New York.

I'll be doing it for all the people I've met over the last year and for all the people from 200 countries and territories who ran with me virtually in our World Water Run to make their voices heard. Because we can't let them down.

We're all in it together, and everyone has a part to play.

This UN Water Summit has shown what is possible - that the world can come together to finally act on water.

Let's have the courage to see it through. To do the hard things to make this conference really count. So that people will look back at this event and say that was when the tide turned.

#### Ms. Sivan Ya'ari, Founder/CEO of Innovation: Africa

- I am honored to be here among so many who understand the importance of access to clean water in relation to poverty alleviation, humanitarian aid, and climate change.
- My name is Sivan Yaari, and I am the founder and CEO of Innovation: Africa, an NGO that uses Israeli technologies to bring clean water and electricity to rural villages across Africa. For the past 15 years, Innovation: Africa has provided clean water and electricity to over 4 million people in over 900 villages across 10 African countries. All our water and electricity projects are facilitated by innovative clean solar energy. As we speak, Innovation: Africa has over 40 local contractors and 140 full-time employees, mostly engineers, who are working on constructing another 1200 solar water pumping systems impacting 6 million more people across Africa by 2026.
- One of Innovation: Africa's key differentiating factors is our ability to monitor live, in real time, every single solar water pumping system project that we construct. This is possible because of our Israeli-developed UN award-winning remote monitoring system. This not only provides a huge level of transparency to our donors but allows us and our local teams and contractors to detect any malfunctioning issues with the system in advance to ensure that the water pump is not pumping beyond the capacity of the borehole.
- I would like to share with you four observations based on our experience, as well as propose solutions in line with the water action plan for the UN decade.
- **First, water scarcity is not the main problem.** In Africa, over 400 million people cannot access clean water, not because water does not exist but because **there is no electricity to pump it.** Because access to clean, safe water cannot happen without energy, focusing on access to energy should be the focus to reaching the UN water-action goals of the Decade.
- **Second, drilling costs are too high.** It is for this reason that so many boreholes are shallow and unsustainable. To reach deep aquifers, NGO's like Innovation: Africa have to undertake a costly deep drilling procedure. On average this process costs about \$10,000. Subsidizing the cost of drilling will drastically increase the number of deep, sustainable boreholes that are not only better for the environment, but also guarantee ongoing access to clean water at all seasons.
- **The third point is that there are very few or no tax incentives for NGOs:** Except in South Africa, Innovation: Africa does not receive any tax deductions and has to pay 15-18 % VAT on its contractor's construction bills for its solar water pumping systems. This amounts to an average of \$12,000 per project. To help more people, better tax benefits must be implemented by African

governments. In addition, in order to get more corporations involved, it is as important for governments to impose or provide incentives to encourage local and international corporations' participation which could include a certain percentage of their CSR going towards energy and water projects.

- **Final point small-scale, stand-alone solar water projects are the most economical and sustainable solution** to Africa's water crisis. These projects are easy to set up and maintain and incur no ongoing costs. The cost to build a large solar water pumping system bringing access to clean water to an African village of up to 10,000 people is \$65,000. The cost includes the drilling, the construction of a 10-meter concrete tower, the solar pump installation, 3 K watts of solar panel, up to 5 km of piping, and up to 30 taps/water stations in the village as well as a remote monitoring system allowing for live and ongoing monitoring of the solar water pumping systems.
- This cost could be reduced to an average of \$45,000 if African governments remove the VAT payment and subsidize the cost of drilling, as mentioned before.
- Innovation: Africa would be happy to work with the UN and member states to establish widely-transferable guidelines and criteria to lower taxes, reduce drilling costs, scale stand-alone water projects and improve energy access. These steps will result in actionable partnerships with governments and businesses to improve humanitarian aid, poverty alleviation, and climate change. Thank you for your time and ongoing commitment to meeting the UN's Water Action as part of the admirable Decade goals. I look forward to partnering with you and other discussants in this critical, lifesaving work.

**Mr. Torgny Holmgren, Executive Director of the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI)**

- Your excellencies, co-chairs, moderator....
- A few days ago the Turning the Tide report stated that “Our collective actions have pushed the global water cycle out of balance for the first time in human history”. This is very serious.
- Given that and the multitude of other challenges we face today, there is a dire need of cross-sectoral solutions for a just transition of our societies towards a water- and climate secure future for all.
- Basically, the achievement of the SDGs is inherently a collective action problem. We need to incentivize joint action by individuals and organizations alike. At the same time, actions must be rooted in local realities, not least to alleviate the hardship of those most in need. Linking global goals with local actions is quite difficult and complex—but that makes it even more important.
- We applaud all commitments made in the Water Action Agenda. However, the real challenge now is to breathe life into it, so that the actions may carry us closer towards the Future We Want. This ongoing collective action exercise, to be driven by all of us, will need to create simplicity within complexity by organizing action into smaller, more specific multi-stakeholder constituencies, I believe.
- Accordingly, we will need a set of consistent coordination mechanisms to enable all actors involved to self-organize, to meet and converge thinking, and for instance to benefit from use of peer review methods. And ultimately people – politicians and organizations - will need to actually live up to what they say they will do.

- This will in addition require solid leadership. I am not only thinking of a global leadership of a UN Envoy for Water and Sanitation, which would also be very welcome, but leadership and accountability of each of us to assume our shared responsibility for making sure we advance on the Water Action Agenda together. I see a poly-centric governance system emerging where action is no longer top-down nor bottom-up but co-exist and advance together.
- Cooperation and coordination across sector will be an imperative in years to come as the concept note underlined. Here, water has a key advantage being a true connector, connecting actors, sectors, countries as well as all the SDGs.
- But to be successful, the Water Action Agenda needs to be embraced by other communities, those of health, food, energy, oceans, climate and finance for example. Those communities need us as we need them. We shall together learn how to overcome the water challenges they encounter. It is only when people outside of the water community become staunch defenders of the cause of water that we will be able to solve the water crisis.
- Finance will be key in this respect as the demand for water related investments is huge. This goes far beyond finding bankable projects. It is mainly about improved governance, to establish the right conditions for increased investments in water, and to stimulate more sustainably and equitably use of water locally and globally.
- We know - all too well - that bad governance and institutional failures render economic policy measures and financing options inefficient and counter-productive to what countries want to achieve.
- At SIWI we stand ready to move the Water Action Agenda forward in collaboration with others through the World Water Week, the Action Platform for Source-to-Sea Management, the Water for Climate Pavilion Collective, to name a few.
- This conference is not the end of a journey, but just the beginning. Let us join hands and advance together for the good of humanity.
- Thank you.