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MR. LI JUNHUA
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
AFFAIRS

Opening Remarks

UN Water Conference Organizational Session

3 March 2025, ECOSOC Chamber

Dr. Cheikh Tidiane Dieye, Minister of Hydraulics and Sanitation of Senegal,

Mr. Abdulla Balalaa, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs for Energy and Sustainability of the United Arab Emirates,

Ms. Retno Marsudi, Special Envoy on Water,

Distinguished co-chairs,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates, Dear colleagues,

I am delighted to join this crucial organizational session for the 2026 UN Water Conference. This is a pivotal step toward an important milestone for SDG 6, and the broader 2030 Agenda.

Water's impact is pervasive – influencing economic, social, and environmental well-being. Water flows through the entire sustainable

development landscape. From human wellbeing, gender equality, sustainable livelihoods, to biodiversity conservation, and climate action -- SDG 6 implementation is fundamental.

The UN Water Conference to be held in December 2026 in the United Arab Emirates will reinforce global commitments to clean water and sanitation for all, fostering innovative solutions, partnerships and investments. Interactive dialogues during the Conference will provide a platform for Member States, experts, civil society, the private sector, and other stakeholders, to discuss key priorities and the way forward.

Today's session focuses on hearing from Member States and other stakeholders on their preferences for the themes of these interactive dialogues. We are committed to listening. My team is also launching a multistakeholder online consultation this week to further collect inputs on possible themes.

UN DESA, as the Conference Secretariat, will work closely with UN-Water, to synthesize all contributions into a background note on interactive dialogue themes, as directed by the General Assembly.

Excellencies,

I echo the Conference Co-Hosts in reaffirming the importance of an inclusive and dynamic preparatory process and conference.

We must move beyond traditional approaches to address complex and urgent water challenges. Diverse voices are needed: Governments across all regions, experts from all sectors, young people who think outside the box, and indigenous communities with invaluable traditional knowledge – will each offer unique and essential perspectives.

The Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Water will also provide valuable insights throughout the process.

In closing, I commend our Co-Hosts for their ambitious vision for the 2026 UN Water Conference. I am committed to supporting their efforts, and I look forward to productive deliberations today.

Thank you!