

Mr. Liu Zhenmin Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

Closing Remarks at Accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda through water, sanitation and climate action

29 May 2020, New York

Excellencies,
Distinguished speakers,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for your participation in today's high-level event on "Accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda through water, sanitation and climate action".

I commend the co-conveners for organizing this very timely discussion under the framework of the Water Action Decade. I also thank the distinguished speakers and participants for their insightful messages and ideas.

We have heard how crucial water, sanitation and climate actions are to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Yet, we are aware that under the current rate of progress, the world is not on track to accomplish SDG 6 by 2030. Moreover, the impacts of climate change and the COVID-19 crisis are exacerbating the situation.

Currently, 3 billion people, or 40 percent of the world's population, lack access to basic hand-washing facilities in their homes. This is depriving them of the most basic and effective prevention measure against the virus, which is frequent hand washing.

Even before the COVID-19 outbreak, almost 2 million people were dying every year from water, sanitation and hygiene related diseases – this translates to almost 5,500 deaths every day.

Globally, at least 2 billion people use unsafe drinking water, and 4.2 billion lack safely-managed sanitation services. These factors present a constant source of stress and disease, particularly for the vulnerable and marginalized population groups, including women and girls.

And climate change is worsening the situation, with the impacts being felt everywhere. Indeed, 90 percent of global disasters are water-related, 40 percent of the world's people are affected by water scarcity, and increased flooding cost lives of too many people.

Just last week, Cyclone Amphan, one of the strongest storms recorded in the Indian Ocean in decades, hit India's eastern coast and neighboring Bangladesh. It left thousands homeless and dozens dead, as authorities raced to provide relief in communities already stricken by the coronavirus.

The current pandemic, spreading against the backdrop of low rates of SDG6 implementation, is a clear wake-up call to change the way we do business.

Access to water and sanitation is fundamental for health, dignity and prosperity in every person's life. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides us with the necessary guidelines for integrated action.

Improved water and sanitation management, – SDG 6, – combined with climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, – SDG 13, – are key to “build back better” and create more sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies.

Multilateral cooperation is essential to harness the benefits of sharing data, information and best practices in implementing effective and integrated national, regional and international strategies. The United Nations system, through our global network of regional and country offices, will support all governments and stakeholders to ensure we emerge stronger, and accelerate progress towards achieving the SDGs.

The SDG6 Global Acceleration Framework, developed by UN-Water, provides a collective pathway to address water and sanitation challenges over the next ten-years.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, together with UN -Water members and partners, including governments, civil society and the private sector, will work to:

- Optimize financing for water and sanitation;
- Build trust through data generation and exchange for decision making and accountability;
- Focus on human capacity to deliver SDG 6;
- Leverage and scale up innovative practices and technologies; and
- Make SDG 6 everyone's business through cross-sector and transboundary collaboration, clear roles, stakeholder involvement and effective institutions.

The Covid-19 stimulus funds will contribute to supporting this process and rebuilding better, by accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Let us all work together to ensure sustainable recovery. Through accelerated and concerted actions to address water, sanitation and climate challenges, we will move closer towards sustainable development and stability for all.

Thank you.
