

**Statement by Mr. Md. Mustafizur Rahman, Deputy Permanent Representative of
Bangladesh to UN at the Third Open-ended Working Group on Sustainable Development
Goals, Issues: Water and Sanitation
New York, 22-24 May 2013**

Mr. Co-Chair,

We heard a number of nice presentations yesterday. The Technical Support Team has also produced an excellent paper on water and sanitation. We applaud all of them for useful contributions.

It will not be an overstatement if we say, water is life. Without water, we can not think of sustenance of life. According to scientific knowledge, 70 percent of human body consists of water. We need water for varieties of purposes, starting with household use, sanitation and hygiene to agricultural use, navigational use and most importantly for ecology and biodiversity. Although 2/3 of the earth surface consists of water, limited amount is usable for household activities and irrigation. Water for agriculture and food production constitutes one of the greatest pressures on freshwater resources. We have been misusing and mismanaging this valuable and infinite resource for too long. Enough attention has not been given to managing surface and groundwater water resources in a sustainable manner.

The problem with water is not unique or uniform to all places. In some parts of the world, it is the scarcity of water as the whole, in other parts, it is an issue of shortage of fresh water or potable water only. In some places, the problem is depletion of ground water, in other place it is pollution or salinity intrusion. Yet, in other regions, there is abundance during the rainy reason, scarcity during the dry season. So, it is a complex situation all together. This makes water management a challenging issue to tackle in a unified manner. As countries develop and populations grow, their demand for water increases. It is reported that close to 2 billion people live today in river basins where water use exceeds recharge, leading to the dryness of rivers and depletion of groundwater. On the other hand, degradation of ecosystems due to human activity is causing increase in extreme events such as floods and droughts. This is expected to further exacerbate water scarcity and flooding.

The MDG framework has captured water in a very narrow and limited manner in the form of water and sanitation, ignoring the broader water management issue and its inter-linkage with various other priority-areas, such as, food security and nutrition and sustainable agriculture; health and population, biodiversity, desertification, land degradation and drought. This will be another missed opportunity if we take sectorial approach as against holistic approach to water system management.

We have to manage water sustainably to meet today's needs without compromise the requirements of the future. At the national level, we have to take policy initiatives to finish the unfinished job in meeting MDG targets on water and sanitation. We know, the progress in the sanitation area is not satisfactory and it is lack of adequate resources as much as the habit and culture that is responsible for its limited progress. Clearly, the countries in special situation, particularly the LDCs would need financial support, technology transfer and capacity building assistance to cover deficits in MDGs and to achieve in the post-MDG development objectives. For sustainable water management, improved knowledge, research and innovation is required. These are available in global market, but should be made accessible and affordable to the

countries in need. Since environment does not follow political boundary, trans-border collaboration is critical for sustainable water management.

Mr. Co-Chair,

We would suggest integration of water challenge into two sets of Sustainable Development Goals. The first set should include universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation; the second set should address economic and ecological aspect of water issue through integrated

water resources management and water-use efficiency. In cases where the water source is

common, countries should undertake coordinated policies and shared management approach, for example, joint river basin management of common rivers. Trans-boundary cooperation on water issue could contribute to more efficient management, with positive impacts on water quantity and quality, as well as preservation of ecosystem and biodiversity. This will also minimize the possibility of unilateral diversion of water by any country for hydropower, creating storage dam or any other unsustainable exploitation of water resources.

I thank you.