

Dialogue on improving the integration and coordination of the work of the United Nations on the water-related goals and targets under its sustainable development pillar, with particular emphasis on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

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*Introductory remarks by co-moderator H.E. Ms. Katalin Bogyay,
Permanent Representative of Hungary*

Happy World Water Day to Everyone!

Mr. President, Your Excellences, Dear Guests,

According to Leonardo da Vinci: Water is the driving force in nature.

Hungarian Nobel-prize winner of 1937, Professor Albert Szent-Györgyi, who discovered Vitamin C said that: “Water is life's matter and matrix, mother and medium. There is no life without water”.

Water is free. Water is restless. Water is not afraid. Water has been a source of inspiration to so many artists, composers, poets.

When it comes to water, cooperation is not an option, it is an imperative for safeguarding a vital life resource and a precondition for peaceful coexistence.

Water is not only the most critical natural asset, but also an enabler and an inter-connector. As we often say: WATER CONNECTS! Water diplomacy is a very important part of preventive diplomacy.

When I enter every morning this noble house, I always celebrate, that we are all coming from different cultures. Culture represents a perpetual motion- like a river you have all seen from a very long distance- from a top of a mountain or through an airplane window, as it carves out a distinctive shape in the land below.

From a distance it looks like a static, not a dynamic structure. But once you step in it, you feel the dynamic flow of water as it rushes around your legs with force and

power. Changing, is the essence of water itself to get around the obstacles in its way.

Just like a river, culture is dynamic, adaptive and changing while at the same time forming a structure that defines who we are - our common values and shared identities at any moment in time and space.

So I would like us to be able to define with our diverse background our common goals and shared tasks, how to improve integration and coordination related to water. The implementation of the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals/SDGs will largely depend on achieving the water related goals and targets under the sustainability pillar. Water resources management and sanitation are linked to all areas of sustainable development, and therefore will be crucial for the years and decades to come.

Mr. President,

I am honoured that Hungary has been appointed together with Tajikistan to co-moderate this dialogue. My country has been traditionally a frontrunner in water diplomacy. Global challenges in sustainable water resources management and the knowledge our experts gained throughout the years had led the Government of Hungary to organize the Budapest Water Summit first in 2013, in the International Year of Water Cooperation, and a second in 2016, under the patronage of H.E. Mr János Áder, the President of Hungary. With the participation of 117 government representatives, international and professional organisations, civil society, academia and the private sector, the event proved to be a landmark in water diplomacy.

Next to the plenary meeting, respective forums of women, very close to my heart, youth, civil society, as well as science and technology took place. The outcome document of the summit stresses that increased water-related vulnerability and insecurity of populations worldwide demand an urgent response. It clearly points out that acting now is a matter of human dignity, justice and survival. Hungary has been active in the group of Friends of Water as of the run-up to the Rio+20 conference.

Mr. President,

In order to give concrete and pragmatic solutions to challenges related to water, preliminary to the dialogue of today we had a discussion with the group in the big snow of New York, followed by expert level briefing on ongoing activities and initiatives of the UN system last week. I see today's dialogue as a window of opportunity to address the implementation of water related SDGs and targets.

For over 40 years the United Nations has been actively engaged in strengthening and promoting the water agenda. Still, today's dialogue is unique in the sense that neither the UN General Assembly nor ECOSOC are covering the water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda in a regular fashion.

Our mandate as co-moderators comes from the resolution on the Water Decade. My aim as co-moderator is breaking the sectorial approach, look at today's discussion with an open mind and an open soul. I count on your valuable inputs to see what we have today, works well, and to identify room for improvement.

I would like to encourage contributions also from academia, civil society and private sector. Even alarming signals are useful, so that we can start thinking of how to turn challenges into opportunities, by assessing their feasibility.

The outcome of today's dialogue should be a summary to be prepared by the Co-moderators. I look forward to working with you all throughout this process.