

Water and Human Rights in the post 2015 agenda
Human Rights Council Side Event High Level Segment
Friday 13 September 2013, 13:00-14:30
Palais des Nations, Salle XXI

Opening address by the Chair of UN-Water
The UN International Year of Water Cooperation and Water in the Post-2015 Agenda

Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour to participate in and moderate the High Level Segment of this Human Rights Council side event on “*Water and Human Rights in the post 2015 agenda*”. It is also my pleasure because this side event is organised by Waterlex, which very recently joined UN-Water as a new Partner.

Today, in my opening address I would like to tell you about the International Year of Water Cooperation and how this Year fits in the bigger picture of the development of the post-2015 agenda.

By proclaiming 2013 the UN International Year of Water Cooperation, the General Assembly emphasized the importance of water for “*sustainable development and the eradication of poverty and hunger*”. Water, the General Assembly added, is “*indispensable for human health and well-being and central to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and other relevant internationally agreed goals.*”

Indeed, water is not only a vital, but also a limited and vulnerable resource. Its interdependent nature calls for close cooperation and solidarity between multiple stakeholders and across various sectors and administrative boundaries.

Water Cooperation lies also at the heart of UN-Water’s mandate and its *raison d’être*. Based on a history of close collaboration among UN agencies, UN-Water was established in September 2003 –exactly 10 years ago– as the inter-agency coordination mechanism for all freshwater-related issues, including sanitation.

Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In a world of climate change, environmental degradation and an increasing world population, cooperation over water is more urgent than ever.

Over 1.7 billion people live today in river basins where water use exceeds recharge often by a large margin, leading to the depletion of groundwater and rivers. As countries develop and populations grow and urbanize, their demand for water increases. Two thirds of the world's population could be living in water-stressed countries by 2025 if current consumption patterns and demographic evolution continue. 80% of wastewater from human settlements and industrial sources worldwide is discharged directly untreated into water bodies, with detrimental effects on human health and the environment. At the same time climate change is anticipated to increase the spatial and temporal variability of the hydrological cycle and in particular the frequency and intensity of several extreme events such as floods and droughts.

The World Economic Forum's "Global Risks 2013" report ranks water supply crises among the top five global risks – edging out issues such as terrorism and systemic financial failure. As the pressure on our water resources increases, water cooperation becomes no longer a matter of choice, but an imperative. Water cooperation is therefore our joint responsibility.

For this reasons, the International Year of Water Cooperation could not have happened at a most opportune moment, when the global community is discussing the post-2015 development agenda.

As we approach the 2015 target deadline, discussions are already well underway within and among Governments, the United Nations, academia, businesses and civil society about the successor framework to the MDGs. At the same time, Rio+20 launched an inclusive intergovernmental process to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals, as an integral part of the post-2015 agenda.

An Open Working Group on these SDGs was established by the General Assembly, which thus far has held four sessions and will continue its "stocktaking phase" until February 2014, under the co-chairmanship of H.E. Ambassador Macharia Kamau (Kenya) and H.E. Ambassador Csaba Körösi (Hungary).

Among the clear messages emerging from the Group are:

1. The need to put the eradication of poverty at the centre of the SDGs; and
2. The need for a transformative agenda that goes beyond poverty eradication to work towards human development and dignity for all people, living together in harmony on a healthy planet.

There now seems to be consensus that the SDG and the MDG processes, including discussions on the post-2015 UN development agenda, must be closely coordinated and complementary. A range of other processes have been put in place, including consultations and analytical work, to inform the negotiations on the post-2015 and Sustainable Development Goals agenda. These are:

- the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda;
- The UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda co-chaired by the Presidents of Indonesia and Liberia and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom;
- The global, independent UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network;
- Around 100 national consultations, 6 regional consultations and 11 global thematic consultations, including the Global Thematic Consultation on Water; and finally
- Contributions from the private sector through the UN Global Compact.

The next milestone will be the MDG Special Event of the President of the General Assembly on 25 September 2013. It is expected that Member States will agree on a roadmap for intergovernmental negotiations, which could lead to the adoption of the vision, principles, goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda at a potential high-level summit in 2015.

Dear Colleagues and Friends,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Water, including of course sanitation, has received a lot of attention in all these consultations. The issue features prominently in both the UN Global Compact's report and the report of the High Level Panel on Post-2015.

UN-Water has been active in these processes by facilitating the Global Thematic Consultation on Water, which was co-hosted by the Governments of Jordan, Liberia, Mozambique, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

We will hear more about this Consultation in the next interventions, but let me just mention that participants in this Consultation recommended that the future agenda should seek to achieve the MDGs but should also build on and go beyond the drinking-water and sanitation target by calling for access to water, sanitation and hygiene for all, while encompassing water resources, water pollution and wastewater management.

“Water and Sanitation” has also been identified by Member States as “key potential area for the SDGs”. How water will be reflected in the next generation of goals remains to be seen.

But there seems to be general convergence that the post-2015 development agenda should not only address water supply and sanitation, but should also include water resources and wastewater management and address water pollution.

In this respect, the draft interim report of the Open Working Group co-chairs also highlights the *“broad support [among Member States] for a dedicated global goal on water as the complex interrelations among various water-related concerns call for an integrated approach which would be better catalyzed by a single water goal.”*

At the same time, the recently released Secretary-General report *“A Life of Dignity for All”* highlights a number of future transformative actions and firmly puts the values of equity, solidarity and human rights “centre stage” in the post-2015 development agenda.

Dear Colleagues and Friends,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I believe that these are solid foundations to build the future global agenda.

While decisions on the shape of this global agenda rest with Member States and the political process takes its due course, we should try to make sure that the best options in terms of targets, indicators and supporting data sources are being considered. As highlighted by the Co-Chairs of the Open Working Group, to ensure that *“progress is measurable and measured, it will be important to have quantified targets and to ensure that countries have the necessary data collection and statistical capacities to support robust indicators of progress.”*

Within its mandate, UN-Water stands ready to support the Member States in this endeavour. This includes tapping the reservoir of expertise and experience of its 31 UN Members and 34 international Partners, as well as reaching out and bringing to Member States the cutting edge research and analysis from the scientific and policy communities.

Based on the available evidence base, UN-Water is working towards identifying potential water-related targets and indicators for consideration by Member States, as well as data needs to ensure national relevance and measurability.

For example, UN-Water is drawing on the proposals on water, sanitation and hygiene that have been developed since 2011 through the consultative process convened by two of its Members, WHO and UNICEF as the Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation. It also draws on the inputs from two UN-Water Task Forces –one on Water Resources Management and the other one on Wastewater Management.

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

There is now a growing body of evidence available on the possible formulation of a global goal on water. UN-Water is working to make this material as accessible as possible and commits itself to continue providing technical input to the post-2015 process by presenting the coherent and integrated response of the UN System to freshwater-related issues including sanitation.

The first draft conceptual framework to consolidate the UN System's experience and expertise into "one UN" input on a possible water-dedicated SDG was discussed last week at the Stockholm World Water Week and it will be further discussed next month at the Budapest Water Summit.

Our objective is to finalise this input by this January 2014 in time to inform the forthcoming discussions and negotiations among Member States.

Thank you for your attention.