

High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028

FINAL DECLARATION PROMOTING ACTION AND POLICY DIALOGUE
Dushanbe, Tajikistan 20-21 June 2018

The High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028, met in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on 20-21 June 2018, to discuss how to achieve the objectives of the Decade, contained in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 71/222 of 21 December 2016, in order to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Heads of State and Government, ministers and other high-level dignitaries took part in this historical gathering together with representatives of international and regional organizations, local governments, civil society, the private sector and academia. The Conference also provided a timely and necessary platform for elaborating recommendations in the run-up of the next session of the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development where, among other issues, the Sustainable Development Goal 6 to “ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all” will be discussed. The Conference built on the outcomes of the Eighth World Water Forum, the High-Level Panel on Water, the Water for Life Decade and other major water-related events and platforms at the global and regional level.

We, the participating representatives of states and organizations,

Recalling the United Nations General Assembly resolution 71/222 of 21 December 2016, by which it proclaimed the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028,

Recalling also the United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, which reiterates the importance of “ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all” as a Sustainable Development Goal to be achieved by 2030, the underpinning importance of water related issues in other goals and targets in order to reach the overall Agenda and the centrality of the “No One Left Behind” principle,

Recalling further resolutions 68/157 of 18 December 2013 on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation and 70/169 of 17 December 2015 on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation of the United Nations General Assembly,

Taking note the efforts and extensive work carried out by the High-Level Panel on Water,

Acknowledging the additional challenges facing countries with water scarcity and concerned with the impacts of such challenges, including inter alia their ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals,

Highlighting the challenge of rapid population growth, water in disaster risk reduction, mitigating and adapting to climate change and ensuring ecosystem protection, particularly of head watersheds in mountain areas, wetlands, deltas and in coastal zones, to increase the resilience of communities, and noting that such actions can contribute, as applicable, to the implementation of the Sendai Framework, the Paris Agreement in the framework of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change and relevant multilateral environmental agreements,

Stressing the need to manage in an integrated and sustainable manner water resources along the water, food, energy and environment nexus, from source to sea, including by promoting the concept of circular economy and other relevant solutions to reduce, recycle and safely reuse water,

Expressing concern about the current and projected effects of climate change on water resources and sanitation challenges, as well as the pathogens, nutrients and emerging pollutants, including pharmaceuticals and microplastics, that are threatening human health and the quality of surface and groundwater,

Bearing in mind the need to implement integrated urban water management, including sustainable waste management systems, in line with the New Urban Agenda, as part of Integrated Water Resource Management, by implementing inter alia nature-based and decentralized wastewater management solutions, as well as improved rainwater management and harvesting,

Recognizing that, according to Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report 2018 on Water and Sanitation, the world is not on track to achieve water-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets at the global level by 2030 at the current rate of progress,

Recognizing that effective lake and river basin organizations, water planning and target setting at appropriate levels, including of drinking water supply and sanitation safety, are key to the sustainable management of water resources, coordination of actors at the resource scale, development of infrastructure and benefit sharing, as well as to the

harmonizing of the national and basin wide development agendas and that parliamentarians and citizens make an important contribution to water governance alongside national governments, as well as regional and local authorities, as applicable,

Singling out the disproportionate burden carried by many women and girls for water collection and use, their specific needs of safe water and sanitation facilities, their key role for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6, their insufficient representation in water-related decision-making processes and among water professionals at all levels and the need to create an enabling environment to address these issues,

Conscious of the importance of ensuring water access for civilians and protecting civilian water infrastructure and service delivery in the event of conflicts and natural disasters, as well as for refugee and migrant populations living in informal or inadequate housing,

Looking forward to the Mid-Term Review of the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028, as an important milestone to be focused on the goals of the Decade and water-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets,

Noting the ongoing efforts by UN-Water in responding to the expectations of the international community, supporting the monitoring of the SDG 6 targets and providing coordination among its membership,

Also noting the possibility to create an International Center for the Water Action Decade in Dushanbe with the support of the Government of Tajikistan and other interested parties to sustain the process towards implementation of the goals of the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028, and the organization of Water Action Decade Conferences,

Hereby reiterate our determination to achieve the objectives of the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028, and declare to:

Promote, at the local, national, regional and global levels, opportunities for public and private investment in infrastructure, including through the development of innovative financial instruments and mechanisms and seek to increase the efficiency of investment to conserve and sustainably manage freshwater, wastewater and water contained in soil and vegetation and support community-based efforts and to develop non-conventional water uses, such as recycling drainage and treated wastewater and desalination;

Strengthen the capacities, resources and skillsets, as well as improve knowledge generation and exchange of practices, to support national and local governments in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in those countries and for those people furthest behind, especially when suffering from water scarcity;

Make concentrated efforts to build innovative, robust, flexible and fair systems for water management, to increase water use efficiency and productivity, particularly in agriculture, energy, tourism, urban development and industry, to better appreciate the value of water and associated ecosystem services, to reduce emissions and the transport of hazardous substances and to take into consideration the serious impacts on the quality and availability of water resources caused from extractive activities, stressing the need for dialogue to implement Integrated Water Resource Management solutions and intersectoral approaches from source-to-sea at all levels;

Commit to reduce inequalities in access to safe drinking water and sanitation service provision, which are basic human needs that are essential for the health and well-being of families, communities and countries and should always be affordable, to avoid any kind of discrimination and to support countries and communities with specific needs and people suffering from poverty and in vulnerable situations, especially women, children, the elderly, people with disabilities and those living in remote areas, going beyond the household, particularly with regard to schools, healthcare facilities and workplaces;

Improve communication and access to practical, water-related information and funding to empower communities at all levels, through clear messages, to promote participation, equity, improved accountability and social innovation and to support the engagement of civil society representatives of those in vulnerable situations in decision-making processes related to the rational, transparent and sustainable use and management of water resources and the provision of water-related services;

Step up the efforts to develop tools, build institutional and human resources capacity, foster technology exchange, improve data, which should be appropriately disaggregated, application and dissemination of knowledge, including traditional knowledge, skills, and enhance science and technological know-how to better understand the water cycle, contribute to the identification of appropriate solutions and implement the targets related to water and sanitation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including through South-South and triangular cooperation

and improved research, education and training with a local perspective and special attention to childhood;

Facilitate partnerships at all levels among different kinds of stakeholders, including public authorities, the private sector, civil society and academia, with the engagement of women, youth, local communities and indigenous peoples, as appropriate, to develop and implement actions that address problems related to water and sanitation at suitable levels and to promote the all-of-society engagement necessary to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

Prioritize water diplomacy and transboundary cooperation in line with the principles of international law by strengthening inter alia the means of information and data sharing, open and inclusive multi-level and intersectoral dialogue in order to foster cooperation and development related to the management of transboundary water resources, joint investment, joint management on a reasonable and sustainable basis of water resources and built and natural water infrastructure, as well as through collaborative management structures and institutional arrangements, such as joint commissions and joint plans, among riparian countries, for the development of transboundary river basins, lakes and aquifers and for protection of ecosystems and recharge zones;

Promote actions to address water-related disasters by significantly decreasing loss of life and damage as percentage of gross domestic product, by treating investment in disaster risk reduction as integral to expanding capacity for socioeconomic growth, by integrating science into policy, by substantially increasing investment in disaster risk reduction and establishing financing and investment principles and by supporting alliance of alliances in recognition that climate change may exacerbate water-related disasters, contributing to promote action for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction activities;

Recall the United Nations Secretary General's plan for the Water Action Decade 2018-2028 as a blueprint to coordinate and catalyze action throughout the Decade and invite the United Nations Secretary General to report to the Member States the progress made with the implementation of his action plan for the Water Action Decade 2018-2028;

Note the intention of the Government of Tajikistan to hold Water Action Decade Conferences in Dushanbe on a biennial basis and to keep organizing them in an open and inclusive manner and invite all states, the United Nations, including UN-Water, and other relevant stakeholders, to actively participate in this Dushanbe Process;

Invite countries to consider the establishment of Water Action Decade centers and partnerships on specific themes, such as one for water and disasters, or at the regional level and use the already existing water-related centers, programs and partnerships, such as those under the auspices of the United Nations and its entities, including UNESCO Centers and Chairs, as useful mechanisms to enhance dialogue, cooperation, technical and scientific transfer and development for the effective implementation of the Decade;

Further invite all states to consider appointing water champions, who will play a mobilizing role for the Water Action Decade;

Strongly recommend Member States to prepare and adopt national strategies, plans and implement actions for the achievement of the water-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets, as well as the goals of the Water Action Decade;

Ask the United Nations, within existing resources, regional organizations, International Financial Institutions, philanthropic organizations, the private sector and development partners to support the implementation of the Water Action Decade, particularly in developing countries, Least Developed Countries, countries suffering from water scarcity, Small Island Developing States and Land-Locked Developing Countries, as well as the specific circumstances faced by middle-income countries;

Request the Government of Tajikistan to present the Chair's Summary of this Conference, accompanied by this Declaration, to the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly, to the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and other relevant venues;

Urge all Member States to actively participate in the preparation process of a United Nations General Assembly resolution on the Mid-Term Comprehensive Review of the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018-2028, to be undertaken during the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly;

Request the Secretariat of this First High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018-2028, to collect, in collaboration with the International Steering Committee, the actions and partnerships that were proposed by the participating states and organizations during this Conference in a document to be entitled "Call for Action and Partnership";

Invite the participating states and organizations to report about the progress made on the actions and partnerships proposed during this Conference at inter alia the Second Water Action Decade Conference, and as a contribution towards the Mid-Term Review of the Decade;

Decide that the theme of the Second Water Action Decade Conference shall be “catalyzing water action and partnership at the local, national, regional and global levels” to achieve the goals of the Water Action Decade and water-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets;

Express our sincere appreciation to the Government of Tajikistan for hosting the Water Action Decade Conferences in Dushanbe and for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to all participants; we also express our sincere appreciation to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, UN-Water and other partners for their support.