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Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations
and Executive Secretary of ESCAP

Statement to the UN-Water Principals Meeting

Tuesday, 16 July 2024
08:00 to 09:30 hrs.
UNHQ, New York

Dear UN-Water partners and colleagues,

Asia and the Pacific has made considerable improvements in water resource management in the last decade. Yet the region remains off-track in achieving the targets for Sustainable Development Goal 6 by 2030.

Access to sustainable water resources is increasingly threatened by water scarcity, rising demand and overuse, rapid urbanization, pollution and inadequate transboundary cooperation.

Climate change is set to worsen all of these challenges, for instance, through sea-level rise and saltwater intrusion into freshwater sources in many areas, and the retreat of glaciers in the Hindu-Kush-Himalaya region along with major changes in water availability for 1.9 billion people, leading to heightened risk of disasters, floods, damage to infrastructure and economic stress.

These challenges are certainly not unique to the Asia-Pacific region. It is now more than ever that member States and stakeholders across regions need support from the United Nations system to build capacities, mobilize stakeholders and provide a platform for multilateral action.

No country holds answers to all the challenges which require actions at scale and speed.

The UN system needs to step up our joint assistance to enhance scientific collaboration, strengthen early warning systems and deepen cooperation on water governance in transboundary river basins, particularly with regard to changes and disruptions of the water cycle associated with climate change.

And many member States count on our assistance for developing financing strategies that sustain the health of every stage of the water cycle.

The UN Systemwide Strategy on Water is a vital and timely step to ensure the UN is better positioned to respond to the evolving challenges and the needs of member States in a more coordinated, efficient and effective way.

Together with the Collaborative Implementation Plan, it provides a valuable framework to optimize use of the knowledge, skills and material resources available within - and through - the UN System.

On behalf of ESCAP, I express my support for the Strategy and welcome its adoption. I look forward to working with UN-Water partners and other systemwide entities for its successful implementation.

Thank you.
