Volker Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UN-Water Principals Meeting, 16 July 2024
Statement on the launch of the UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation

Dear Colleagues,

Water is indispensable to life, health and human dignity, and to the realization of many other human rights.

Water and sanitation are not commodities. They are human rights to which all people are entitled without discrimination.

Yet almost half of the world still lacks access to adequate sanitation, and over 2 billion people do not have access to safe and clean drinking water. The marginalized and disadvantaged, notably those living in poverty, minorities, asylum seekers, Indigenous Peoples, women and girls, persons with disabilities, older persons among others, are disproportionately affected.

The entire UN System has a unique mandate to apply a human rights-based approach to development.

This involves working with governments to accelerate action on eliminating discrimination and inequalities, including through progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights.

And to reach the furthest behind first when it comes to access to water and sanitation.

The UN System is also crucial to help ensure people, communities, and environmental human rights defenders can participate meaningfully in processes to manage water resources, services and ecosystems.

The Roadmap for Integration of Human Rights in Water and Sanitation is a key component of the UN System-Wide Strategy and the Collaborative Implementation Plan.

UN Human Rights is committed to work with all UN agencies and other stakeholders to ensure that human rights norms and principles inform the Strategy’s implementation.

So that the UN system’s work on water and sanitation advances the realization of human rights for all.

Thank you.