A very good morning to all of you!

Let me start by acknowledging the collective effort, under the leadership of UN-Water, to put together the UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation (SWS) and to convene and engage the UN-Water Principals in the development of SWS’ first Collaborative Implementation Plan 2025-2028 (CIP).

As you are aware, the achievement of SDG 6 is intricately linked to our efforts in realizing SDG 11 on cities. Inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities envisaged in SDG 11, require affordable and reliable water supplies of good quality and proper sanitation. The New Urban Agenda adopted by member states at the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in 2016, envisions cities as vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable places that fulfil their social function, including the provision of safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation to their residents.

Today, cities are the sites of growing water and sanitation challenges. The bulging urban population is already placing extra demands on both water resources and service delivery. Demand for water in cities is projected to increase by 50 to 70% in the next three decades. Estimates also show that by 2050, 1.9 billion urban dwellers will live with seasonal water shortages. Climate change is adversely impacting an already challenging water situation. Today, over 530 cities are already reporting the devastating effects of climate change, subjecting up to 517 million urban residents to tropical diseases and lost livelihoods, destroying infrastructure, and undermining the capacity of local governments to provide basic services to their citizens.

UN-Habitat, therefore, welcomes the renewed global commitment to strengthen UN system-wide coordination in accelerating the much-needed progress in the achievement of SDG 6 and other water-related SDGs.

I would like to propose two high priority actions that could be incorporated into the CIP that would add value to the SWS and our entity’s work to better support Member States.

- The CIP should have a human face. Put more emphasis on strategies to safeguard the poor and vulnerable groups to leave no one and place behind. The success of
SWS and CIP should be gauged by the number of individual or collective initiatives responding to the plight of the 1.1 billion people living in slums and slum-like conditions where safe drinking water and basic sanitation needs are barely met. Initiatives aimed at increasing access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation in informal settlements are, therefore, an important step in eradicating growing poverty and reducing inequality in cities and human settlements.

- The CIP should be explicit on initiatives that support the crucial role of local water and sanitation operators who are so critical to reaching SDG 6 in our cities and communities around the world but who urgently need capacity and resources to play their full role. As part of UN-Habitat’s commitment to the Water Action Agenda, we have pledged to accelerate the approach of GWOPA to engage at least 100 public water and sanitation service providers across the globe to sign up for a set of criteria of peer exchange and support.

UN-Habitat is committed to show leadership in the following key areas in collaboration with other UN agencies:

- Placing water and sanitation access and management at the heart of urban and territorial planning processes. UN-Habitat will collaborate with other UN agencies to promote the integration of planning for the water and sanitation services with urban and territorial planning processes, including planning for other urban sectors, such as land use, housing, industry, energy, and transportation.

- Strengthening inter-agency collaboration to continue the implementation of the UN-Water Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG 6 as a co-custodian of SDG6.3. If we are consistent in adopting a much-needed global transformation for a circular and resilient economy, inter-agency efforts at wastewater management must feature more strongly in SWS and CIP.

Finally, we call on everyone to join the movement for Water Operators’ Partnerships to connect essential water and sanitation service providers in not-for-profit and solidarity-based peer partnerships through our Global Water Operators Partnership Alliance.

Thank you for your attention.