Statement on the launch of the UN-Water System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is past its midpoint, and we find ourselves falling short of achieving the water-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets by 2030.

The launch of the new UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation comes at a critical juncture, where there is a need for UN entities to work more effectively with each other to support Member States in implementing their water-related plans and initiatives.

The United Nations University (UNU), as the academic arm and think tank of the United Nations, is well-positioned to support the global effort to fulfill the SDGs through state-of-the-art research, capacity building and policy outreach. The UNU Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH) represents UNU at UN-Water and co-leads UN-Water efforts to support the UN-wide International Decade for Action on “Water for Sustainable Development” (2018–2028).

In 2023, UNU-INWEH released the Global Water Security 2023 Assessment that evaluated the state of water security for 7.78 billion people living in 186 countries. In addition to highlighting that 78% of the global population (6.1 billion people) presently live in water-insecure countries, the report’s alarming statistics indicate that the world is far from achieving SDG 6 and providing “clean water and sanitation for all”.

UNU-INWEH works with other UN entities and Member States to build capacity and increase knowledge on water-related challenges exacerbated by the climate crisis and operationalize its research to provide informative and practical inputs to policy debates. It is my hope that this practical, solutions-focused strategy will reinvigorate the work done by the United Nations on this vital goal.

UNU and UNU-INWEH are uniquely positioned to drive this strategy as a centre of interdisciplinary research expertise on water-related innovation and policy, supported by the UNU Water Network that coordinates water-related activities across the UNU system. The collaborative efforts and innovative approaches developed through this strategy will be crucial in overcoming the significant challenges we face to ensure water security and sustainable management of water for all by 2030.