

Speech by Vice Minister Jaap Sloopmaker of the Netherlands, at the event on 'SDG 6 and interlinkages with other SDGs', High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, 11 July 2023, 10.00

Good morning,

Thank you for having me at this important event where we take a look at SDG 6 and its interlinkages with other SDGs.

It's great to be back in New York. Just over three months ago, the world came together here for the UN 2023 Water Conference, which the Kingdom of the Netherlands was proud to co-host with Tajikistan.

I can still feel the positive energy generated by the almost ten thousand participants. For many, it was their first UN conference. And everyone contributed enormous enthusiasm, energy and commitment to fundamentally change the way we understand, value and manage our water.

The conference delivered a concrete result in the shape of the Water Action Agenda, with more than 800 commitments of different types and magnitudes. A quarter of these commitments have game changing potential, according to the World Resources Institute. Together, they are a promising and concrete agenda on which we can focus in the years ahead.

It's not only the number of commitments that impresses me, but also the diversity. We're talking about commitments pledged by a wide range of actors – governments, NGOs, companies and universities – in a wide range of areas – agriculture, health, climate change, industry, domestic.

This proves that water is not a single issue. Water is a connector, linking many sectors and all aspects of life.

The world has reached a turning point. Water, climate, disasters, policies, planning and investment can no longer be considered as separate, discrete issues. They're all part of the same puzzle and so need to be addressed through an integrated vision and agenda.

The UN Water Conference has laid a solid foundation for a substantial change in the way we understand, value and manage water.

We need this change more than ever. It's clear from the synthesis report on SDG 6 that a business as usual approach will not be sufficient to achieve the global targets by 2030.

The report also shows us that change is possible. It describes good examples of countries that are making progress, like Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Rwanda, Chile and Croatia.

It provides several key recommendations, like providing more funding, addressing data gaps and introducing innovations. And it calls for strong leadership on water at the highest level of the UN.

Alarming reports, reviews like this AND inspiring examples: we need them all. We need them to make us see the facts. And we need them to see that the SDG targets for water are still achievable.

The UN Water Conference has strengthened this conviction – that we're going to make it. The Conference gave us momentum to turn the tide. The important thing now is to maintain that momentum.

I'm very pleased that the UN has embraced the Water Action Agenda. The first stock-take of the Agenda will be presented next week. And plans are being made to further develop and implement the Agenda.

In other good news: the UN Secretary-General will be appointing a UN Special Envoy on Water. This envoy will unite us, and will work closely with UN-Water and other UN agencies, member states and stakeholders, using tools like the Water Action Agenda, the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework and the Water Action Decade.

And last but not least, we're hopeful that a resolution will soon be adopted on strengthening the intergovernmental process on water and holding regular UN Water Conferences.

In this regard, the co-facilitators look forward to working closely with all member states to ensure broad support and a successful outcome.

Let's turn the tide. Let's put water at the centre of our decision-making. For a safer, healthier and more prosperous world. The urgency is clear, the Agenda is there: let's not waste any more time.

Thank you.