



Permanent Mission of Hungary
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY!

Open debate of the Security Council

on

Water, Peace and Security

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Intervention by

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Permanent Representative

Your Excellency, Mr. President, Honorable members of the Security Council, Dear Colleagues,

Let me first commend the Senegalese Presidency for including this topic on the agenda of the Security Council.

Hungary aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union.

When speaking about water security and cooperation I always refer to the striking conclusion of a Hungarian-born Nobel laureate physicist (Dénes Gábor): “Until today man has fought nature. From now on man has to fight his own nature.”

What makes this statement relevant in the context of this debate is that the challenges related to the sustainable management of our freshwater resources, as well as the looming water crisis, are up to a large extent man-made. Mutual dependencies will only increase over time as regions and sectors exposed to water shortage rely more and more on waters controlled by others, also due to the dramatically changing climatic conditions and the excessive growth in global population. All these ever increasing challenges contribute to the growing water scarcity and exacerbate the situation arising from the unequal geographical distribution of the water resources.

But while many consider water as a driver of conflict, water is also, and perhaps even more importantly, a source of cooperation. While over 140 water-related treaties were signed in this century, datasets show that only seven minor skirmishes related to water are found in the same period. War over water is neither strategically rational, nor hydrographically effective, or economically viable. Until today, water cooperation has prevailed over water conflicts.

But in order to prevent water to become one of the main causes of tomorrow’s conflicts, or a tool for certain methods of war, significant changes will be needed in the way we manage our waters. Water is the most critical natural resource of the 21st century; therefore it must be treated as a high priority. The growing uncertainties can only be tackled successfully if all Member States, as well as all stakeholders act together. Cooperation across geographical and political boundaries will be of key importance for stability and survivability for more than 40% of human lives on shared waters.

Water diplomacy is a key priority for our country. Hungary has also developed a strong tradition of prudent water management over the centuries, while also providing technical assistance to developing nations. Given the hydrogeological conditions of the country, transboundary water cooperation is an unquestionable imperative for Hungary. We also encourage all Member States to join the relevant UN Conventions on water. To avoid mismanagement, distrust and eventually conflict, the establishment of coordination mechanisms sharing countries at the level of transboundary river basins or aquifers is an absolute must. Transboundary cooperation hinges on political will and on the understanding of what the issues are. Data sharing over transboundary river basins and/or aquifers is therefore essential.

The Budapest World Science Forum, organized by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and UNESCO since 2003 has put water cooperation into the forefront of its deliberations.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development once again reconfirmed that sustainable development and peace are interlinked. Universal implementation of this Agenda will reduce tensions among countries, and will ensure that situations, threatening international peace and security, arise less frequently.

Under the patronage of H.E. Mr. János Áder, President of Hungary and Member of the Joint UN and World Bank High Level Panel on Water, Hungary is hosting next week, from 28 to 30 November 2016, the Budapest Water Summit 2016, to give momentum to the implementation of the water-related agenda transpiring from SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement. The mission of the Summit is to promote the message that for all the countries helping sustainable water resources development should be the source of cooperation and of peace.

The 2030 Agenda creates an impetus for all Member States and UN organs to work together, without changing the authority of any organ as set forth in the Charter. With the adoption of the SDG framework and its integrated vision on water, we now have clear pathways towards placing water into the center of our collective development efforts. Delivering on the water related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda will, by definition, enhance water cooperation, and reduce tensions connected to water. An enhanced cooperation under the development pillar of the United Nations would also bring to the forefront the very simple truth that water connects, it does not divide.

Thank you for your attention.