

Launch event of the International Decade for Action

“Water for Sustainable Development” 2018-2028

Plenary meeting

22 March 2018, 11:00 am

Remarks by H.E. Ambassador Katalin Annamária Bogyay, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the United Nations:

- Mr. President, Excellences, let me first allow expressing the **regrets of H.E. Mr Péter Szijjártó, Hungary’s Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade**, who was **committed** to take part in this important event today, however the weather conditions unfortunately did not make his visit possible this time. **I will convey Hungary’s key messages for the discussions in his place with pleasure**, as my country **had been a frontrunner in promoting water and sanitation** for a long time.
- Hungarian Nobel-prize winner Mr Albert Szent-Gyorgyi, who discovered the chemical ascorbic acid, known as vitamin C said that *“Water is life’s mater and matrix, mother and medium. There is no life without water”*.
- Ladies and Gentlemen, **water is not only the most critical natural asset, but also an enabler for development**. Water is widely present in **history, science, arts** and in all **aspects of everyday life**. Many of our poets and composers got inspired by rivers, lakes and the sea.
- **Water resources management and WASH are linked** to all areas of **sustainable development**, and therefore will be crucial for the years and decades to come. **The implementation of the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals will largely depend on achieving SDG 6.**
- If the world continues on its current path, projections suggest that we may face a 40% **shortfall in water availability**, affecting at least 1.8 billion people by 2030 and 4.8 billion by the middle of the century. There is a wide recognition that **climate variability** will make water extremes even worse.
- Understanding the link **between the global water context and migration** will be essential to address the issue of migration flows in the future effectively. By 2030, **severe water scarcity may drive 700 million people to leave their homes.**

- Water security is not only a **push factor for migration**, but it may increase the probability for the outbreak of **conflicts**, and contribute to **food insecurity**. This would place existing water resources as well as water infrastructure and supply under even greater **stress**, triggering huge **financial burdens**.
- Hungary launched various initiatives and programs aimed at ensuring that our partner countries have safe and affordable drinking water supplies. Our **tied aid credit programs** have paved the way for modernizing water-related infrastructure of **Bosnia-Herzegovina, Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Indonesia**. In the framework of **development cooperation**, Hungary has provided **mobile water purification systems** to those in need in **Asia, South America and Europe**.
- We are well aware however that **the efforts of countries will not be sufficient alone** if we are to avert the imminent “Global Day Zero” and to **provide humanity with safe, affordable drinking water and sanitation systems**.
- **Member States and the whole international community should work together, undertake coordinated efforts** and adopt both **urgent and long-term measures**. The case is particularly relevant for **waters shared among sectors as well as surface and groundwater shared between communities and countries**. With the rise of water scarcity, it is time now more than ever before to ensure that **cooperative frameworks for efficient water management** are being put in place.
- Challenges are outstanding, therefore it is truer now than ever before that **“Water connects”, it should not divide us!**
- **Our President, H.E. Mr. János Áder**, the **patron of the two Budapest Water Summits** participated in **the High Level Panel on Water (HLPW)** and **presented the panel’s outcome** at the opening of **the World Water Forum in Brasilia on behalf of the panel members** just this Monday, on 19th March.
- Under **the leadership of Hungary**, the panel members elaborated **recommendations** in the five topics:
 - **institutional considerations,**
 - **sustainable cities,**
 - **transboundary water governance,**
 - **water infrastructure and investment, and**
 - **the link between water, peace and forced displacement.**

- Hungary promotes a greater emphasis on **preventive** measures, including the development of **integrated urban water solutions** and **financing** schemes for **high quality water infrastructure**.
- We know by now that the **Budapest Water Summit** in **2013** contributed to awareness raising about the global water problems through its role in the formulation of a **stand-alone SDG on water in the 2030 Agenda**. In **2016**, the second Summit – attended by over 2,200 participants from 117 countries – represented a milestone in the implementation of SDG 6. **The Summit identified the crucial water-related tasks that the international community needs to carry out in the coming fifteen years ahead**. The Summit **connected those individuals** who are best-placed to discharge these tasks most effectively. **Leading representatives of the multilateral financial institutions agreed to double their investments in the sector**.
- We hope that the **next Budapest Water Summit to be held in 2019** will provide all **stakeholders** with an opportunity to redefine the **scope of managing the world’s water resources**.
- Hungary remains committed to these strategic discussions. Both the experience from the High Level Panel on Water and my own experience as co-facilitator of the **working level dialogues on improving the integration and coordination of the work of the UN** on water related SDGs brought us to the conclusion to **strengthen governance and the framework for water cooperation at the global level**. Such a structure could provide governments and other stakeholders with **coherent policy guidance, oversee monitoring and follow-up of the implementation of SDG 6**.
- I would like to congratulate Tajikistan for the *“International Decade (2018–2028) for Action – Water for Sustainable Development”!* We welcome this **initiative** that shall be **mutually reinforcing with all the efforts mentioned, via linkages also to the ongoing reform of the UN development system** through finding **synergies**.
- An important dimension to support the implementation of SDG 6 should imply **projects aimed at enhancing the sustainability of local water management**, along with **education and training programs**, especially for **women**; which could have **empowering spill-over effects**, including via the creation of jobs.
- We must also **include youth** – as much as possible – into our **water governance schemes**, water management **projects**, as well as monitoring and reporting.
- **Youth** may provide us with a **new perspective** on the approach to the traditional water-related problems that we are faced with. **The future belongs to them!**

- With regards to international legal frameworks applicable at international level, **as the current presidency until 2018, Hungary supports the universalization of the Water Convention of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), which is now open to all UN Member States.** We welcome the recent ratification by Chad and the preparatory steps underway by Tunisia, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Togo, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon to join the convention.
- **Hungary hopes that the in-depth review of SDG 6 by the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July will be a timely opportunity for overcoming the pressing challenges in the water arena.** We will present a National Voluntary Review on SDG6 with a high-level delegation.
- Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for your kind attention!