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WOMEN AND WATER - GEOPOLITICAL ASPECTS TOWARDS CRISIS MANAGEMENT. INTERSECTIONS OF SDG 5-6 IMPLEMENTATION

Remarks by

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Mainstreaming gender in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

- The empowerment of women and girls, the promotion of gender equality is a cornerstone in the achievement of sustainable development. The establishment of a dedicated goal, the many cross-cutting targets and the mainstreaming of gender equality and the empowerment of women throughout the SDG framework were important first steps, but **gender inclusiveness has to ingrained in our efforts towards implementation** as well.
- As we look ahead to creating a more sustainable, inclusive and peaceful world, we must **ensure that the potential of half of the world's population is fully realized**. When we empower women and girls, we achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.
- This is especially valid in the case of SDG6, as **women play an essential role in realizing sustainable management of water** and in achieving a water-secure world. The **close interlinkages between SDG5 and SDG6** cannot be overlooked during the phase of implementation.
- Likewise, it is **essential that sustainable water management is gender inclusive** and recognizes **the important role of women as agents of change** and takes into account the specific challenges women and girls face.
- Sustainable management of water resources and sanitation provides great benefits to families and to the society as a whole.

The role of women in the implementation of the water related Sustainable Development Goals, Women as agents of change

- The cause of empowering women to take leading roles in the positive social transformations towards peace and sustainable development is especially close to my heart.

- Women have proven their tremendous potential to foster peace, nurture reconciliation and contribute to sustainable development of their communities. And yet, **the potential contribution of women to peace and development** remains severely undervalued.
- But apart from highlighting the impact of water management on gender equality, we must also emphasize how **women's participation** is necessary for effective implementation of the water related aspects of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.
- **Leadership** is often defined within the sphere of politics, but many women are already very active in civil society and are engaged at the community level. Building on this, the international community must more to **support the local movements**, encourage women to take up leading roles and create space for them to engage in politics at all levels.
- We need to think of the ways in which we, also under the aegis of the United Nations, can empower women to realize this potential for the betterment of humanity.
- For me, the answer lies in **innovation**; innovation in thinking, innovation in changing attitudes, innovation in acting to rectify gender imbalances.
- We have to strongly recognize and value the power and unique skills of women in peace and development. Empowering women by investing in their **education**, strengthening their leadership capacities, as well as **engaging them in decision-making** are in each society's best interest.
- Studies show that projects designed and run with the full participation of women are more sustainable and effective than those that don't include women, especially in the field of water and sanitation management.
- It is therefore imperative that women participate and play leadership roles in sustainable water management decision-making, capacity building, education and mobilizing political will.
- We must support women in reaching their full potential as **agents of change** and advance a gender perspective in the implementation of the SDGs at national, regional and at the global level, by also taking into account the specific challenges faced by women and girls.

The specific challenges faced by women in conflict and post-conflict areas

- We know well that worldwide, an estimated 2.5 billion people – half of the developing world – lack access to adequate sanitation. This needs urgent action.
- But we also know that gender-sensitive water management means much more than just access to adequate sanitation.
- **Women and girls continue to suffer disproportionately from the effects of armed conflict.** They are often the targets of sexual violence, abuse, sexual slavery, child and forced marriage, and other serious violations of their human rights.
- Women and girls are traditionally responsible for domestic water supply and sanitation, bearing the responsibility of fetching water, often going at long distances and exposing themselves to unsafe circumstances on the way.
- These women often live in conflict and post-conflict areas and are vulnerable to assault and sexual violence. In addition to the obvious effects on health, lack of access

to clean water and sanitation has a huge detrimental effect on the education opportunities and outcomes of women and girls.

Water as a source of cooperation

- The only way to tackle the multidimensional challenges and threats related to water, we have to take a close look at the **interlinkages between development, peace and security**.
- It is quite clear that inadequate water management, increased demand, water scarcity and water stress, natural disasters, and water insecurity, exacerbated by climate change can easily trigger conflicts within and among States.
- But while many consider water as a driver of conflict, water is also, and perhaps even more importantly, **a source of cooperation**. 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, a complete shift in the mindsets will be needed in the way we manage our waters.
- Water must **be treated as a high political priority** that is **integrated into other policy areas**. The growing uncertainties can only be tackled successfully if all Member States, as well as all stakeholders act together.
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development once again reconfirmed that **sustainable development and peace are intrinsically interlinked**. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development. Universal implementation of this Agenda will reduce tensions among countries, and will ensure that situations, threatening international peace and security, arise less frequently.
- The integrated nature of challenges and threats will require ever closer cooperation between the fields of development and security. The implementation of the Agenda requires a fresh look at the relationship of the two areas, the division of labor, and possible fields of convergence between all stakeholders. The 2030 Agenda creates an impetus for all Member States and UN organs as well to move out of the silos, and work together as never before.

Ensuring a more integrated and comprehensive water approach within the UN system

- With the adoption of the SDG framework and its integrated and comprehensive vision on water, we now have clear pathways towards placing water cooperation into the center of our collective efforts.
- Delivering on the water related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda will also enable achieving a multitude of other, directly and indirectly related development goals.
- **States and stakeholders should consider the options on the way forward towards a more integrated and comprehensive water approach within the UN** with a view to work towards implementing the water related aspects of the 2030 Agenda to ensure that water remains a source of cooperation and of peace.
- For effective implementation, a robust, **effective and integrated follow-up and review framework will be required**.

- Echoing the conclusions of the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (**UNSGAB**); there is currently a mismatch between the integrated and ambitious Agenda 2030 vision of freshwater and sanitation management and the international political structures available to contribute to its implementation and its follow-up and review.
- The global water governance structure is highly fragmented; there is disconnection between the water-specific processes on the international level. There is no institutional home for the cross-cutting theme of water under the umbrella of the UN.
- A **dedicated intergovernmental body** would enable regular dialogue among governments and stakeholders at the global level to provide guidance and recommendations for implementation of the SDGs targets related to water, while feeding into the High-Level Political Forum overseeing follow-up and review of the SDGs at the global level. This intergovernmental body on water would also offer a forum for knowledge exchange and mutual learning and for building partnerships for implementation and cooperation.
- Building on and engaging with the existing structures, water-relevant thematic networks and multi-stakeholder partnerships, the body would safeguard an integrated water perspective in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, while reflecting interlinkages with other themes, thereby promoting a cross-cutting understanding across the goals and targets.

The importance of data in SDG implementation

- **Integrated monitoring of progress** on SDG6 will be a prerequisite for full and effective implementation.
- To monitor progress made in implementing the water related SDG and targets, a **unified and coherent water data collection and monitoring mechanism** will have to be built. **If you don't measure it, you can't manage it.**
- Without putting in place effective monitoring and data collection systems the water related goals cannot be achieved in a timely fashion. **Data collection capabilities** will therefore have to be increased, especially in developing countries.
- An **intergovernmental body on water could be tasked to coordinate monitoring** and evaluation for water related targets, including the means of implementation to provide a comprehensive assessment of the progress in implementation.