

# **High-Level Interactive Dialogue of the UN General Assembly on Water Cooperation**

At the occasion of World Water Day, Friday, 22 March 2013

## **1. Background**

At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012 (Rio+20), Member States recognized that “water is at the core of sustainable development as it is closely linked to a number of key global challenges”. Water is essential for human health and well-being, food and energy production, social and economic stability, and for protecting and maintaining healthy ecosystems.

But water is also a finite and vulnerable resource under mounting pressure. Around the world, freshwater resources are threatened by climate change, urbanization, population growth, pollution and other drivers of change. Analysis suggest that by 2030 demand for freshwater will outstrip supply by 40 percent. Between 2000 and 2050, the number of people living in river basins under severe water stress is expected to more than double, reaching almost 4 billion people. While too little water can have devastating effects on humanity, too much water can also be fatal. In recent decades, the frequency and intensity of water-related disasters such as floods and droughts have been rising substantially, claiming the lives of millions of people and damaging the economies of many countries.

The UN General Assembly declared 2013 the International Year of Water Cooperation (A/RES/65/154). Enhancing cooperation and building partnerships at the local, national and transboundary levels will be critical to address freshwater-related challenges. A wide range of activities around the world will help raise awareness on the potential and challenges to water cooperation, facilitate dialogue among stakeholders and promote innovative solutions. This year’s World Water Day 2013 on 22 March will be also dedicated to the theme of water cooperation.

The High-Level Interactive Dialogue on Water Cooperation of the UN General Assembly will provide the opportunity to identify and discuss water-related challenges and key areas which will require stronger political support and greater cooperation at the international level. The event will also explore strategies and cooperative solutions to overcome these challenges and discuss the potential role that all stakeholders, including UN-System could play in this context.

The High-Level Interactive Dialogue on Water Cooperation complements the Official World Water Day celebrations to be held on the same day in The Hague. The Interactive Dialogue will address the four global key messages of the International Year of Water Cooperation (poverty reduction, economic benefits, environmental protection and peace building) as well as water security from a political perspective. In addition the session will also address the issue of extreme hydrological events and the challenges that emanate from them with a view to also exploring possible solutions.

## **2. Objective and expected outcome**

This event responds to the invitation of Member States to convene a High-Level Interactive Dialogue during the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly in New York on 22 March 2013, World Water Day, to mark the 2013 International Year of Water cooperation and the twentieth anniversary of World Water Day (A/67/204).

Taking place in the context of current discussions on the Post-2015 development framework and the process of developing a set of SDGs, the main objective of the event is to identify and discuss water-related challenges and key areas which in the future will require stronger political support and international cooperation. The event will also explore concrete strategies and practical solutions to overcome these challenges and discuss the potential role that all stakeholders including the UN-System could play in this context. In addition, this year also marks the 20th anniversary of the commemoration of World Water Day and in this regard, the event will provide an opportunity to share experiences and highlight the lessons learnt over the past 20 years.

The main output of the high-level interactive debate will be a President's summary that will inform ongoing discussions on the Post-2015 development framework and Open Working Group on SDGs, as well as forthcoming freshwater-related events such as the High-Level International Conference on Water Cooperation to be hosted by the Republic of Tajikistan in August 2013, Stockholm World Water Week in September 2013 and the Budapest Water Summit hosted by Hungary in October 2013.

## **3. Programme**

The High-Level Interactive Dialogue will start with an opening session featuring statements by the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary General (SG) and several leaders from UN Member States. The opening session will be followed by a videolink with the event taking place in The Hague.

The event will also feature two panel discussions: the first panel will set the stage with in-depth discussions on pressing freshwater-related challenges and areas that require better cooperation at the international level, while the second will look at concrete proposals, strategies and cooperative solutions for the period after 2015.

## Draft Programme

Time	Draft Programme
10:00 – 11:00	<p><b><i>Opening Session</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremic, President of UN General Assembly</li> <li>• H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General (tbc)</li> <li>• H.E. Mr. Okil Okilov, Prime Minister of Tajikistan</li> <li>• H.E. Dr. Rashid Ahmed Bin Fahad, Minister of Environment and Water, United Arab Emirates</li> <li>• H.E. Mr. Federico Ramos de Armas, State Secretary of Environment, Spain</li> </ul>
11:00 – 11:20	<p><b><i>Videolink to the official World Water Day in the Hague (GA Hall)</i></b></p>
11:30 – 13:00	<p><b><i>Panel 1: Setting the Stage - Issues, Challenges and Opportunities for Water Cooperation</i></b></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Jan Eliasson, UN Deputy Secretary-General</p> <p><b>Panelists:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HE Mr. M. Salem Ould Merzoug, High Commissioner of the Senegal River Organization (OMVS) and President of the International Network of River Basin Organizations (INBO)</li> <li>• Dr. Zafar Adeel, Director, UNU Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH)</li> <li>• Dr. Uschi Eid, Vice-Chair of the UN SG’s Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation and Co-Chair of the Bonn 2011 water, energy and food security conference</li> <li>• <i>Other panelists have been contacted</i></li> <li>• Interactive dialogue</li> </ul>
13:00 – 15:00	<p>Lunch break</p> <p>(Side event: hosted by Spain “Achieving the MDGs through Governance of Water and Sanitation. The Experience of the MDG Fund”; Conference room 7, NLB, 13.15-14.30 hrs)</p>
15:00 – 16:45	<p><b><i>Panel 2: Exploring Proposals, Strategies and Cooperative Solutions for the Period after 2015</i></b></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> tbc</p> <p><b>Panelists:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ms. Kusum Athukorala, Researcher and Advocacy Specialist, Chair of NetWater and the Sri Lanka Water Partnership (tbc)</li> <li>• Mr. Jeremy Bird, Director General of the International Water Management Institute</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof. Benedito Braga, President of the World Water Council</li> <li>• Ms. Julia Bucknall, Head of Water, World Bank</li> <li>• Mr. Jason Morrison, Technical Director of the CEO Water Mandate</li> <li>• <i>Other panelists have been contacted</i></li> <li>• Interactive dialogue</li> </ul>
After the dialogue	<p><b><i>Closing Session</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremic, President of the General Assembly</li> </ul>