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**Statement by  
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UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
TO THE HIGH-LEVEL INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE ON WATER  
OF THE 64<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
New York, 22 March 2010**

Mr. President,

Madame Deputy Secretary-General,

Prime Minister Oqil Oqilov,

Excellencies,

I am honoured to join this high-level interactive dialogue on water.

I spent my childhood in a rural village in China. I knew as a small boy that water is for life – my family depended on river water to grow paddy rice; I took buffalos, ducks to water ponds. Water gave my family our livelihood.

It still does today – thanks in part to integrated water resource management, rural livelihoods in China have improved by leaps and bounds in recent decades.

But we should never take water for granted. Challenges remain in sustainable water resources management.

From Barbados to China, from Ethiopia to Australia, nations, both developed and developing, have witnessed the devastating effects of drought in recent years. Asking the farmers who have seen the rice field go dry, the livestock decimated by shortage of water, you will truly understand why water is for life.

Water resources play a central role in reaching all economic, social and environmental goals and targets. Without water, there will be no prospects for achieving all MDGs. Sound water management must emerge as a strategic solution to development challenges.

Promoting integrated water resources management must become a central focus of UN system activities in implementing the “Water for Life” Decade.

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which I head, is proud to serve as the Secretariat of UN-Water, an interagency coordination mechanism bringing together 27 entities of the entire UN system.

UN-Water provides a single entry point to the United Nations system in this important field.

Excellencies,

Water resources issues are multi-faceted and there is no single actor that can claim to have a mandate or expertise to cover all aspects.

This is not unique to the UN system; governments, too, are facing the same reality. Different ministries carry portfolios for water, as it relates to agriculture, commerce, drinking water and sanitation, energy, health, and industrial development.

Within the UN system, we have tapped into our specialized expertise and resources to support member States in implementing the objectives of the Decade.

As part of the actions taken for the "Water for Life" Decade, UNDP and the World Bank have undertaken joint initiatives in water and sanitation. The UNDP Water Governance Programme and the World Bank's Water and Sanitation Programme are working together to develop rural and urban initiatives in water supply and sanitation.

My Department provides policy advice at the national level, through its technical advisory services to developing countries, in particular LDCs and SIDS, for strengthening institutional capacity to develop integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans.

UN-Water, which includes the secretariats of all five regional commissions as members, also encourages regional inter-agency networking and action in support of member States.

During the Water for Life Decade, UN-Water/Africa focus on monitoring progress in implementing regional and global initiatives and on improving access to information on African water resources. The UN-Water/Africa group has set up the African Water Information Clearing House, a continent-wide information system backed up by sub-regional networks of water and geo-information specialists and institutions.

Similar initiatives have taken place in other regions. The Economic Commission for Europe has focused on research and capacity-building in flood management and protection of water-related ecosystems.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean conducts research and disseminates information on the economic and institutional aspects of water resources management. It also provides advice on water legislation and regulation of water utilities.

As part of its activities related to the “Water for Life” Decade, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific has initiated programmes focusing on the application of strategic planning in integrated water resources management and on integrating disaster risk management into water resources management.

The Economic Commission for Western Asia has initiated several activities that address the specific water supply challenges in the region, in particular in building capacity for sound management of shared water resources.

Excellencies,

United Nations Funds and Programmes, as well as specialized agencies, have actively participated in the implementation of the “Water for Life” Decade.

Under the umbrella of UN-Water, WHO and UNICEF actively contribute to global water supply and sanitation monitoring through the Joint Monitoring Programme.

UNEP, among other activities, has strengthened the implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities.

UNESCO’s International Hydrological Programme has focused on minimizing risks to water resources systems, by improving the scientific and technological basis for the sound management of water resources, including the protection of the environment.

UN-Habitat has adopted a programmatic approach that allows donors to contribute funds to dedicated facilities, such as the Water and Sanitation Trust Fund, as well as the Water for Cities programmes.

Excellencies,

I have given only a snapshot of UN system activities in support of the Decade. You will certainly learn more details from my colleagues in the following panel discussions.

As member States implement the second half of the International Decade, “Water for Life” 2005-2015, UN-Water and its 27 member entities look forward to enhancing our support and contributions. And we’ll do so in a coherent and coordinated manner, with UN system acting as One and delivering as One.

Thank you.