

22 March 2012

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,  
President of the 66<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Side Event on the Celebration of the International Water Day:  
“From the World Water Day, 2012 ‘Water and Food Security’ to  
International Year Water Cooperation 2013”**

Your Excellency Mr. Sulton Rahimov, First Deputy Minister of Melioration and Water resources of Tajikistan,

Your Excellency Dr. Asha-Rose Migero, UN Deputy Secretary General,

Your Excellency Mr. Sirodjidin Aslov, Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations,

Mrs. Kenza Robinson, Secretary of UN-Water, UNDESA

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Sirodjidin Aslov, for the invitation to join you today.

It is a great pleasure to attend this meeting, to mark the observance of International Water Day.

This year, “Water and food security” is our theme.

Food security is fundamental to a decent life.

Food security depends on a large extent to the availability of clean, safe water.

Yet, as populations continue to grow, water shortages remain one of the greatest obstacles to human survival.

There are now 7 billion people on our planet.

That is 7 billion people to feed.

7 billion people who consume between 2 to 4 liters of water every day.

Clean, safe water is, therefore, critical to all efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger.

It is central to sustainable development and to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

We can be proud of progress to date towards achieving international agreed goals on water.

Almost two billion people have gained access to improved drinking water between 1990 and 2010.

The UN system plays an important role in supporting countries to achieve the goals of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the International Decade for Action: Water for Life 2005-2015.

The UN also supports Member States in meeting emerging challenges.

It promotes cooperation at all levels, and helps build capacity in integrated water resources management, facilitating access to safe drinking water, and the provision of sanitation services.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Despite our concerted efforts to date, much more has to be done to address the needs of the 800 million people who still drink dirty water.

40% of those still without access to improved drinking water live in Africa.

The International Year of Water Cooperation in 2013 could also serve as a platform to unify our efforts.

Declared by the General Assembly in 2010, The International Year of Water Cooperation will bring together the UN system, governments, civil society and the business community, to increase awareness of water-related problems and to consider ways to resolve them.

In our efforts, the efficient and sustainable use of limited water resources; the effective application of science and technology; and investment in irrigated agriculture should focus as much on economic development and income generation as on food security.

As we approach the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development - Rio+20 - we must recommit to achieving all of the MDGs.

We must also ensure safe drinking water for millions of people still suffering from water scarcity and dirty drinking water.

I call on all stakeholders – Governments, civil society, the private sector and the United Nations - to engage constructively to make smart and strategic decisions at Rio+20, with the health, well-being and prosperity of humanity at the fore.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Water is Life.

Without water there can be no future. Thank you very much.