

Mr. President  
Honourable Prime Ministers,  
Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Colleagues,  
Associate Administrator of UNDP,  
Under-Secretaries-General,  
Members of the UN family of Agencies represented here today,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed my pleasure to be here at this third High Level International Conference on Water Cooperation, an event that has now become one of international community's most important venues for discussions on the key topic of water cooperation.

This is due in large part to the leadership role that you, Mr. President, and the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, have collectively played in ensuring that water issues remain front and center in the consciousness of the international community.

I arrived in Dushanbe just yesterday, and within a few short hours of my arrival I observed some of the magnificent vistas that define this country. On my way to a reception yesterday evening, I saw a river winding its way, and on the other side, were magnificent mountains, which have stood the test of time. These geophysical attributes provide the context and rationale for this important meeting on water.

Mr President,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have a global water crisis on our hands- it is a crisis of epic proportions particularly for the poor and marginalised in rural and urban communities across the globe.

Global water consumption continues to grow exponentially as agricultural, industrial, and domestic demands increases. Growing pressures of urbanization and sprawling cities, and the adverse impacts of climate change intensify demand for clean water and sustainable sanitation and waste disposal services and systems.

Currently for a large percentage of the world's population, drinking water supplies and sanitation services are neither safe nor adequate. In many parts of the world, clean water is taken for granted- however, for countless others, such a luxury is

scarcely conceivable. They are the mothers who turn on the tap with fickle and unsafe results, they are the girls who walk great distances to bring water back home; they are the children with water-borne illness and they are the communities enmeshed in water-related conflicts. Indeed, they are the 783 million people who lack access to decent water supply, and the 1.1 billion people without sanitation.

Excellencies,

I am from a small place: the Caribbean island of Antigua and Barbuda. But there is one thing my country and all others across the globe have in common – which is our shared need for water to sustain life.

Water is critical for human health and well being, and also for the health of our planet. If we are to achieve our development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, if we are to eradicate poverty and hunger, if we are to advance on the path of sustainable development, water cooperation holds the key.

It is for this reason that the United Nations designated 2013 as the International Year of Water Cooperation as part of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Life”, 2005–2015 - an initiative that is most closely associated with the Republic of Tajikistan. It is no small wonder that under this country’s leadership we, the international community, have gathered here for this Conference.

Water cooperation is as essential now as it was three years ago when this conference was first conceived. With rapid population growth, urbanization, impacts from climate change and limited water and land resources all upon us, we need to be creative, cooperative and resolute in how we approach water conservation and efficiency.

Colleagues,

In *The Future We Want*, the political declaration adopted by our heads of state and government last year in Rio de Janeiro, water was recognized as central to sustainable development and closely linked to a number of key global challenges.

In Rio, leaders committed to (and I quote) “the progressive realization of access to safe and affordable drinking water and basic sanitation for all, as necessary for poverty eradication, women’s empowerment and to protect human health, and to significantly improve the implementation of integrated water resource management at all levels as appropriate.”

Excellencies,

As President-elect of the 68<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly, I have selected as my theme: "The Post 2015 Development Agenda: Setting the Stage!" To further define this theme, I have identified a number of thematic debates, one of which is entitled "*Water, Sanitation and Sustainable Energy in the Post 2015 Development Agenda*".

I hope that in your discussions here, you will, in fact, be the first to contribute to this thematic debate, as well as to other upcoming events, which are part of the Year of International Water Cooperation, including World Water Week in Stockholm and the 2013 Budapest Water Summit.

The ultimate objective, of course, is to clarify what kind of water goals we all want to see in a new development agenda, and more importantly, how we plan to implement them.

With this in mind, I'd like to invite you to consider a few questions that might help guide us as we move forward:

1. How can international assistance and cooperation significantly reduce water pollution and increase water quality, significantly improve wastewater treatment and water efficiency, and reduce water losses?
2. What measures are needed to better respond to floods, droughts and water scarcity?
3. How can we integrate a gender perspective in our approach to water issues?
4. How can we improve integrated water resource management at the trans-boundary level?
5. What practical measures can we implement to sustainable water practices in agriculture and food security and to ensure we are getting more crop per drop?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations is about embark on an ambitious agenda-setting exercise that will result in a new development paradigm for the post 2015 era. To get there we need to put the necessary building blocks in place at this stage, while seeking to ensure that the final result is a development agenda that is sustainable.

Water, in all aspects, must be key to this development agenda if it is to be what we all hope it is: the simplest and most basic of human rights.

Let us find the necessary ways and means to work together to conserve and preserve water so that there's enough for our future generations.

Thank you.