

22 March 2010

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki,  
President of the 64<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
at the High-Level Interactive Dialogue on Water - The International  
Decade for Action, " Water for Life", 2005-2015**

H.E. AKIL AKILOV, PRIME MINISTER OF TAJIKISTAN  
MADAME DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL  
EXCELLENCIES, MINISTERS AND SENIOR REPRESENTATIVES  
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

I am pleased to welcome all of you today to this High Level Dialogue on Water. Your strong participation testifies to the importance of this meeting. Let me welcome in particular, H.E. Okil Okilov, Prime Minister of Tajikistan for his presence and for his country's keen interest in this issue.

Water is life. It is an essential component of our bodies. It is a precious and common resource of the entire mankind, and all living beings. How best we are able to utilize and preserve this resource, I believe, is a fundamental question that concerns our present and future generations. The challenges are serious. But the opportunities and the potential to work together to overcome them are no less significant. It is right that the General Assembly discusses this issue and help synergize our efforts to address it effectively in all its aspects.

Excellencies,

Mid way through the International Decade of Action "Water for Life" we need to take stock of where we stand with regard to the implementation of the commitments and objectives contained therein. Appreciable efforts have been undertaken over the years leading to increased awareness and recognition of the crucial importance of sustainable use and efficient management of fresh water resources as well as the sanitation issues. However, when one in six persons does not have access to safe drinking water, when 2.5 billion people do not have access to basic sanitation, and when thousands of children continue to die everyday from preventable water-borne diseases, we know, sadly, that we are lagging behind in the implementation of the commitments related to water and sanitation, contained in the MDGs and other agreed goals in the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. We must be cognizant of its impact on the achievement of other targets related inter alia to poverty, health and environmental sustainability- issues that we will also take up in the context of the MDGs Review Summit review Summit in September.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Water impacts on our lives and our environment on a much wider scale. Water is a crucial factor in the climate change debate. There is also a linkage to natural disasters and their aftermath. As we recently witnessed in Haiti and Chile, one of the most pressing challenges facing the affected populations was the supply of drinking water and proper sanitation facilities.

Water related disasters are themselves a puzzle: while on one hand we have floods, tropical storms, typhoons, hurricanes and tsunamis, on the other, drought afflicts various parts of the world. This exacerbates the vulnerability, particularly of many developing countries, including Small Island Developing States. This dialogue provides an opportunity to underscore the connection between water, climate change and disaster risk management and the proactive engagement of all stakeholders to cope with these challenges.

With increased demand for water and dwindling supply, the scramble for water resources is becoming more evident. When it is an issue of survival, trans-boundary waters might become a source of potential conflicts. Nevertheless, water resources also present an opportunity for cooperation, and it is this aspect that we need to promote through dialogue and understanding, underpinning equitable and sustainable use and management of trans-boundary rivers, lakes and aquifers.

I hope this dialogue will provide a rich perspective on all these issues and will contribute to our efforts for global solutions and implementation of water related goals

I am pleased to announce that at 10:00 we will have a Video link to the celebrations on World Water Day in Nairobi from where the Executive Director of UNEP, Achim Steiner, and His Royal Highness, Prince Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands, will join us.

I want to express my thanks to all Member States for their support, as well as the United Nations Development programme, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, through UN Water, Friends of the United Nations, civil society and private sector, among other stakeholders that have contributed to this endeavor.

We have with us, distinguished personalities, as moderators and panelists, and I would like to welcome and thank them all for their participation.

I wish you a most fruitful and substantive discussion.