

(Check against delivery)

Statement by Mr. Hotaka Machida
Representative of Japan
at the Meeting of the Sixth Committee
on the Law of Transboundary Aquifers

22 October 2019

Thank you, Mr/Madam Chair,

It has been three years since the General Assembly last discussed this agenda item in 2016. My delegation is pleased to be here with colleagues to debate this item today.

Let me reiterate the importance of the topic we discuss today. As often pointed out, demand for fresh water has dramatically increased over recent decades, particularly where rapid socio-economic development has taken place. A large portion of fresh water is located in underground aquifers, which frequently exist across national boundaries. A number of these aquifers are heavily over-exploited, seriously depleted and damaged by pollution, and in need of proper management mechanisms.. Therefore, developing legal instruments for regulating the use of transboundary aquifers is an important task for all Member States in order to achieve the common goal of sustainable development.

Mr/Madam Chair,

The Government of Japan believes that the ILC draft articles on the law of transboundary aquifers provide a valuable platform for countries to establish bilateral or regional legal frameworks to manage their aquifer systems, for three reasons in particular:

- First, the draft articles adequately reflect a wide range of established State practices.

- Second, they are well supported by scientific evidence through cooperation with UNESCO, which provided valuable support to the ILC with its scientific and technical expertise.
- Third, the draft articles lay out the essential elements of a possible legal framework, thus allowing them to serve as a general and common basis for negotiations on particular bilateral or regional agreements and arrangements.

Progress in codification at the bilateral and regional levels has been slow but steady, as we can observe in the adoption of agreements and arrangements on transboundary aquifers bearing in mind the ILC draft articles. For this reason, my delegation would like to propose that the next discussion of this issue be held at the 79th session of the UNGA in five years. We believe this time span is necessary to observe further developments in State practice in order to make proper decisions on the final form of the ILC draft articles.

Mr/Madam Chair,

As all of you are aware, Japan is a country surrounded by oceans and thus does not have any transboundary aquifers itself. Nonetheless, as a responsible member of the international community, and as part of our efforts to support sustainable development and the rule of law, we have taken the lead in the discussions in this committee since the ILC submitted its final report in 2008. Although my delegation did not take the position of the facilitator of this agenda item this session for some technical reasons, we will continue to actively and constructively participate in the discussion.

Thank you, Mr/Madam Chair.