

**Statement on behalf of  
Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden**

**74th Session  
of the General Assembly of the United Nations**

**Sixth Committee**

**Agenda item 85  
The law of transboundary aquifers**

**New York  
22 October 2019**

*Check against delivery  
E-mail: [nycmis@um.dk](mailto:nycmis@um.dk)  
<http://fnnewyork.um.dk>*

Madam Chair,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of Finland, Norway, Iceland, Sweden - and my own country, Denmark.

Access to safe freshwater is essential.

According to the report of the Secretary-General (E/2019/68) “Special edition: progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals” from 8 May 2019 billions of people still lack access to safe water.

Approximately one third of all countries have medium or high levels of water stress and indications of serious difficulties in the supply of freshwater. Furthermore, as the climate change now affects every country in every continent, the Nordic countries feel that the work related to transboundary aquifers has become even more important also for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goal 6.

Therefore, the Nordic countries welcome further discussions on the law of transboundary aquifers.

Madam Chair,

In general, we find that the draft articles provide us with helpful tools to enable a sustainable management of transboundary aquifers.

However, on the substance we do have some concerns about the draft articles. The particular vulnerability of aquifers and the fact that the livelihood of a large number of people depend on well-managed transboundary aquifers make it particularly important for aquifer States not to cause harm to the transboundary aquifers.

The present draft articles 6 and 12 refer to a threshold of “significant harm”.

We believe this threshold is too high to safeguard transboundary aquifers to the benefit of the people that so heavily depend on them.

Madam Chair,

Having followed the matter for nearly a decade, we notice that a number of states have developed bilateral and regional agreements and arrangements on transboundary aquifers. One example is the Guarani Aquifer Agreement between Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay.

This development is positive, and we would like to use this opportunity to recognize States that have made such agreements and arrangements to the benefit of their communities and the environment. We recommend that all States, where relevant, take similar steps in order to secure proper management of transboundary aquifers.

The Nordic countries remain fully committed to continued discussions on the law of transboundary aquifers.

Thank you.