

(Check against delivery)

Statement by Mr. Gensaku MAEDA
Representative of Japan
At the Meeting of the Sixth Committee
On the Law of Transboundary Aquifers

19 October 2022

Thank you, Mr./Madam Chair,

Let me reiterate the importance of the topic of the law of transboundary aquifers. As is 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 the world's 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 to achieve the common goal of sustainable development.

Mr./Madam Chair,

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 the 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.

In this connection, we are glad to note, as a positive development since 2019, that the Agreement on Guaraní Aquifers finally entered into force on 26 November 2020. We see this Agreement is based on the ILC draft articles and is expected to serve as preventive diplomacy to avoid conflicts over the use of groundwater. We commend Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay for their tireless efforts, and we recommend that all States take similar steps to ensure proper management of transboundary aquifers.

Mr./Madam Chair,

Japan is a country surrounded by oceans and thus does not have any transboundary aquifers. 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. We will continue to actively and constructively participate in the discussion.

Thank you, Mr./Madam Chair.