

Vice-President of ECOSOC, H.E. Mr. Mahmamin Mahmaminov

Opening Remarks

**High-level Conference on Financing for Development and the Means of Implementation
of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

Breakout session on SDGs 6 and 7 – Energy and Water

19 November, 10:00-11:30 a.m.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today. Our success in achieving the SDGs will determine the kind of future we will create for ourselves and our children. Science, technology and innovation are among the most important and effective means of implementation for all of these goals. Therefore, I believe that financing STI in key sectors should be our top-most priority.

Today's session is dedicated to two sustainable development goals that are vital for the quality life of all people: SDG 6 on water and SDG 7 on energy. Water is the elixir of life. Today, there remain 2 billion people who are living in countries with excess water stress. Northern Africa and Western Asia experience water stress levels above 60 per cent, which indicates the strong probability of future water scarcity. Thousands of women wake up every day at 2 a.m. to walk for hours in search for water to feed their family. Agriculture - which is the primary economic activity - is facing reduced productivity due to lack of water.

Equally important for quality life is clean and affordable energy. In fact, it is crucial for achieving almost all the SDGs - from its role in poverty eradication all the way to advancements in health, education, water supply and industrialization, to combating climate change. Still, 1.1 billion people live without this valuable service. And current progress is only about two thirds of the pace needed to double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency by 2030.

It is striking that scientific solutions to address these challenges actually already exist in many areas. Examples include converting brackish water, polluted ground water and waste water into

affordable WHO-quality potable water; as well as installing and operating pollution-reducing, renewable waste-to-energy facilities.

Let me give you a specific example from the work of ECOSOC. As you know every year the President of ECOSOC convenes the meetings of the STI Forum. As part of the Forum's preparations, a call for innovations is launched every year. Winners of the Call attend the Forum and present their innovations. Last year, the WaterQuest team was among the winners. This team suggested AI solutions for providing fresh water. Their program is fine-tuned to identify high volume, self-recharging flowing water sources with around 98% of accuracy of water finding and 92% precision in predicting flow-rate. It has a track record of more than 1,200 wells drilled in a number of countries. It is effective and it works, but is it enough? Such solutions need to be scaled up, in order to bring progress to the global scale.

Scaling up such solutions requires financing. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda encourages thus countries to consider nationally appropriate spending targets for quality investments in essential public services for all, including energy, water and sanitation (para 12). Other stakeholders need to contribute, too. Scientists and innovators with useful discoveries need to identify entrepreneurs who can convert these scientific advances into products and businesses tailored to the needs and customs of local consumers. And conversely, entrepreneurs in emerging markets need the capacity to find, adapt and adopt useful technology. Matching this potential supply and demand seems fairly simple in theory – just build a data base and let people find each other via the internet – but real-world experience suggests that life is frequently more complicated.

I hope today's discussions will provide insights on how to most efficiently raise finance for STI in these areas that will end up in real actions.

It is my pleasure now to introduce a moderator, H.E. Csaba Korosi, Sherpa to the President of Hungary in the High Level on Water. H.E., the floor is yours.