UNITED NATIONS NATIONS UNIES

**As delivered**

# THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

--

# KEY NOTE ADDRESS
# STOCKHOLM WORLD WATER WEEK
# "WATER IS PEACE, WATER IS LIFE, WATER IS DIGNITY"

**Stockholm, 1 September 2016**

**Your Royal Highness,**
**Excellencies,**
**Distinguished guests,**
**Friends of Water,**

**I am honoured to be with you once again to speak at the Stockholm World Water Week. It is good to be back in Sweden, in particular on this internationally renowned occasion.**

**Let me thank all those behind this event for their outstanding dedication to this great cause. You are through the World Water Week mobilizing action on one of the most crucial challenges on the global agenda: safe water for all.**

**The water issue has for long been close to my heart. 24 years ago, as the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, I saw children in Somalia die in front of me out of dehydration, dysentery and diarrhea. For want of clean water and sanitation, many thousands of young lives ended prematurely. I tried to imagine the grief of their parents and siblings. I asked myself what the victims might have made of their lives had they had what all human beings should have – a healthy start in life. And I decided, then and there, to never**

**stop fighting for the fundamental right for all to water and sanitation.**

**Ever since my experience in Africa, I have been growingly reminded that we can never take the precious resource of water for granted.**

**A few months ago, during a visit to Vietnam, I saw farmers who had given up making a living on land ravaged by the impact of drought, the salination of freshwater and the erosion of shorelines by rising sea levels. I saw with my own eyes the effects of climate change.**

**There are few issues I can think of that are more essential for our survival than water.**

**We live in a time and in a world of dizzying change, of deep uncertainty, of grave risks, but, let us also remember, of promising opportunities.**

**Last year, United Nations Member States made a breakthrough in our quest for a better life for all and for a return to a healthy planet. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Climate Agreement, adopted in New York and Paris, are ground-breaking, ambitious and transformational – and have to be implemented.**

**These two global achievements are to be seen together, reflecting the interdependent relationship between peace, development and human rights. And quite naturally, water figures prominently in everything we are trying to achieve in these three pillars of the UN.**

**Indeed, by linking to water our work on peace, development and human rights, I want to suggest to you the following key words, guiding concepts, for my remarks today:**

**Water is peace, water is life, and water is dignity.**

**Peace, yes – water is central to the security of communities and nations.**

**Life, yes – water is indispensable to development, indeed to our survival on Earth.**

**Dignity, yes – water is a human right, fundamental for justice and rule of law.**

**First, water is peace.**

**In today's interconnected world, water availability is directly related to peace and security. Strains on water are rising in all regions. Climate change, pollution and growing demand for water are adding up to scarcity and ever greater risks.**

**Only 2.5 per cent of the water on the planet is fresh-water. The rest is too salty to drink or to use for agriculture, unless we resort to energy-costly de-salination.**

**70 per cent of our freshwater is locked in icecaps and snowfields. Almost all the rest is in the ground. Less than 1 per cent is available to us in rivers, lakes, clouds and aquifers.**

**By 2050, the world population could rise to nine billion. Nine billion people sharing a finite resource – water.**

**There are several reasons why water can become a source of conflict. A major one is unequal distribution.**

**One-third of the world's population already lives in countries with water stress. As the impacts of climate change grows, so too will the prospects of further stress. And if we continue on our current path, the world may face a 40 per cent shortfall in water availability by 2030.**

**The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) projects that, by 2025, 1.8 billion people will be living in countries or regions with absolute water scarcity. Two-thirds of the world population will be experiencing serious stress conditions.**

**I have personally witnessed the implications of such stress.**

**In Sudan, I saw first-hand how water was being used as an instrument of war by local militias in the Darfur conflict.**

**And recently in Iraq, I learned how extremist groups exploit access to water to expand control over territory and to threaten and subdue the population.**

**Today, more frequent and more intense periods of drought are devastating communities in the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, the drylands of East and Central Asia, and many other parts of the Planet.**

**Apart from causing hunger, droughts are driving people from the countryside to cities, increasing pressures on water which can lead to instability. A long period of drought and its consequences may, in fact, have been one of the factors behind the war in Syria.**

**Droughts reduce agricultural production and lead to rising prices in the marketplace. When staple food prices rise, civil unrest can follow.**

**Water easily becomes a source of conflict when this precious resource is inequitably allocated.**

**When upstream users of cross-boundary rivers are seen to deprive those downstream of their water, disputes are almost inevitable.**

**Still, I claim that it would be a mistake for us to get caught up in "water-war" rhetoric. Water equally represents a source of cooperation, a source of growth and a source of mutual positive dependence.**

**When we examine history, we see that cooperation over water, in fact, is more common than conflict over water.**

**Through water diplomacy, "hydro diplomacy", powerful signals can be sent on the benefits of cooperating around water resources. Water, fairly shared, can, indeed, become a confidence building measure, so desperately needed in many of today's conflict areas.**

**Three quarters of UN Member States share rivers or lake basins with their neighbours. In the second half of the 20th century, more than 200 water treaties were successfully negotiated.**

**The 1960 Indus Water Treaty between India and Pakistan has survived three wars and has been instrumental in preventing water from becoming a reason for conflict.**

**Lake Titicaca has long been an arena of cooperation between Bolivia and Peru.**

**And water-use has been an area where cooperation has been possible between Israelis and Jordanians. A more equitable distribution of water between Palestinians and Israelis could be an important confidence-building measure.**

**In Europe, the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes has fostered collaboration since 1992.**

**And in Central Asia, the UN is collaborating closely with the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea.**

**As we work to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we must capitalize and expand on these initiatives. Scarcity of resources, in particular water, should trigger us to find models of sharing and cooperation in the interest of peace and prosperity.**

**This brings me to my second point, <u>water is life</u>.**

**Water is essential to the viability of ecosystems and the health and well-being of people.**

**1.8 billion people worldwide drink contaminated water. 2.4 billion people lack improved sanitation.**

**In poor countries, 90 per cent of sewage is discharged untreated into rivers, lakes and coastal areas.**

**An estimated 800-900 children under the age of five die every day from diarrheal diseases.**

**Sustainable Development Goal 6 calls on us to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by the year 2030.**

**Goal 6 and its targets must not be seen in isolation. They are part of a larger pattern. I look at the 2030 Agenda like a tapestry, with many interlocking patterns and threads.**

**One of those threads, which is woven throughout the entire cloth of the Sustainable Development Goals, is water.**

**Water and sanitation are related to a number of development areas: public health, food security, poverty reduction, economic growth, livable cities, sustainable energy, environmental health and climate action.**

**But the interdependence between the goals also creates challenges. As poverty declines and as standards of living rise – as they should – people around the world are changing their food habits. Most of the water we consume is embedded in the food we eat. From farm to table, a kilo of wheat uses 1,500 liters; a kilo of beef, 15,000 liters.**

**Agriculture already accounts for 70 per cent of all the water we use. And the water that agriculture uses is not available for producing hydro-energy or for drinking and sanitation.**

**Sustainable food production and agricultural practices are therefore of critical importance for sustainable water management.**

**For water to continue to sustain life, we must work together in innovative ways. The global partnership for Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) is a good example of bringing people together across different sectors.**

**In the same vein, the United Nations is engaging the private sector, civil society and the scientific community to support Member States in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Here, the SDG Advocates, including Crown Princess Victoria and several other prominent personalities, will be playing an important mobilizing role.**

**As part of these efforts, the UN Secretary-General and the President of the World Bank earlier this year established a High Level Panel on Water with the participation of 10 Heads of State. They are now developing an important plan of action.**

**With networks such as SWA, our own umbrella organization UN-Water, as well as the High Level Panel on Water and different business initiatives, we can generate greater cooperation for the benefit of all.**

**This brings me to my third and final point.**

**<u>Water is dignity</u>.**

**The new Sustainable Development Agenda must be a vehicle for efforts to achieve the rights to water and sanitation for all, without discrimination.**

**When we call for no one to be left behind, it is not from a sense of charity. It is an acknowledgement of a duty. The right to water is a human right.**

**A child missing school to collect water is deprived of an essential right.**

**So too is a girl denied an education because her school lacks toilets for girls.**

**Let me state unequivocally: there is no dignity in illness and death from diarrhea, there is no dignity in open defecation, or there is no dignity in paying outrageous prices for water in slums.**

**In today's world, limited natural resources must be managed more fairly. Climate change and growing demand are contributing to increased water scarcity.**

**Yet, for food security for 9 billion people, we need more water resources.**

**We need more water and better methods to provide improved sanitation.**

**And we need to address equity – among sectors of society and among populations.**

**We have huge tasks ahead of us. But we also have great tools in our hands for water availability and water equity, not least with the new SDGs.**

**The answer lies in better management – using what we have more wisely, more smartly, more responsibly.**

**This means integrated management of watersheds and lake basins.**

**This means improved irrigation technologies.**

**This means less water-intensive and more climate-resilient crops.**

**We cannot expect governments to do all this alone. Guaranteeing water security for all will require the full engagement of all actors, including the private sector and the scientific community.**

**Dear World Water Week Participants,**

**In closing, some personal remarks. Throughout my life as a diplomat and politician, and for the past five years as Deputy-Secretary-General, I have sought to place water issues where they belong: at the core of our attention and the centre of our work.**

**Many people made jokes when I at official meetings in New York talked about toilets and open defecation. But bringing these words to the diplomatic discourse is to me very essential. In fact, they bring the stark realities into our meeting rooms.**

**We now have a dedicated SDG for water and sanitation. Awareness has grown, not least thanks to so many of you here today. People are getting ever more engaged. Innovation is thriving.**

**We still face daunting realities. But I believe we today are better placed than ever to keep children from dying needlessly. I have been haunted by what I saw in Somalia in 1992. But I am heartened by what is happening today to keep children and others from meeting a similar fate, again thanks to many of you.**

**Let us be driven by hope and determination.**

**Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and I have given water issues high priority during our terms in office. We count on you to carry this work forward. We count on your full support to the next Secretary-General in pursuing this historic, truly noble, even sacred, mission and cause: the right to water.**

**Thank you.**

**[END]**