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Statement

by

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at

9th World Water Forum: Ministerial Segment

In Person, 21 March 2022

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Oval Room CICAD

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Transboundary water cooperation is not an option, but a must, for so many countries. Globally, more than 40% of the world population lives in basins shared with other countries and 153 countries worldwide share rivers, lakes and groundwaters.

My country, Slovakia, just as our Forum hosts, Senegal, share significant water resources with other riparian countries. Our major transboundary rivers, the Danube and Senegal, connect people through navigation and trade, bring drinking water to millions of people, sustain our economies, agriculture and energy production.

Our forefathers have been visionaries by promoting peace and regional integration through water cooperation. They established strong and effective basin organizations, the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube and the Senegal Basin Development Organization. These organizations bring together the riparian countries to jointly address common challenges such as floods, droughts, pollution and ecosystem degradation. Cooperation has brought multiple benefits to our region in terms of improved health, enhanced climate resilience, stronger energy and food security and sustainable development.

However, many transboundary basins and their populations worldwide do not enjoy the benefits we see in the Danube and Senegal basins. Only 24 countries worldwide have all their shared waters covered by operational arrangements for water cooperation, as the second reporting on SDG indicator 6.5.2 on transboundary water cooperation, carried out by UNECE and UNESCO shows.

We therefore urgently need to accelerate progress if we want to achieve SDG 6 by 2030. I thank the government of Senegal for having elevated cooperation as one of the main priorities of this Forum. UNECE is pleased to have

contributed to the Forum as a strategic partner and a member of the Pilot Group on Cooperation.

This World Water Forum in Dakar offers all of us meeting here, and the water community at large, the opportunity to mobilise stakeholders to urgently accelerate actions for transboundary cooperation, to promote peace and achieve the SDGs. It is also an important step towards the 2023 UN Water Conference.

I therefore wish to call upon all of you to make sure that transboundary cooperation receives the needed attention at the UN Water Conference and to commit to concrete actions at this unique occasion.

Accelerating transboundary water cooperation requires a broad partnership of actors joining efforts to work together on the existing challenges: from the strengthening of the legal and institutional frameworks, to enhancing capacity, making data available, increase financing, etc.

From our side, in the UNECE secretariat of Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, known as the Water Convention, we are ready to do our part.

The Water Convention provides a unique legal and intergovernmental platform in the United Nations. It supports water cooperation by promoting development and implementation of transboundary agreements, the exchange of experiences, the development of common policy responses and the strengthening of capacities.

Since the opening to the Convention for accession to all UN Member States, many African countries have joined it, including the Forum's hosts, Senegal. Currently, more than 15 countries are in the accession process.

I encourage all countries present here to consider accession to the Water Convention and to take advantage of the benefits it offers to advance sustainable development, transboundary cooperation and peace.

Finally, I would like to sincerely thank Senegal and the World Water Council for the organization of this Forum. UNECE stands ready to contribute to the implementation of the Dakar declaration, in cooperation with our colleagues from the UN system, governments and partners.

Thank you.