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Statement

by

Ms. Olga Algayerova

United Nations Under-Secretary-General

Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

at

UN-Water High-level Political Forum Special Event

Launch of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 Global Acceleration Framework

Virtually, 9 July 2020

14:00 – 15:30 (Geneva time)

8:00 a.m. to 9.30 a.m. NY time.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Progress towards SDG 6 is lagging behind. We need to speed up. UNECE will do its part by contributing to the SDG 6 global acceleration framework through several commitments and particularly to the governance, data and information and capacity-building accelerators.

First, at the global level, we will support countries to improve and monitor inter-sectoral and transboundary water governance, focusing on development, implementation and financing of agreements, in order to prevent conflicts and promote development.

Second, at the Pan-European level, we will support countries to achieve access to water and sanitation for all and prevent diseases.

COVID-19 has shown that safe and sufficient water, adequate sanitation and hygiene can save lives. The Protocol on Water and Health, jointly serviced by UNECE and WHO-Europe, provides a practical tool for the principles of the 2030 Agenda and the accelerator framework: principles such as inclusiveness and helping to realize the human rights to water and sanitation. Its progressive target setting and national reporting on all aspects of water, sanitation, hygiene and health are mechanisms to accelerate progress. It supports countries in recovery from and preparedness for COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. I call on countries to ratify and implement the Protocol and use its many tools.

60 per cent of the world's freshwater flows in shared basins. Therefore, achieving SDG6 requires effective transboundary governance. Transboundary cooperation is also crucial for other SDGs including peace, health, food, and energy. SDG Target 6.5. requires countries to implement integrated water

resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation. However, the first reporting on SDG indicator 6.5.2, carried out by UNECE and UNESCO, showed that we need greater progress: only 17 of the reporting countries achieved the target in 2018. Therefore, a huge concerted effort is necessary. A coalition of all relevant actors needs to mainstream transboundary water cooperation in order to close the governance gap. We need to enhance capacity and political will for cooperation, step up human and financial resources, and establish legal and institutional frameworks. I call on all actors to contribute: countries, basin organizations, international financial institutions, UN agencies and NGOs. UNECE will support development and implementation of agreements through guidance, projects on the ground and capacity-building in the framework of our Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, known as the Water Convention.

The Convention provides a unique global legal and intergovernmental UN platform for the peaceful management of shared waters. Since 1992, it has greatly accelerated progress towards transboundary cooperation. Following its opening to all UN Member States in 2016 it now counts 44 Parties. I welcome the most recent Party, Ghana, which acceded last week. 20 countries are in the process of accession and more than 120 participate in the Convention's activities. The Secretary-General is calling upon all countries to accede to the 1992 Water Convention and the 1997 United Nations Watercourses Convention.

We look forward to our cooperation in the global acceleration framework and Water and Climate Coalition.

Thank you.