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**Statement**

**by**

**Mr. Sven ALKALAJ**

**United Nations Under-Secretary-General**

**Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

**at**

**UN-Water workshop on a sustainable development goal relating to water**

**Geneva, 16–17 December 2013**

Secretary-General, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome the UN-Water family—Members from the United Nations System and Partners—to the Palais des Nations. You have before you the important task of distilling the numerous and diverse challenges of the water agenda into a proposal for a sustainable development goal on water with a series of simple, clear targets. Those targets should be aspirational and realistic, and at the same time politically-acceptable and measurable. I hope you will be able to find a compromise, taking into account the numerous proposals and opinions. I would also like to express my thanks to the UN-Water Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, which has worked hard during the last half year on preparing a draft proposal. I would also like to thank the donors who made this work by UN-Water and by UNECE possible.

The process of consultations on 11 different areas started more than a year ago and UNECE led the stream on water resources management. Many of you have joined us here for a global consultation meeting in February this year focused

on the wastewater and water management streams which has resulted in the following priorities: resilience in terms of climate change adaptation; transboundary water cooperation; water quality and ecosystems; water efficiency; allocation and balancing uses; and water governance in general.

Similar themes were discussed at numerous other occasions, including the Open Working Group's meeting in New York in May and the Budapest Water Summit in October.

These consultations have shown that the sustainable development goals should address the water agenda in full. They should cover: water, sanitation and hygiene; water efficiency and governance of water resources; wastewater and water quality; reducing the risk of water-related disasters; and key cross-sectoral links, notably with energy and food.

A particular priority for the UNECE Water Convention, and one that seems at last to be gaining currency at the political level, is that water resources management has to be at the basin level, whether or not crossing national borders. It will not be possible to reach any SDG on water without effective

and cooperative management of transboundary waters. I therefore urge you to be bold in retaining basin-level management, including for transboundary basins, in your advice to Member States.

A second priority is of equitable and universal access to safe water and sanitation. In November, the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health adopted an *Equitable Access Scorecard* to supplement the existing legal and policy tools available to the Protocol's Parties and others. They invited States and other stakeholders to use the *Scorecard* as a policy tool to assess the situation of equity of access to water and sanitation in their respective countries, and to plan necessary measures for improvement of the situation.

They also noted that the WHO/UNICEF wealth quintile analysis complements the *Score-card* approach by providing country-specific data on access to water and sanitation by different groups of population. In addition, they decided to work on strengthening hygiene education and the promotion

of sanitation in schools. These issues are clearly of concern to Member States.

But the discussions should not stop at the level of proposing a possible water goal. It is important that you also discuss tomorrow how to promote the water goal and how to ensure its implementation and monitoring. The United Nations System will obviously play an important role in that and UNECE will assume its responsibility. For example, we are planning a briefing for missions in Geneva early next year. Later on, the two legal instruments we service, the Protocol on Water and Health and Water Convention, can help countries in the implementation of an eventual SDG on water.

I therefore wish you fruitful discussions over the coming two days leading to a convincing proposal to Member States that will be in the best interests of all the people of the United Nations.

Thank you.

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