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Closing statement

by

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at

COP28 Energy, Industry, Just Transition, Indigenous People Day Event

(Dubai, UAE)

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Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you to the COP28 Presidency and to WMO for having led the organization of this important event.

I am also grateful that the UN-Water expert group on climate change and water has brought this topic on the agenda: starting with the Bonn workshop in June 2023, then through a study that's being carried out by the International Universities Climate Alliance (IUCA) and now this event.

We have heard that there are multiple linkages between water and energy.

As it was emphasized, water resources globally are suffering from climate change impacts.

At the same time, water resources and associated ecosystems provide a significant potential for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Without considering freshwater in such efforts, it will be very difficult to achieve the Paris Agreement.

In many countries, the overall energy system is vulnerable to water stress, flooding, droughts, and climate change in general, through changes in the water cycle.

Water is a prerequisite for mitigation efforts linked to the transition towards clean energy, for example for hydroelectric power generation, cooling in nuclear power plants, the use of geothermal resources, and for the extraction and processing of certain minerals.

It also plays a key role in the industrial production of renewable energy technologies and batteries, which requires large amounts of metals, minerals and other natural resources.

Water is of course needed to grow biofuels.

And last, but not least, hydrogen production through electrolysis, very high on the energy transition agenda of many countries, needs water and thus competes with other uses.

Water availability for climate mitigation purposes cannot be taken for granted: water impacts need to be considered when selecting mitigation measures, especially in water-scarce regions.

Integrated water and energy planning at the national and regional levels is crucial. In shared basins, transboundary cooperation is key to prevent and reduce risks and ensure that the energy transition is just.

The principles of international water law can guide towards sustainability and equity.

The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), hosted by UNECE, provides a unique global legal framework and intergovernmental platform to ensure the sustainable use of transboundary water resources by facilitating cooperation, including on water and energy.

For more than 10 years, the Convention's Task Force on Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus has provided a platform for discussing tradeoffs and synergies between water, food and energy.

It has brought together over 300 experts from governments and academia around the world.

Very relevant to our discussion today, the next Task Force meeting on 7 and 8 December will tackle, among others, the role of transboundary water cooperation for the energy transition, and mainstreaming the water-food-energy nexus in global climate and environmental processes.

I hope that your countries and organizations will be there.

I would also like to stress that water efficiency measures – for example modern pumps and irrigation systems, or efficient municipal water conveyance and distributed storage - as well as landscape and nature-based solutions, can contribute significantly to reduce energy consumption.

At the same time, saving and reducing energy can save water.

Considering that energy efficiency remains a top priority, it is one more reason to look at these systems together, as we seek practical, feasible solutions to climate change.

How to move this discussion forward? Let me make four points:

First, we need to consider these issues in the discussions and negotiations here at COP28 and beyond in the global climate processes, including in the response to the Global Stocktake.

Second, we need to consider the interlinkages in water and energy planning at national and regional levels.

This should be the basis for the new Nationally Determined Contributions, and for national and regional energy planning documents.

Third, we should use existing tools to avoid tradeoffs and increase synergies.

One such tool is the toolkit *Towards sustainable renewable energy investment and deployment*, jointly developed by the UNECE water team and UNECE Sustainable Energy Division, in cooperation with partners.

This toolkit considers the transboundary, regional dimension of cooperation and is based on experience from pilot projects implemented by UNECE and partners in the Western Balkans, Central Asia, the North-Western Sahara Aquifer and others.

Finally, we need more research to assess the amount of water required for each mitigation measure.

To this end, today's discussions will be continued in the framework of the UN-Water expert group on climate change and water, co-coordinated by UNECE, WMO and UNESCO.

The results of the study I mentioned, on the water dependency of the Paris Agreement, will be presented at the June 2024 climate change conference in Bonn and at COP 29.

It is crucial that subsequently, these results are taken up and assessed in the 7th IPCC assessment cycle, and summary for policymakers.

Thank you very much for your attention.

I look forward to continuing this discussion in June in Bonn.
