

# **High-Level Interactive Dialogue of the UN General Assembly on Water Cooperation**

At the occasion of World Water Day, Friday, 22 March 2013  
(GA Hall and NLB II)

## **1. Background**

At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012 (Rio+20), Member States recognized that “water is at the core of sustainable development as it is closely linked to a number of key global challenges”. Water is essential for human health and well-being, food and energy production, social and economic stability, and for protecting and maintaining healthy ecosystems.

But water is also a finite and vulnerable resource under mounting pressure. Around the world, freshwater resources are threatened by climate change, urbanization, population growth, pollution and other drivers of change. Analysis suggest that by 2030 demand for freshwater will outstrip supply by 40 percent. Between 2000 and 2050, the number of people living in river basins under severe water stress is expected to more than double, reaching almost 4 billion people. While too little water can have devastating effects on humanity, too much water can also be fatal. In recent decades, the frequency and intensity of water-related disasters such as floods and droughts have been rising substantially, claiming the lives of millions of people and damaging the economies of many countries.

The UN General Assembly declared 2013 the International Year of Water Cooperation (A/RES/65/154). Enhancing cooperation and building partnerships at the local, national and transboundary levels will be critical to address freshwater-related challenges. A wide range of activities around the world will help raise awareness on the potential and challenges to water cooperation, facilitate dialogue among stakeholders and promote innovative solutions. This year’s World Water Day 2013 on 22 March will be also dedicated to the theme of water cooperation.

The High-Level Interactive Dialogue on Water Cooperation of the UN General Assembly will provide the opportunity to identify and discuss water-related challenges and key areas which will require stronger political support and greater cooperation at the international level. The event will also explore strategies and cooperative solutions to overcome these challenges and discuss the potential role that all stakeholders, including UN-System could play in this context.

The High-Level Interactive Dialogue on Water Cooperation complements the Official World Water Day celebrations to be held on the same day in The Hague. It will address the four global key messages of the International Year of Water Cooperation (poverty reduction, economic benefits, environmental protection and peace building) as well as water security from a political perspective. In addition the session will also address the issue of extreme hydrological events and the challenges that emanate from them with a view to also exploring possible solutions.

## **2. Objective and expected outcome**

This event responds to the invitation of Member States to convene a High-Level Interactive Dialogue during the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly in New York on 22 March 2013, World Water Day, to mark the 2013 International Year of Water cooperation and the twentieth anniversary of World Water Day (A/67/204).

Taking place in the context of current discussions on the Post-2015 development framework and the process of developing a set of SDGs, the main objective of the event is to identify and discuss water-related challenges and key areas which in the future will require stronger political support and international cooperation. The event will also explore concrete strategies and practical solutions to overcome these challenges and discuss the potential role that all stakeholders including the UN-System could play in this context. In addition, this year also marks the 20th anniversary of the commemoration of World Water Day and in this regard, the event will provide an opportunity to share experiences and highlight the lessons learnt over the past 20 years.

The main output of the high-level interactive debate will be a President's summary that will inform ongoing discussions on the Post-2015 development framework and Open Working Group on SDGs, as well as forthcoming freshwater-related events such as the High-Level International Conference to be hosted by the Republic of Tajikistan in August 2013, Stockholm World Water Week in September 2013 and the Budapest Water Summit hosted by Hungary in October 2013.

## **3. Programme**

The High-Level Interactive Dialogue will start with an opening session featuring statements by the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary General (SG) and several leaders from UN Member States. The opening session will be followed by a videolink with the event taking place in The Hague.

The event will also feature two panel discussions: the first panel will set the stage with in-depth discussions on pressing freshwater-related challenges and areas that require better cooperation at the international level, while the second will look at concrete proposals, strategies and cooperative solutions for the period after 2015.

**Draft Programme**  
*(the speakers are to be confirmed)*

<b>Time</b>	<b>Draft Programme: (GA Hall, NLB)</b>
10:00 – 11:00	<p><b><i>Opening Session (GA Hall)</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremic, President of the General Assembly</li> <li>• H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General</li> <li>• H.E. Mr. Okil Okilov, Prime Minister of Tajikistan</li> <li>• High-level representative from Egypt (tbc)</li> <li>• High-level representative from United Arab Emirates (tbc)</li> <li>• High-level representative from Jordan (tbc)</li> <li>• High-level representative from Panama (tbc)</li> <li>• State Secretary of Environment of Spain, Federico Ramos de Armas</li> </ul>
11:00 – 11:20	<p><b><i>Videolink to the official World Water Day in the Hague (GA Hall)</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statement by HRH the Prince of Orange, Chair of the UN SG’s Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB)</li> <li>• Special presentation by Mr. Michel Jarraud, Chair of UN-Water on the messages of the Global Thematic Consultation on Water</li> <li>• Message from Ms. Irina Bokova, Director General of UNESCO</li> </ul>
11:30 – 13:00	<p><b><i>Panel 1: Setting the Stage - Issues, Challenges and Opportunities for Water Cooperation (NLB II)</i></b></p>
13:00 – 14:15	Lunch break
14:15 – 15:45	<p><b><i>Panel 2: Exploring Proposals, Strategies and Cooperative Solutions for the Period after 2015 (NLB II)</i></b></p>
15:45 – 16:00	<p><b><i>Closing Session (NLB II)</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremic, President of the General Assembly</li> </ul>

#### **4. Participants**

Participants will include high-level representatives from Member States, UN-agencies, international and regional organizations, civil society and the private sector.