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Statement delivered by

Ambassador Karl Lagatie, Deputy Permanent Representative

Celebrating World Water Day 2024: Converging Efforts, Keeping the Momentum of Progress

New York, 22 March 2024

Mrs. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies & Gentlemen,

Let me start by thanking Indonesia, Tajikistan, The Netherlands, UN-Water and UN DESA for the organisation of this High-Level event.

A year ago, the 2023 UN Water Conference was a landmark moment for water with the world united to mobilise global action for water security and resilience. It elevated water as a United Nations priority and showed that addressing the global water crisis requires cooperation rather than competition on the water resource. The conference has already left an important legacy and we strongly welcome all the developments that it has delivered.

The follow-up resolution will ensure that attention to water will be maintained at the highest level in the years to come, through the UN Water Conference of 2026 and the Water Decade Conference in 2028.

We also support the work of UN-Water and UN DESA in preparing an action-oriented system-wide strategy for water and sanitation, which will increase policy coherence and coordination of the UN system and enhance demand-driven support to countries to accelerate progress on the sustainable delivery of water and sanitation.

Only a few weeks ago, the water resolution adopted by the UN Environment Assembly confirmed the importance of implementing integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation.

We need to build further on those efforts, towards an effective multilateral water governance including through the appointment of a UN Special Envoy on Water, enhanced integration of water-related priorities in multilateral processes, regular intergovernmental dialogues and the continued globalisation of the Water Convention.

We trust the upcoming World Water Forum in Bali, the Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference in Dushanbe and the One Water Summit in New York in September will sustain that momentum.

Let me now turn to the official global theme of World Water Day 2024, “Leveraging Water for Peace”, which unfortunately is not reflected in the concept note or programme of today’s event.

As water scarcity increases, competition for freshwater resources threatens stability among and within countries through conflicts and displacement. The essential role of water also makes it far too often a weapon of war, with water bodies being intentionally polluted, water installations attacked and people prevented from getting their necessary supplies.

The EU is committed to leveraging “water for peace” and improving water resilience by actively addressing the role of water throughout the whole conflict cycle, from conflict prevention to mediation and peacebuilding - using integrated water resource management and transboundary water cooperation as powerful tools for conflict prevention and peacekeeping.

In conclusion, water, including the water-security nexus, needs to be a priority topic across multilateral processes. We stress its strategic importance to achieve the SDGs and to build resilience to climate change.

The human rights of access to water and sanitation must become a reality for all. Securing water means securing sustainability and peace.

I thank you.