

Statement by
Mr. Surasri Kidtimonton,
Secretary-General, Office of the National Water Resources,
Office of the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand
at the UN 2023 Water Conference
23 March 2023, UNHQ

Presidents of the Conference,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

1. Water is crucial for life and sustainable development. As stated by the UN Secretary-General, “water is humanity’s lifeblood”. Water is an integral part of humanity’s culture and sustains our economies. Access to safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation services are basic human rights, to which Thailand attaches high priority.

2. To this end, Thailand has made great efforts to continue improving the country’s water distribution system. To date, 98 per cent of the country’s population have access to water supply system. The Thai Government has set a firm target of expanding this coverage to the entire population, especially those living in remote and rural areas, to ensure access to safe water for use and consumption at an affordable price for all. Furthermore, we are increasing water storage capacity and improving our water management to reduce water-related disasters, thus enhancing national water security.

3. Based on our experience and lessons learned, Thailand would like to highlight key challenges and strategic directions in order to ensure water security for all, as follows:

4. First is funding. In Thailand, only 30 per cent of the planned investment can be allocated from the Government's budget. Therefore, we need to find innovative ways to mobilize additional financing to improve water quality and water services for all sectors. It is thus important to secure adequate finance to ensure inclusive and efficient water service system.

5. Second is technological gap. Standardized database, appropriate technology and innovation, together with traditional and local knowledge, are necessary in order to keep up with the increasing demand for water within the country. International cooperation can play a crucial role in capacity building and closing the technological gap, especially for developing countries.

6. Third is good governance. Sustainable management and conservation of water resources require cooperation from all stakeholders. Effective law enforcement is a good start but it is not enough. Sustainable water management requires good governance and engagement of all sectors. This is why Thailand places a strong emphasis on empowering various groups, including the Water User Associations. Apart from their local wisdom, these associations can help mobilize funding and find new technology and innovation. Raising awareness of all sectors, including children and youth regarding water management, is also important.

7. The Thai Government is aware that overcoming these challenges is not easy, and requires transformative changes in many aspects. Due to the cross-cutting nature of this issue, an integrated approach entailing all-of-government and all-of-society participation is needed. Cross-boundary cooperation is also required.

8. As we approach the mid-term point in the Water Action Decade and the SDGs, we need to accelerate actions to drive forward SDG water-related goals, bearing in mind the interconnectedness between these goals and other global agendas, be they climate change or disaster risk reduction.

Excellencies,

9. Due to the increasing importance of water in the global agenda and its far-reaching impacts on peace, progress and development, Thailand supports the appointment of the UN Special Envoy on Water to drive forward more intensive actions on water at all levels. We also welcome ideas to develop and strengthen networks amongst relevant national and regional water institutes, to enhance knowledge sharing and promote mutually beneficial cooperation.

10. We are committed to do more and to cooperate with all partners to achieve a more secure world in which clean water and sanitation is accessible to all by 2030.

Thank you.