

Secretary-General, in Security Council, Stresses Promotion of Water-resource Management as Tool to Foster Cooperation, Prevent Conflict

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SECURITY COUNCIL

7818TH MEETING (AM)

Speakers Highlight Effective Initiatives in Some Regions, Low Capacity in Others

Management of the world's precious water resources must be promoted as a means to foster cooperation rather than conflict, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the Security Council today, as he opened a day-long open debate on water, peace and security.

“Water challenges affect us all,” said Secretary-General Ban. “Let us commit to invest in water security as a means to ensure long-term international peace and security.” Access to water could exacerbate communal tensions, as in Afghanistan and Peru, and armed conflict resulted in destruction of water systems, as in Syria and Gaza, he said, pointing out that Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) targeted control of dams as a strategic tactic.

On the other hand, shared water resources often generated cooperation, with more than 200 water treaties having been negotiated successfully in the latter twentieth century, he said, citing agreements signed between India and Pakistan, Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan, as well as Mali, Mauritania and Senegal as instruments promoting stability and peace. Describing United Nations efforts to promote “hydro-diplomacy”, he said that he and

the President of the World Bank Group had convened the High-level Panel on Water and Peace to champion a comprehensive and collaborative way to develop and manage water resources. He called for implementation of the Panel's recently adopted Action Plan.

Others briefing the Council were Danilo Turk, Chair of the Global High-level Panel on Water and Peace, Christine Beerli, Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and Sundeep Waslekar, President of the Strategic Foresight Group.

Mr. Turk described the transboundary management of the Senegal River Basin — involving Senegal, Guinea, Mali and Mauritania — as an inspiration for the founding of the High-level Panel. Unfortunately, such cooperation was relatively rare, he said, noting that of the 236 shared river basins, only 84 had joint water-management bodies. Good practices in the area of inter-sectoral cooperation on water resources, including voluntary codes of water management involving the full range of stakeholders, was particularly important, he emphasized. Noting growing efforts to address water issues through United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding initiatives, he called for contributions of specific expertise on the issue to both efforts.

Ms. Beerli, noting that the ICRC was one of the main providers of water to people affected by armed conflict, emphasized the interdependence of essential services, including water, health and electricity. Calling upon parties to conflict, Governments, donors and humanitarian organizations to work together to support the resilience of such services during periods of crisis, she emphasized the Council's role in promoting dialogue and ensuring respect for international humanitarian law with respect to the management of water resources.

Mr. Waslekar proposed the creation of a "blue fund" for collaborative infrastructure projects, and suggested that the Council extend its pronouncements on the protection of medical personnel and facilities to water resources. Ceasefires could be negotiated to facilitate repair of water systems, among other measures, he added.

Presiding over the meeting, which heard from more than 60 speakers, was Mankeur Ndiaye, Senegal's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad, whose country holds the Council Presidency for November. Speaking in his national capacity, he noted that while competition for water seemed inevitable, coordinated and peaceful management of the resource was possible. Citing his own country's engagement in hydro-diplomacy through the creation of a joint mechanism for the management of the Senegal River Basin, he said most shared water sources lacked such mechanisms, which led to disputes over water distribution. Water supplies were often targets of war, he said, while warning that preventive diplomacy, while critical, must be done carefully lest the attention paid to the issue actually heightened tensions.

According to the concept note (document S/2016/969) prepared by the Senegalese Presidency, the purpose of today's debate was to take a close look at the issue of water as a driver of conflict and an object of cooperation. Growing scarcity and unequal access to water had made the issue more urgent in the context of preventing conflict, for which the United Nations provided crucial platforms for cooperation and mediation, it stated.

Most speakers today affirmed the need to protect water supplies for conflict-affected populations, with many describing the mechanisms successfully created in their respective regions. They agreed that joint water management could foster trust, stability and peace. Germany's representative, noting that the World Economic Forum's Global Risks report ranked water crises among the risks with the greatest impact and likelihood, also pointed out that the International Organization for Migration estimated that about 200 million people would be forcibly displaced by 2050 due to threats causing or increasing water scarcity. "Water wars" were not inevitable, however, he said, adding that transboundary water cooperation was the only effective and lasting regional solution to water disputes, as proven by such positive examples as the Danube.

Brazil's representative stressed that cooperation, not coercion, should guide efforts to ensure the just and efficient use of limited water resources. Brazil had signed the Treaty of the River Plate Basin with three neighbouring countries in 1969, establishing a committee to promote joint projects in one of the world's largest river basins. A decade later, the Tripartite Agreement linking Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay had ended a long-standing controversy regarding hydroelectric power plants, he said. Describing initiatives in Central America, Costa Rica's representative called for the development of an inclusive binding international instrument for the protection of water resources.

Some African countries called for intensifying initiatives to manage the shrinking resources of the Lake Chad Basin, which they cited as a factor in the poverty and conflict afflicting that region. Angola's representative said that amid the scarcity of safe drinking water, people in some countries took water for granted and turned it into a lucrative business. The Lake Chad Basin was a dramatic case in which the link between water and peace was at centre stage, he said, noting that the situation there had led to youth radicalization, terrorism and a huge humanitarian crisis.

Several speakers invoked ongoing conflict over water, with the Russian Federation's representative saying that Ukraine was blocking the supply of water to Crimea. Ukraine's representative countered by stating that the problem originated from the illegal Russian occupation of that peninsula. Syria's representative said that terrorists were destroying water infrastructure and poisoning supplies, while sanctions prevented the maintenance of water systems.

While several speakers criticized Israel for the diversion of water from Palestinian communities and for damaging systems in the Gaza Strip, that country's representative replied that Israel had applied innovative technologies to create a water surplus out of scarcity, and was sharing its resources and expertise in the region and around the world. It had authorized increased supply to Palestinian areas but the Palestinian Authority had refused to cooperate, he added.

Pakistan's representative noted that the regions most likely to be affected by acute water scarcity were those facing political turmoil and conflict, emphasizing that Member States must be willing to share water resources peacefully. Malaysia's representative declared: "Using water as an instrument of war is reprehensible", stressing that there could be no defence for targeting water, health, food and other essential services.

Also speaking today were representatives of Uruguay, China, United States, United Kingdom, Japan, New Zealand, Egypt, France, Venezuela, Spain, Kazakhstan, Sweden, Iran, Colombia, Hungary, Italy, Guatemala, Slovenia, Mexico, South Africa, Poland, India, Belgium, Nigeria, Morocco, Bangladesh, Georgia, Cyprus, Palau, Portugal, Jordan, Djibouti, Australia, Finland, Romania, Argentina, Botswana, Netherlands, Slovakia, Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti, Sudan, Maldives, Canada, Viet Nam, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Indonesia, Ethiopia, Armenia and Switzerland. Others addressing the Council were an observer for the European Union delegation and the Permanent Observers for the Holy See.

The meeting began at 10:05 a.m. and ended at 5:46 p.m.

Briefings

BAN KI-MOON, Secretary-General of the United Nations, said that by 2050 at least one in four human beings would be likely to live in a country affected by chronic or recurring shortages of fresh water, with climate change compounding the challenge. Management of the more than 260 international rivers and at least that many transboundary aquifers was especially important, he emphasized. Cautioning that the issue of access to water could exacerbate communal tensions, as in Afghanistan and Peru, he said, noting also that armed conflict resulted in destruction of water supply, as seen in Syria and Gaza. Control of dams was often a strategic goal, as shown by operations carried out by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh).

On the other hand, shared water resources often generated cooperation, with river or lake basins shared among neighbours by some three quarters

of Member States, he said, pointing out that more than 200 water treaties had been successfully negotiated in the second half of the twentieth century. They included agreements signed between India and Pakistan, Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan, as well as Mali, Mauritania and Senegal as instruments that promoted stability and peace. The United Nations had actively promoted the potential of water for cooperation, he said, citing the notable example of the “hydro-diplomacy” efforts carried out by the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia.

He went on to note that the Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) had published a guide containing strategies and best practices for promoting mediation and dialogue for resolving disputes over water. The participation of women was particularly important in ensuring that water issues were addressed in peace agreements, he stressed, recalling that, to rally concerted action around hydro-diplomacy, he and the President of the World Bank Group had convened the High-level Panel on Water to champion a comprehensive and collaborative way to develop and manage water resources. He commended Senegal’s role in that effort and encouraged greater participation in implementing the Panel’s recently adopted Action Plan. “Water challenges affect us all,” he pointed out. “Let us use this Security Council meeting to highlight the value of water as a reason for cooperation, not conflict.” He added: “And let us commit to invest in water security as a means to ensure long-term international peace and security.”

DANILO TÜRK, Chair, Global High-level Panel on Water and Peace, said that Senegal’s effective cooperation with Guinea, Mali and Mauritania on use of the Senegal River could be a global inspiration and had contributed to the establishment of the High-level Panel on Water and Peace, the goal of which was to propose specific recommendations to help in the search for solutions and to prevent armed conflicts. Transboundary water cooperation was a prime example of a potentially powerful tool for long-term conflict prevention, he said, noting that countries with developed mechanisms for water cooperation seldom resorted to war. However, transboundary water-cooperation mechanisms were relatively rare, and of

the 236 shared river basins, involving 145 States, only 84 had joint water-management bodies. Greater political support for additional international cooperation was necessary and much of it could be generated by the United Nations, the Security Council and the General Assembly, in particular. An important political priority was to complement transboundary water cooperation with financial incentives, he emphasized.

In its preventive mode, the United Nations must be attentive to inter-sectoral cooperation on water intended to reduce tensions, in full accordance with the sovereign rights of States, he said. Good practices in that regard included voluntary codes of water management involving a variety of stakeholders. Noting that the United Nations system had been dealing with various water issues under “UN Water”, which brought together all relevant organs, funds and agencies, he said that activity had been mostly concentrated on technical, environmental and legal questions. It was now time to address the political and security aspects of water cooperation, in which the Council could play a critical role, he stressed. Water was usually transformed into a weapon during armed conflict, most often affecting civilian populations, he said. The question was how the protection of civilians in armed conflict could be increased, including in matters of water supply. Diplomatic and military means might be required to support efforts by local and international humanitarian organizations to ensure the functioning of water infrastructure during conflict, he said, while underlining that defence of water by civilian populations for their own use was a legitimate form of self-defence.

The Council could convey a sense of legitimacy to military actions whose sole purpose was the protection of water sources and installations, he said, adding that such legitimate defence was closely related to the future of international humanitarian law. Water sources and water installations were among the major areas of concern for peace operations and peacebuilding, he continued. Defence of civilians had become part of the doctrine of United Nations peacekeeping, and the “adequate capabilities” that Member States must provide to peace missions should include water and electric power specialists, according to the report of the High-level

Independent Panel on Peace Operations. It was encouraging that the current Global Field Support Strategy placed stronger emphasis on environmental management, including water, he said, noting that water infrastructure was also a vital part of any peacebuilding activity.

Underscoring that cooperation on shared water basins was a historically proven factor of post-conflict stabilization and peacebuilding, he said the Peacebuilding Commission should therefore include water management and cooperation among its priorities.

CHRISTINE BEERLI, Vice President, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), emphasizing the many crucial uses of water, said “water is a symbol of life in the poetry of every nation”. Its vital importance often made it a highly contested resource in armed conflict and water systems were damaged or destroyed in many wars. Highlighting the dangers involved in collecting water, especially for women and girls who were tasked with that activity in many societies, she said water was also directly linked to public health and migration. “When water supply fails, a civilian population has no option but to move,” she added.

She said the ICRC worked in more than 80 countries, partnering with local authorities, commercial entities, communities and national Red Cross or Red Crescent societies to provide water every day to people affected by conflict and violence. The rise of protracted urban warfare in the Middle East as well as increasing concentrations of internally displaced persons in urban areas of Lake Chad Basin countries had caused an exponential increase in the scale and technical complexity of water operations. Attacks on electricity sub-stations, water-storage installations and piping could render them unusable, cutting off tens of thousands of people in a single strike, she noted.

Highlighting the various relevant protections provided by international humanitarian law, she called on parties to conflict, Government donors and humanitarian organizations to work together to support resilient urban services during armed conflict. The Council must take measures to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and take into account

the interdependence of essential services, such as water, health and electricity. It was also important to help facilitate dialogue between warring parties on water needs and to prioritize effective partnerships between local authorities, service providers and humanitarian organizations so as to ensure resilient water services, she said, emphasizing that they must remain seized of that issue.

SUNDEEP WASLEKAR, President, Strategic Foresight Group, said water could be a source of crisis but also of cooperation. With about 2 billion people living in shared river basins, water was often seen as a local or regional issue, but it was increasingly also a global security matter, he emphasized, cautioning that, if mismanagement of water and climate change combined with mismanagement of politics, there could be consequences around the world. With resources depleting, supplies of fresh water could be down by 25 per cent in the next 20 years, he said, stressing that the impact would be felt by all.

Noting that the Strategic Foresight Group had found that any two countries engaged in active water cooperation did not go to war for any reason at all, he said there was thus a direct correlation between water cooperation and the risk of war. There was also a continuum in water management, since the resource was the key to peaceful and inclusive existence of peoples. The impact of water management was not confined to one region and there was a positive relationship between water cooperation and peace, he said, urging the Council to find ways to consider water as a strategic means for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Recalling that the Council had passed 2286 (2016) on protection of medical personnel and installations, he said it could consider a resolution in the same spirit to protect water resources, he said, urging its members, especially the permanent ones, to consider negotiating ceasefires to repair water systems, which would be a better investment than trying to find water on Mars or on the moon. The Council could also intensify water cooperation as a form of preventive diplomacy. The role of financial

incentives in water management cooperation would be important in that regard, he said, proposing the creation of a “blue fund” to support collaborative infrastructure projects. One billion dollars annually from the Green Climate Fund could create \$13 billion worth of infrastructure, he said, adding that the world had enough capacity to find solutions with the Council providing guidance and inspiration.

MANKEUR NDIAYE, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad of Senegal, which holds the Council Presidency for November, spoke in his national capacity, noting that water was indispensable for life and was increasingly scarce for a growing world population. The resulting forecasts of shortages were very worrying. Competition for water seemed inevitable. However, coordinated and peaceful management of resources was possible, bringing States closer together. He cited as an example his country’s engagement in hydro-diplomacy through the creation of a joint mechanism for management of the Senegal River Basin. Most shared water sources lacked such mechanisms and water distribution often flamed disputes and water supplies were often a target of war.

Preventive diplomacy was critical, he said, but it had to be done carefully lest tensions were actually heightened by the attention paid to the issue. The Group of Friends on the issue had been created in order to deal with the complexities. He called for participation in that group and urged the international community to intensify its work to ensure that “water flows only in the direction of development, peace and harmony among peoples”.

RAMLAN BIN IBRAHIM (Malaysia), affirming a legitimate linkage between water, peace and security, hoped that the discussion could strengthen the Security Council’s work on conflict prevention. Occupation could not be ignored in that context, and he called for the end of the diversion of Palestinian water supplies by Israel. On the other hand, he commended international efforts on integrated water resources management, particularly those pursued by the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Given continued tensions over water and the targeting of the resource in ongoing conflicts,

it was vitally important to continue to address the issue of water, sanitation and related infrastructure in relevant areas. In that regard, technological transfer and other assistance was essential in the context of peace building.

ELBIO ROSSELLI (Uruguay), noting work on the issue of water in the General Assembly and affirming the importance of addressing the security implications of water in the Council, expressed repugnance over the use of water as a strategic weapon of war. Access to the resource was a basic human right. In that regard, he welcomed the related commitments in the Sustainable Development Goals. He also described cooperation in his region among States sharing the Guarani Aquifer and the Uruguay River. His country had also contributed to providing potable water for civilians in Haiti. Cooperative management was the only long-term way of meeting the challenge of sustainable water for everyone, he stressed.

VOLODYMYR YELCHENKO (Ukraine), associating himself with the European Union, noted that the scarcity of freshwater and its uneven distribution across the world caused competition for its use, which could lead to conflicts. Recent examples of such conflict demonstrated the need to consider protecting critical infrastructure through the promotion of international cooperation. For the Security Council, the water issue should form an essential element of its conflict prevention work, he stressed, pointing out that Europe was expanding inter-State cooperation on water. Together with 13 countries and the European Union, Ukraine was working on sustainable and equitable water management through the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River. Drawing attention to the resolution on the protection of the environment in areas affected by armed conflict, he noted that Ukraine had faced environmental issues as a result of foreign military aggression in Donbas. Those issues included damage to pipelines, pumping stations and other infrastructure critical for water supply. Greater awareness and practical implementation of the resolution's provisions as well as relevant international law would foster environmental protection related to armed conflicts and reduce their environmental impact.

LIU JIEYI (China) said the problem of water scarcity was acute in many regions and had a bearing on international peace and security. The international community should strengthen water-resource management to remove the root causes of water scarcity and countries should improve scientific development for more efficient use of the resource. Emphasizing that sharing water resources could enhance international cooperation and prevent tension, he said the international community must provide more assistance to African countries by helping regional organizations involved in managing transboundary water resources and helping to enhance water infrastructure. Ensuring universal access to water was an important safeguard for peace and security, he said, stressing that regional and subregional organizations as well as United Nations entities should, upon request by concerned countries, play an active role in transboundary cooperation by facilitating dialogue. China had implemented projects to help enhance the capacity of African countries to improve water preservation and management, he noted.

ISOBEL COLEMAN (United States) said the over-use and poor management of the Lake Chad Basin had led to a 90 per cent reduction in the size of that body of water, which had led to territorial disputes, but the affected countries had established the Lake Chad Basin Commission to try to solve the disputes peacefully. The international community must bolster its support to help the Commission and local Governments build capacity in order to ensure lasting peace and security. Describing water scarcity in other places, such as Iraq, where ISIL/Da'esh had seized strategic dams, she urged the international community to support regional solutions to water disputes. Building institutions could help to lock in progress, and sound data were essential in providing support for sound decision-making in terms of giving early warning when water issues might lead to conflict, she said.

ISMAEL ABRAÃO GASPAR MARTINS (Angola) said increasing portions of the world were confronted with scarcity of safe drinking water, although people in some countries took water for granted and turned it into a lucrative business. Water problems were part of the problem of climate

change and environmental degradation and also a source of social and political conflict. Praising the management of the Senegal River Basin as an outstanding example of regional cooperation, he noted that such good practice was not always the rule. The Lake Chad Basin was a dramatic case in which the link between water and peace was at centre stage, he said, noting that the situation there had led to youth radicalization, terrorism and a huge humanitarian crisis. The Lake Chad Basin Commission had developed a replenishing project which deserved priority support, since the Basin could become a hotbed of conflict, he emphasized. Urging regional cooperation on transboundary basins, he described actions taken by the countries around the Okavango River Basin, including Angola.

MATTHEW RYCROFT (United Kingdom) praised Senegal's leadership in the Senegal River Basin as an example of managing transboundary water resources for development instead of conflict. In less than 10 years, 2.5 billion people could be affected by water scarcity and the global demand for water could outstrip supply by 40 per cent within 20 years, he said, adding that \$500 billion had been lost to flood damage, drought and floods. To the people affected, however, it was a matter of life and death. Noting that conflict could lead to the targeting of water infrastructure, he welcomed the idea of establishing ceasefires for the purpose of undertaking repairs. He went on to describe a project that his country, together with other partners, was undertaking in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region to support water projects that could help 3 million of the poorest people in that subregion.

KORO BESSHO (Japan), underlining that the sound development and use of water resources were crucial to achieving peace and prosperity, also noted that its importance had led to disputes among States, including recent attacks on a water treatment plant in Aleppo and on waste-water treatment plants in Gaza. His country had worked with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to build roads to improve access to water to the people of Juba. Japan had also led discussions on the International Law Commission's draft articles on the law of transboundary aquifers, which provided a valuable platform for countries to establish

agreements for the proper management of their aquifer systems.

PETR V. ILIICHEV (Russian Federation) said only sustainable access to water could bring about sustainable development and fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda. Noting that his delegation supported a draft resolution initiated by Tajikistan in the Second Committee, on the second Decade for Water for Sustainable Development, he said natural resources could not be considered the underlying reason for conflict, but only an amplifier of already existing disputes. Expressing doubt over the utility of involving the Security Council in issues of sustainable development, he warned that the geopolitical aspects of water cooperation could only compound the quest to resolve difficult socioeconomic situations and hinder sustainable development as a whole. The key to resolving water issues lay in increasing national development, he said, emphasizing the importance of developing the regional and international legal bases for regulating water resources. It was necessary to find mutually accepted approaches on the basis of partnerships and national sovereignty, and the Russian Federation regretted that Ukraine had once again tried to use the Council as a forum for propaganda work and for providing political cover for Kyiv's criminal activities rather than for the purpose of making constructive contributions.

GERARD VAN BOHEMEN (New Zealand) emphasized that the effective management of water resources was a conflict prevention tool. In many parts of the world, considerable progress had been made in the collaborative management of water resources, enhancing security and prosperity. For its part, the United Nations could play an important role, he said, welcoming the Department of Political Affairs' fostering of dialogue and cooperation on the management of transboundary water resources in Central Asia. Furthermore, in conflict situations, competition for water resources would affect the conduct and continuation of hostilities. It was essential that disputes were fully integrated into conflict analyses, prevention and resolution strategies. Among other things, he also stressed that water security must not be considered solely as a transboundary issue. For many small island States in the Pacific, reliable access to fresh water was an existential issue. Given that almost half of

them had no significant surface water resources, it had left many communities reliant on unpredictable rainfall patterns for fresh water. With a view to addressing such vulnerabilities, New Zealand had been working with its Pacific partners to strengthen national water management and delivery systems.

AMR ABDELLATIF ABOULATTA (Egypt) said that all studies on water resources had stressed that scarcity of water led to competition and could cause conflicts between States. Egypt suffered from a scarcity of water resources, as it relied on only one water source – the River Nile. That was compounded by a scarcity of rainfall and overpopulation, with its per capita share of water only 600 metres per year, which was below the water poverty line. Egypt's share of the River Nile failed to respond to its basic needs, he pointed out, adding that it was difficult to rely on underground water, as it was a non-renewable source. All those factors were compounded by the fact that Egypt was a downstream nation. His country had contributed to establishing the Nile Basin Initiative and was cooperating with it so that relevant nations benefited from water resources. Stressing that countries must respect their commitments according to multilateral agreements on cross-border resources, he said they must also stop financing construction that had a negative impact on downstream States.

FRANÇOIS DELATTRE (France), emphasizing that water should never be a source of division but should instead be a factor for cooperation amongst States, noted that natural resources were at stake in many conflicts. Climate change compounded the situation due to its impact on land degradation and desertification, but even in times of war, the sharing of water resources could facilitate dialogue between belligerents. A fair multilateral framework characterized by quality expertise was essential. Second, the Security Council had a key role to play, he said, stressing that it must ensure the protection and distribution of water resources during conflicts. It must also ensure that peacekeeping operations left a minimal environmental impact in their wake, and learn all the lessons of the operational recommendations that the High-level Panel on Water and

Peace would formulate in the course of 2017. Third, it was high time to start thinking about global water architecture and governance, which was currently not commensurate with the goals of the 2030 Agenda, he said. Concerted management of water resources, particularly access to drinking water, was not merely a technical topic but a vital development, human rights and security issue, he stressed.

HENRY ALFREDO SUÁREZ MORENO (Venezuela) noted that more than 1.2 billion people worldwide lived in areas with a shortage of water and that one billion relieved themselves in the open air. Farming accounted for 70 per cent of the world's extraction of water, with that figure rising to 90 per cent in least developed countries. If the world continued with its current consumption of water, it would see a significant decrease in availability by 2030. A scarcity of water would exacerbate any attempts to resolve conflicts or to take a holistic approach to them. The 2030 Agenda recognized that socio-economic development depended on the sustainable management of resources, including water. Efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals should be analysed annually in a high-level political forum, which would consider their interrelated nature. He stressed that the international community must seek a balanced approach to achieving those goals.

JUAN MANUEL GONZÁLEZ DE LINARES PALOU (Spain) said water management had today become risk management, explaining that it was a risk relating to insecurity and exacerbated by climate change. Emphasizing the growing importance of “water diplomacy”, he said some countries continued to lack appropriate institutions for managing the resource, noting that it was in places where Governments demonstrated incapacity to supply water that conflicts could be found. Spain had thousands of years of experience in water management, including during chronic shortages, and shared its experience both bilaterally and regionally, he said. Armed conflict could lead to abuses of international humanitarian law and violations of human rights, especially in relation to access to water, and the civilian population was the real victim of the use of water as a weapon of war or as a political or military weapon.

Mr. YELCHENKO (Ukraine), taking the floor a second time, suggested that the representative of the Russian Federation check the language of his previous statement, which had not mentioned that country. However, the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea remained under occupation by the Russian Federation, and the occupying Power bore responsibility for its illegal actions, he said. The statement by the representative of the Russian Federation showed the inability of the occupying authorities to provide for the needs of the local population. Instead of owning up to its actions, the Russian Federation opted to use the issue of water supply to Crimea as a propaganda tool, he said, adding that it should take steps to end the occupation of Crimea to resolve the issue.

Mr. ILIICHEV (Russian Federation), also took the floor a second time, describing the water blockade as an intentional act by Kyiv aimed at exacerbating the humanitarian situation in hopes that it would result in disaster. The water blockade had been followed by an energy and food blockade, he added. On the situation in Donbas, he said the most recent report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights stated clearly that as a result of military activities, infrastructure was suffering and there was restricted access to water. The report appealed to all sides, including the armed forces of Ukraine, to ensure respect for international humanitarian law, he pointed out.

AKYLBEK KAMALDINOV (Kazakhstan) said the risk of water-related conflicts had grown over the past decade due to increased competition, inadequate management and the impacts of climate change. Water shortages threatening food production and energy supply placed additional stress on countries struggling with poverty, diverting them away from global cooperation. As shortages became more acute in the next 10 years, tensions would arise over control and distribution of such resources. Already, water was a major source of conflict impacting economic and social development. In that context, the urgency of the situation demanded information sharing, early-warning signals, and the prompt use of existing mechanisms. Emphasizing that water security was increasingly becoming

one of the defining factors for human progress, he added that Kazakhstan was committed to championing water security for the benefit of all.

MAURO VIEIRA (Brazil) said cooperation, not coercion, should guide efforts to ensure the just and efficient use of limited water resources. Agencies and initiatives such as UN-Water, the Food and Agriculture Organization's Land and Water Division, the World Water Assessment Programme and the International Hydrological Programme of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) provided technical expertise to prevent and solve issues concerning water resources management. In 1969, Brazil had signed the Treaty of the River Plate Basin with three of its neighbouring countries establishing a committee to promote joint projects in one of the world's largest river basins. A decade later, the Tripartite Agreement between Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay ended a long-standing controversy regarding hydroelectric power plants. That agreement also paved the way for deeper integration and cooperation in the region. The Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization had also made great strides in promoting cooperation and sustainable development in the Amazon Basin. Those regional initiatives were evidence to the potential of coordinated water management as an instrument to prevent and resolve disputes.

OLOF SKOOG (Sweden), noting that water scarcity disproportionately affected the most vulnerable and poor, pointed to the Sahel region and Lake Chad area where drought, land degradation and desertification had led to resource scarcity and food insecurity. Highlighting his country's efforts in "water diplomacy", he added that while the threat of violence over water was real, it also offered opportunities for cooperation. Water had even become a driver for conflict resolution, as evidenced in transboundary water management, where States tended to collaborate rather than enter into violent disputes over shared waters. Calling for smarter and more integrated water management techniques, he said that stronger partnerships were necessary to turn water into an opportunity for cooperation.

MALEEHA LODHI (Pakistan) said that Asian and African States, in particular sub-Saharan States, were all witnessing a growth in population, vulnerability to climate change and an ever-increasing hunger for development. The countries of those regions were likely to be the first to face the challenge of sharing transboundary waters. Therefore, the ability of such countries to cooperate and peacefully share water resources would be critical to their peace and security. She also underscored that regions most likely to be affected by acute water scarcity were those facing political turmoil and conflict. Member States must be willing to share water resources peacefully. The international community should promote bilateral and regional agreements on waterways and ensure that, once those agreements were developed, they not be undermined through unilateral or coercive measures.

GHOLAMHOSSEIN DEHGHANI (Iran) said that, with 260 rivers shared in one way or the other between 180 countries, water-related issues could affect regional peace significantly. Unprecedented population growth and climate change were putting increasing pressures on freshwater resources. Calling for an enhanced coordinated response from the international community, he added that the fierce competition for fresh water could well become a source of conflict and war in the future in the same way that land or energy had led to conflicts in the past. Water diplomacy must promote a new approach to managing complex water issues and networks, and innovative water management approaches should replace outdated zero-sum battles over the resource.

CARLOS ARTURO MORALES LÓPEZ (Colombia), observing that less than 3 per cent of the world's water supply consisted of freshwater, said that his country was committed to Sustainable Development Goal 6 and had made many efforts to ensure integrated water management. Colombia's national water plans and policies aimed at conserving ecosystems and hydrological cycles, optimizing use of water, reducing levels of contamination, and supporting institutional conditions for holistic management of water resources. Highlighting the importance of water-related conflict management, he also said that "water must be at the front and centre" of

international dialogue. He called for integrated and pragmatic solutions spearheaded by the United Nations, and emphasized that the General Assembly was the appropriate forum for discussing the use of water resources, as it was a universal body and would ensure a wide debate within the international community.

KATALIN ANNAMÁRIA BOGYAY (Hungary) said the challenges of sustainable management of freshwater resources and the looming global water crisis were, to a large extent, man-made. Mutual dependencies would only increase over time as regions and sectors exposed to water shortages relied more on waters controlled by others. That was due to the dramatically changing climatic conditions and excessive growth in global population. Significant changes were needed in water management to prevent it becoming one of the main causes of future conflicts or a tool for certain methods of war. Water was the most critical natural resource of the twenty-first century and must be treated as a high priority. Cooperation across geographical and political boundaries would be important for stability and survivability for the more than 40 per cent of humans who lived on shared waters. To avoid mismanagement, distrust and eventually conflict, the establishment of coordination mechanisms at the level of transboundary river basins or aquifers was an absolute must.

SEBASTIANO CARDI (Italy), associating himself with the European Union, underscored that international cooperation was an essential tool for the prevention of conflicts related to resource scarcity. In that regard, the International Freshwater Treaties Database contained a list of examples of agreements that were alternatives to conflict. Italy was a party to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, also known as the Water Convention, which proved instrumental after the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and provided an institutional framework of cooperation based on sustainability and peace. In addition, education, research and cooperation, as well as the transfer of knowledge, on sustainable water management were key. Advanced water management could contribute to the advancement of societies, he said, adding that the root causes of

conflict should be recognized, as well as the challenges that climate change, urbanization, population growth and migration posed to the stability of the world.

JORGE SKINNER-KLÉE (Guatemala) said that unequal distribution of water resources called for careful and sensible water conservation, especially given the expected increase in population. Citing former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, he said that while competition for fresh water could be a source of conflict, it could also be a catalyst for cooperation. He called for a strategic response to the problems underlying water shortages, adding that he was especially concerned about man-made factors, such as climate change, rapid demographic growth, pollution, and appropriation of water resources. In addition, the relationship between water and peace needed more analysis. It was necessary to develop the global architecture related to water management by enhancing relevant local, regional and national policies. By addressing that issue in the Council, the international community was underscoring that water was a strategic resource which had an impact on security and development.

ANDREJ LOGAR (Slovenia) said water's value and strategic place in international politics had long been underestimated, as had the dangers of water scarcity for peace and security. Considering the effects of climate change, including droughts, floods and rising sea levels, the international community must adopt a different attitude and more coherent approach to water management and its protection. Stressing that mobilizing political will was crucial in protecting water resources, he said the Security Council had an important role to play in raising awareness of the importance of water for peace and security and in preventing possible water-related conflicts. Regional organizations also had a great role to play in contributing to peaceful and sustainable water management across national borders, as did inclusive water partnerships. Those partnerships should involve a range of actors – governments, civil society and the private sector – and should be fairly and appropriately financed.

JUAN SANDOVAL MENDIOLEA (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the

Global High-level Panel on Water, said that sustainable and inclusive management of water should be for the benefit of all. Referring to Sustainable Development Goal 6, he also underscored that water should be at the heart of future discussions, whether they concerned social and economic development, peace and security or climate change. As well, the Panel had launched a plan of action highlighting the human right to drinking water and sanitation services. Current recommendations and research on water and peace were being consolidated to put forward a new initiative in 2017. In his national capacity, he reiterated that the protection and management of water resources was of importance in regions where water was a frequent source of conflict.

WOUTER HOFMEYR ZAAYMAN (South Africa) said that it was evident how water impacted conflicts, particularly in Africa and those countries along the Nile, as well as in the water-scarce parts of the Middle East. Referring to the recent World Bank report “High and Dry: Climate Change, Water and Economy”, he said that in the next thirty-five years, water insecurity, combined with climate change, could force migration, spark conflict and be a significant financial drag on regional governments. Stressing that water security remained a high priority in Africa, he added that challenges surrounding water could also be a path for dialogue, mediation and confidence-building between States. South Africa shared transboundary river basins with three other African countries and achieving transboundary water security had assisted his country and its neighbours in stimulating regional cooperation. Furthermore, because women played an important part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water, accelerating their empowerment in regional water management was critical.

HEIKO THOMS (Germany) noted that the World Economic Forum’s Global Risks report ranked water crises among the risks with the greatest impact and likelihood. Furthermore, the International Organization for Migration estimated that by 2050, about 200 million would be forcibly displaced because of threats that caused or increased water scarcity. Despite those bleak forecasts, however, “water wars” were not inevitable,

he stressed. Transboundary water cooperation was the only way to achieve effective and lasting regional solutions for water disputes. Positive examples, such as the Danube, served as proof. Such cooperation required stable legal frameworks, he pointed out, encouraging all countries to join the United Nations water conventions of 1992 and 1997. Also, in order to prevent the use of water as a method of warfare, strengthening the implementation of the legal provisions of international humanitarian law was urgent. The recent example of ISIL/Da'esh and the Mosul dam demonstrated the tangibility of such threats.

TOMASZ GRYSA, Permanent Observer for the Holy See, said water's implications for national, regional and international peace and security could hardly be overstated. Water experts and advocates have ominously predicted the third world war would be about water. One particularly serious problem was the quality of water available to the poor. In addition, a growing tendency to privatize water and turn it into a commodity dictated by market laws could seriously compromise the poor's access to safe water. Citing Pope Francis, he said it was conceivable "that the control of water by large multinational businesses may become a major source of conflict in this century." New technology continued to emerge that could help avoid a sustainability crisis through better methods of food production that required less water and the use of industrial manufacturing and minimized pollution of the planet's aquifer and water systems. At the same time, local and traditional solutions could not be abandoned. He called on public and private sectors to support community-driven initiatives for water conservation and water allocation. Education on the fundamental importance of water was crucial, such as water conservation, wise consumption and equitable use.

BOGUSŁAW WINID (Poland), associating himself with the European Union, stressed that the peaceful resolution of conflicts arising over States' competition for transboundary water was of utmost importance. Poland was a member of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, comprised of 11 countries and the European Union. That council served as an important platform for building trust, safety and security in the region and for

dialogue on such issues as energy efficiency, migration, border control and human trafficking. In addition, Poland was a party to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and a member of the United Nations Group of Friends of Oceans and Seas. His country was also serving as Steering Committee Vice-Chair of the 10x20 Initiative on Marine Protected Areas.

SYED AKBARUDDIN (India) said that there were several key policy issues in water management, ranging from private versus community ownership, agricultural versus industrial use, water as a commodity versus water as a right, and developing mandatory standards for efficient water use. While international cooperation was essential in cases of transboundary water bodies, countries had also found ways to cooperate in specific contexts. India was both an upper riparian and lower riparian State for a number of different rivers, including partitioned rivers stemming from the partition of India in 1947. His country had engaged with neighbours in managing those shared waters. Given the current understanding about the interconnectivity and mutuality of environmental challenges, the international community should make water a driver of cooperation rather than securitizing water issues.

JOANNE ADAMSON, Deputy Head of the European Union delegation, said that preventing water-related tensions and conflict involved managing the effects of climate change, population growth and economic development. Goal 6 of the 2030 Agenda was a decisive step in that direction, while the Paris Agreement on Climate Change could have a major positive impact on security vis-à-vis water supply and usage. Since 2007, the European Union had allocated more than €2.2 million to water-related projects in more than 62 countries, in addition to aid provided by its member States on a bilateral basis. She also described how the European Union supports efforts to achieve sustainable water management, including through transboundary cooperation.

With the adoption of the European Union Global Strategy, the European Union had committed itself to redoubling its efforts on preventing and

monitoring root causes of conflicts, she continued. Sustainable access to and use of water was essential to stability and security around the world. The European Union would also keep working to address the international security aspects of climate change, she said, adding that she looked forward to the Security Council continuing its work on the matter. The law on transboundary aquifers could ensure better protection of water during armed conflict, as well, contributing to stronger protection of water resources in times when they were most at risk.

MARC PECSTEEN DE BUYTSWERVE (Belgium) noted that the Peacebuilding Commission was an essential partner in post-conflict situations and in ensuring that natural resources like water were put to the service of sustainable development. The Peacebuilding Fund was also useful, he said, voicing his support for its projects related to the sharing and access of water. In regards to the Sahel, he recalled the open debate that underscored the link between climate change, demographic growth and the availability of water in the region. Also encouraging were examples of cooperation between States in the region, including initiatives in the basins of rivers in Gambia and Senegal. Noting the particular situation of small island developing States, he said that global warming had aggravated their situation due to the infiltration of salt water into their ground water, threatening their survival.

ANTHONY BOSAH (Nigeria) said the growing scarcity of water was a potential source of conflict, not only within countries but across international boundaries. Averting potential conflicts stemming from water insecurity should be the thrust of collaborative efforts. His country had joined other West African nations to establish the Niger Basin Authority, which was created to promote cooperation and foster integrated development of resources in the Niger River Basin. That organization had worked to create an “Integrated Development Plan of the Basin” focusing on cross-boundary projects. Nigeria had also established the Lake Chad Basin Commission with Cameroon, Chad and Niger. The Commission’s mandate was to sustainably manage the shared water resources of the Lake Chad Basin and promote regional integration, peace and security across

the region.

ABDERRAZZAK LAASSEL (Morocco), recalling the latest climate change conference in Marrakesh, highlighted the “Water for Africa” initiative which aimed at mobilizing international cooperation for the growing water challenges on the continent. Given the increased dangers, there was a shared responsibility to address water-related tensions and the use of water as a tool of war. Fair and sustainable management went hand-in-hand with proper governance of water, nationally and trans-border. Unfortunately, protocols on the issue had not been ratified universally and there was limited recourse to adjudication for water issues. Therefore, regional dialogue was critical. In that context, during the climate conference, Morocco had brought together African leaders to push States to jointly address the consequences of climate change, including increased competition for water.

Ms. KHALED (Bangladesh) cautioned that water-related issues among countries could often act as a potential trigger for inter-State or regional conflicts. The Water Cooperation Quotient, developed by the Strategic Foresight Group, had highlighted the lack of institutional cooperation in shared river basins as an underlying cause for conflict in various parts of the world. Bangladesh, as a low-lying delta vulnerable to climate change, constantly grappled with challenges that related to the availability of fresh water. Growing saline intrusion in coastal areas, depletion of groundwater reserves in large urban areas and the challenge of arsenic contamination of groundwater in certain parts of the country added to the systemic constraints in water use and management. However, against the backdrop of those challenges, more than 98 per cent of the population had access to safe drinking water and over 65 per cent had access to safe sanitation.

KAHA IMNADZE (Georgia) said his country was a party to several agreements with neighbouring States on regulating the management of water resources. It had also participated in numerous regional projects aimed at elaborating ecologically sound and rational water management. Because the sustainable use of water resources was a priority, national

legislation had been adapted from internationally recognized principles of water resource management. However, following the 2008 Russian Federation military intervention, many villages across the occupation line in Georgia had suffered from water shortages. The villagers were unable to carry out agricultural works, which was the main source of income in those areas. Highlighting a project improving reservoir security, he said that the initiative allowed Georgian authorities to ensure a safe and sufficient water supply for the villages situated in the occupied Tskhinvali region. With the financial support of international partners, Georgia had also carried out rehabilitation projects to ensure drinking water supply and irrigation systems in conflict areas.

NICHOLAS EMILIOU (Cyprus), associating himself with the European Union, said that as a country surrounded by water, Cyprus had experienced drought and water scarcity many times, resulting in a well-informed and experienced view on water management for sustainable development and peace. His country had used innovation and technology to address water shortages which also included a state-of-the-art desalination system. In order to address water-related issues and their links to conflict, the dimension of water-related issues had to be incorporated in conflict prevention. It was also important to further study the interlinkages between conflict, access to water and sanitation, and violations of international humanitarian law. Transboundary agreements on water management and the promotion of water-related confidence-building measures should be built on provisions that benefited all countries.

CALEB OTTO (Palau), calling for more information about the impact that a lack of water would have on peace and security, urged Member States to agree to ask the Secretary-General for updates. Access to water was a human right and water should never be allowed to become a business. The role of the United Nations was to ensure, with national governments and civil society, that access to safe drinkable water was secured for all. He also stressed that local populations should not have to compete with deployed United Nations personnel for local resources. Action on water by the

Security Council and the General Assembly should be aligned, he stated, highlighting parallel resolutions in both organs addressing the impact water and climate change had on security and peace.

CRISTINA MARIA CERQUEIRA PUCARINHO (Portugal), aligning himself with the European Union, said the uneven distribution of fresh water, alongside other factors such as population growth, was generating tensions internally and between countries. Goal 6 called on countries to implement the human right to water and sanitation. The action plan of the High-level Panel on Water contained key requirements and principles as well as priority actions for improving water security. Only a cross-cutting and interdependent process based on a transboundary approach could provide the necessary legal and political framework which would ensure access to water for countries and populations where water was scarce or where accessing it involved risks.

SIMA SAMI BAHOUS (Jordan) said that her country was the third-poorest in freshwater resources. Population growth, along with shouldering a great share of responsibility for the welfare of Syrian refugees had worsened the situation. She thanked the ICRC for its assistance in that context and welcomed initiatives to ameliorate the situation. It was unacceptable to use water access as a tool of war, intimidation or terrorism, she stressed. Conversely, she urged intensified work promoting international water cooperation, which, in turn, would provide a social and economic environment benefiting all people.

MOHAMED SIAD DOUALEH (Djibouti) said that growing populations, more water-intensive patterns of growth, increase in rainfall variability, and pollution were combining to make water one of the greatest obstacles to poverty eradication and sustainable development. Calling for increased political commitment, he noted that 90 per cent of the African continent was covered by 64 transboundary river basins, some of which still were not regulated by any agreement. Transboundary groundwater must be better factored into transboundary cooperative arrangements for water. Highlighting efforts by the member States of the Intergovernmental

Authority on Development (IGAD) to promote cooperation in the use, protection, and conservation and management of water resources, he said the regional bloc was working with the United Nations to share experiences and good practices, and most importantly, to promote a conflict-sensitive approach to manage all natural resources, including fresh water and rivers.

CAITLIN WILSON (Australia) said that failure to provide functional water supply and sanitation systems often led to community tension, instability and could easily result in conflict. In that context, good water governance was a key component in adapting to climate change and essential to achieving many of the sustainable development goals. For Australia – a dry continent prone to highly variable rainfall – effective water management was critical to the economy. Her Government made the most efficient use of scarce water resources and had enabled investment to meet the growing needs of agriculture, industry and urban communities. Through the High-level Panel on Water, Australia had also committed to a number of initiatives aimed at strengthening the capacity of countries to meet water crisis and had established the Australian Water Partnership to assist countries in improving their water governance. The collaboration was a practical way to improve water resource management in partnership with other countries and the United Nations system.

KAI SAUER (Finland), associating himself with the European Union, said that competition over natural resources was likely to increase in the future. The Security Council needed to play a leading role in preventing and responding to conflicts that might result. Mediation was one of the most effective prevention tools, and water could serve as a basis for collaboration instead of conflict. It was of the utmost importance that the 2030 Agenda included a target to promote cooperation on transboundary waters at all levels. Arrangements such as river commissions and international water conventions, together with concrete measures such as regulation of water flows, fish stocks, measures to reduce pollution and monitoring of water quality, could be agreed upon in a manner that benefited all parties.

DANNY DANON (Israel) said that faced with water scarcity, Israel, by making every drop count and developing revolutionary technology such as drip irrigation, had in less than seven decades created its first water surplus. The country was committed to sharing its solutions with countries in need through its development-cooperation agency, the experts of which were assisting countries from South Africa to Peru. He described in particular a trilateral partnership between Israel, Italy and Senegal, and closer to home, an agreement to supply additional fresh water to Jordan. Describing authorization of increased water supplies for the West Bank and Gaza along with approvals of new infrastructure including a large desalinization plant and sewage projects for Gaza, he said that, unfortunately, the Palestinian leadership refused to engage on the issue. If that situation continued, a water crisis could occur in several months.

ION JINGA (Romania) noted that 3.5 billion people currently suffered from water insecurity. Better access to funding for adaptation projects was needed for both small island developing States and less developed countries, which faced the greatest water vulnerability. Furthermore, some parts of the world had experienced a long history of mistrust related to joint water resources access. He cited the Nile and Jordan rivers as examples, encouraging the promotion of international agreements on water cooperation. The Geneva Convention regarded water resources and installations as key civilian infrastructure, immune from attacks. However, in Syria, water had become a weapon; limiting civilian water access was a grave breach of international humanitarian law and human rights. “Water security is essential in order to ensure political security, but water ignores political boundaries,” he said. Good communication and strengthened relations between upstream and downstream States were essential for successful water negotiations. International mediation, facilitation, dialogue, water diplomacy and education were all important methods of preventing, managing and resolving water disputes.

MARTÍN GARCÍA MORITÁN (Argentina) said there was no proof that water had always been a source of tension, as had been stated. On the contrary, it was an instrument of peace. Nations had sovereignty over their

natural resources and the right to water was a human right that they should guarantee to their citizens. The issue of water resources should be approached from the perspective of development and eradicating poverty, he said, adding that Argentina supported integrated water–resource management at the local, regional and international levels. Emphasizing that the Security Council’s role should not be distorted, he said it should not examine topics outside its mandate or link environmental issues to questions of security. It was up to other United Nations bodies to examine the issue of water.

EDGAR SISA (Botswana) said it was essential that neighbouring countries signed bilateral and multilateral agreements in order to promote cooperation in the management and sharing of water. For their parts, Southern African Development Community member States had signed the Revised Protocol on Shared Watercourses, which supported equitable and reasonable utilization of watercourses in the region. The Protocol also promoted information and data exchange on hydrological, hydrogeological, meteorological, and environmental condition of watercourses. Sharing national experiences, he also stressed that transboundary water resources played an instrumental role in Botswana’s water security. In that connection, his country had signed and ratified various agreements to promote closer cooperation.

ROLANDO CASTRO CORDOBA (Costa Rica) said that the protection of water must become an international priority. He called for the development of an exclusive binding international instrument for that purpose, which would ensure the survival of the human species. He also called for the priority implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals on water. From a national perspective, cross–border cooperation was a driver of stability and positively affected the situation of vulnerable people, he said, offering to share lessons learned. On an international platform, legal and policy structures must be consolidated so that the benefits of water cooperation could be experienced on a broad basis.

KAREL JAN GUSTAAF VAN OOSTEROM (Netherlands), associating

himself with the European Union and Italy, with which the Netherlands would split its 2017-2018 term on the Council, said climate and water were at the heart of peace and security. It was critical to address the root causes of conflict related to water at an early stage. To that end, his country's Prime Minister was among those serving on the United Nations and World Bank High-level Panel on Water. Noting that food insecurity could be connected to social instability and violent conflict, he added that drought and food shortages in Syria had likely contributed to the unrest that had triggered the country's civil war. While climate-related factors had been acknowledged at the recent United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants, policies and funding must follow that trend. For its part, the Netherlands had organized a seminar on water issues last March in Khartoum and would host the next Planetary Security Initiative conference in The Hague next month.

LOUAY FALOUH (Syria) said one of the priorities of his Government was to ensure the supply of water. Prior to the crisis, it had made great achievements in that regard. During the crisis, water installations and wells were demolished by armed terrorist groups. Using water resources as a weapon was a gross violation of international humanitarian law. Unilateral measures by the European Union and the United States imposed on Syria had prevented spare parts for installations and fuel for pumps to be imported. Syria was developing a strategy for rehabilitating the irrigation network, but that required an end to the unilateral measures. Water should not be politicized and international law should be respected. There was a need for international efforts to support the right of people living under occupation including the right to water. In the occupied Golan, water was only provided for Israeli settlers, while inhabitants' shares of that resource were limited.

FRANTIŠEK RUŽIČKA (Slovakia), while noting that water resources had rarely been the sole source of armed conflict or war, said there was a long history of water-related tensions and violence and water resources had been used as a political, economic and military tool, including by non-State actors. The United Nations should continue to reinforce its institutional

capacity to help Governments mediate between and build the capacity of different stakeholders while also supporting civil society's participation in natural-resource management. In that regard, the work of the Global High-level Panel on Water and Peace, launched in November 2015, would make a crucial contribution. Pointing out that one-third of the world's population depended entirely on groundwater, he said transboundary aquifers were a critical and inseparable component of the global water resource system and another source of water-related tensions. In October, Slovakia had organized a seminar on that topic, in cooperation with UNESCO and within the framework of Sustainable Development Goal 6, he recalled.

CLAUDE STANISLAS BOUAH-KAMON (Cote d'Ivoire), affirming the importance of access to water for human survival and conflict prevention, said that mediation and cooperation in bilateral and multilateral contexts was indeed critical. The United Nations and the Security Council should encourage such activities. In that context, his country participated in the Mano River Union. As a nation dependant on precipitation for most of its water, Cote d'Ivoire also required technical assistance to ensure an adequate supply of the resource despite the ravages of climate change. United Nations development agencies should play a major role in that regard.

DENIS RÉGIS (Haiti) said that his country was already experiencing water stress due to climate change and other reasons, raising the possibility of all the related security and socioeconomic consequences. Access to water was a fundamental right of every human being, and lack of access and lack of sanitation was a deprivation of the enjoyment of that right. His country had suffered in that regard in the form of the cholera epidemic, for which the United Nations had recently assumed belated responsibility. The affected communities hoped that international solidarity would redress that situation through current and planned projects to end the epidemic and ensure a clean water supply. In addition, it was critical to ensure protection of water in the context of peacekeeping missions, in the face of both natural and man-made threats.

OMER DAHAB FADL MOHAMED (Sudan) underlined the role his country had played in water diplomacy in the agreement reached by three countries of the eastern Nile basin. However, he stressed that while Sudan was determined to strengthen its role in water diplomacy, it needed sanctions to be lifted in order to implement its strategy on the matter. The United Nations could play a pivotal role to ensure the focus was on cooperation and not an issue of tension. Conflicts over water could be avoided by increasing awareness within the United Nations and highlighting the level of financial resources spent on research. Furthermore, support was needed for regional projects that contributed to the fight against desertification. He noted that it was inappropriate to involve the International Criminal Court in the issues being discussed, as the Court was not a United Nations body. He also expressed the hope that the international community could act in the framework of preventive diplomacy before it was too late.

AHMED SAREER (Maldives) said drought had wreaked havoc on agricultural lands and livelihoods in much of the Pacific, impacting water and food security. Typically most affected were countries least able to cope with the impact and which were therefore most in need of support. Such constraints had led the Maldives to explore proactive measures to address interruptions and draw lessons from its own experiences. They included the creation of a robust national mechanism to meet water needs during spikes in demand or shortages in supply, as well as sharing best practices in meeting national water needs. At the same time, if the international community was to meet the objectives of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, it was crucial to effectively stem the pace of climate change and related water depletion, he emphasized. The result would be water and sanitation education having a larger-than-expected effect on water supply, he added. Altogether, such measures could help bring nations closer to meeting the Sustainable Development Goal targets on water and help to build more resilient, secure and peaceful societies.

SIMON MARC-EMMANUEL COLLARD-WEXLER (Canada) said that water-related disputes between States had historically been resolved through diplomatic channels. However, the past would not necessarily be a

good predictor of the future as climate change would amplify existing water challenges on all levels. Greater diplomatic engagement on water, peace and security was important and diplomats should continue to advance transboundary water agreements for a world facing future climate-change impacts and population growth. Diplomats should also be equipped with the means to monitor and expose the use of water as a tool of war. Member States should work hand in hand with organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to address the humanitarian implications of water in active conflict settings.

NGUYEN PHUONG NGA (Viet Nam), expressing concern about the impacts of water scarcity and unequal water distribution on economic development and social cohesion, said it might lead to conflicts within and among States. Describing transboundary water cooperation as a good way of addressing related challenges, she emphasized that it would ensure economic prosperity, foster resilience and enhance security. The United Nations could provide assistance to countries facing water management challenges and deploy preventive efforts aimed at promoting regional cooperation, she said, while stressing the need for developed countries to assist others in technology transfer, capacity-building and responding to climate change impacts. She went on to share national experiences, noting that Viet Nam had suffered from both floods and severe drought, and largely depended on transboundary water resources. Having actively participated in water management frameworks in the region, Viet Nam welcomed the strengthening of the Mekong cooperation with diverse mechanisms.

YASHAR T. ALIYEV (Azerbaijan) said that in conflict situations it was critical to ensure the human right to water, as well as protection of all natural resources, were in line with legal responsibilities. However, the continuing aggression by Armenia in his country had had a devastating impact on the environment, including pollution of water sources. A major reservoir had been under Armenian military occupation since 1993, with the deteriorated condition of its dam threatening those downstream. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe had recognized such

problems. There was also evidence of transboundary pollution of rivers. He called for intensified efforts from the international community to bring an end to impunity enjoyed by the aggressors and ensure the liberation of the Nagorno-Karabakh region and other territories of Azerbaijan occupied by Armenia.

LADISLAVA BEGEC (Turkey) said that water was an important means of cooperation and bridge-building. Still, each transboundary water situation had its own specific characteristics and peculiarities and reflected particular regional, economic, social and historical aspects. Therefore, bilateral and “riparian-only” approaches were the most appropriate methods to address the relevant resources. In addition, given that life-sustaining water resources and infrastructure must be protected during armed conflict, dialogue over them as a confidence-building measure did not always result in progress and might even further complicate peace negotiations.

DIAN TRIANSYAH DJANI (Indonesia) said that while water – a fundamental element of human survival – could arouse strong passions, it need not be a source of conflict if governed prudently. Successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement could help mitigate conditions that could lead to conflict over water, he said, expressing support for agreements requiring States to ensure the availability of clear methodologies and mechanisms for resolving disputes over watercourses. There should also be greater support for developing countries lacking capacity to build water conservation and agriculture production capabilities. “Using water as an instrument of war is reprehensible”, he added, stressing that there could be no defence for targeting water, health, food and other essential services for civilians.

LEULSEGED TADESSE (Ethiopia) affirmed that water cooperation was critical for peace and sustainable development and stressed that such cooperation had been historically successful. It was in that context that his country had been participating in the Nile River Basin Initiative and

related agreements. Welcoming the Sustainable Development Goals on access to water, he stressed that political commitment, long-term vision and partnership between all Governments and stakeholders were needed to implement them. Frank and constructive discussions among States and regional organizations were also needed, while inflammatory rhetoric on the issue must be avoided.

ZOHRAB MNATSAKANYAN (Armenia) said transboundary water bodies created hydrological, social and economic interdependencies between societies and nations. Recognition of mutual interests and dependency should serve as a basis for cooperation and promotion of regional peace and security. States' strong political will and genuine commitment were critical prerequisites for successful transboundary water management. Such cooperation was a basis not only for addressing and advancing mutual interests between neighbouring nations, but also represented important confidence-building measures in situations of unresolved conflict.

Addressing the accusations made by the representative of Azerbaijan against his country, he said those accusations were shaped in the context of water sharing. The Sarsang water reservoir had been formed by a dam built in 1976. That reservoir was of key importance for the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and was under that Republic's control. All maintenance was carried out in a timely fashion and there had not been any emergencies. A mechanism of water-sharing with Azerbaijan had been established. Instead of presenting misinformation, Azerbaijan should invest its diplomatic efforts to finding solutions to the conflict.

OLIVIER MARC ZEHNDER (Switzerland) said that competition for access to water could fuel violent conflict at local and regional levels, with water-related problems often affecting countries that were already fragile. Such problems were compounded by climate change. On the other hand, there was great potential to transform water from a source of crisis into a source of peace, for example the cross-border cooperation of the Rhine Basin and with the Senegal River Basin Development Authority. Collaborative water

schemes could be an effective measure to prevent conflict, with water serving as a starting point when other elements made dialogue between parties difficult.

For information media. Not an official record.