



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MR LUKE DAUNIVALU, CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES A.I. AND DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, PERMANENT MISSION OF FIJI TO THE UNITED NATIONS, AT THE HIGH-LEVEL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WATER COOPERATION (Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 20 August 2013)

Distinguished Co-Chairs,
Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.
2. At the outset, allow me to extend my sincere appreciation to the organisers of this Conference for inviting Fiji in its capacity as Chair of the Group of 77 and China, to participate in this high-level event on water cooperation. On a personal level, I wish to thank the Government and people of Tajikistan for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to me since my arrival in Dushanbe.
3. I would also like to commend the organisers for convening this important high-level international conference. As we celebrate the International Year of Water Cooperation, I am honoured to participate amongst a group of eminent political leaders, and distinguished delegates at this special event with the key objective to take stock of the progress achieved towards the implementation of internationally agreed water-related goals, the fulfillment of the international commitments on water and water-related issues by 2015, as well as to engage in an interactive discussion on the possible elaboration of water-related Sustainable Development Goals in the post-2015 development agenda.
4. The main themes of this conference, focusing on water cooperation for human development, economic benefits, ecosystems and water cooperation across boundaries, highlight the importance of water as a basic human need since our environment, socio-economic development and poverty reduction are all heavily dependent on this scarce resource.

Co-Chairs,

5. The sustainable management of the world's freshwater resources is one of the most serious and complex challenges facing the global community. A growing number of States are experiencing rising or even permanent water stress. An increasing demand for water resources from economic growth and declining water quality are being aggravated by the adverse impacts of climate change, expanding populations, rapid urbanization and a significant shortage of financial resources and much-needed investment.
6. Water should be seen as a multifaceted resource that provides opportunities for creating new benefits to be shared, and that it does not have to be a source of conflict and competition. History has often shown that the vital nature of freshwater is a powerful incentive for cooperation. Thus water should be a catalyst for regional cooperation and peace. When it is handled with the right tools, namely, through respect of international law, cooperation, mutual respect and consensus-based agreement, it can pave a safe way towards sustainable and peaceful development from every angle: social, economic, political, cultural and ecological.

7. Although sustainable management of water is now high on the global and national policy agendas, we note with great concern that despite declared commitments and many efforts to achieve Target 10 of Goal 7 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to halve the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015, about 2.5 billion people still live without improved sanitation, and over 800 million people are without access to an improved water source, and many more remain without safe and sustainable water supply. To accelerate efforts to achieve MDG 7, it requires the urgent need to clearly identify and utilise the link between policy, decision making, science and practice in order to transcend the gap between rhetoric and the achievement of our desired development goals in a meaningful manner.

8. International cooperation and capacity-building play a key role in assisting developing countries to undertake sustainable water management. We recognise that technologies are now available for making water potable, for saving and redistributing its supplies, for conserving the use of water and securing new sources of water, as well as maximising energy efficiency, energy conservation and increasing use of water-related renewable energy resources. States should be encouraged to promote cooperation in the dissemination and transfer of such technologies, including the exchange of scientific and technological know-how in undertaking efficient management, preservation and sustainable use of water. In this regard, water cooperation includes the transfer of appropriate technologies; the sharing of best practices; the exchange of information; the employment of the latest techniques of water conservation; training and capacity-building.

9. The water challenge goes beyond access to water, sanitation and hygiene. The vital importance of water to sustain habitat and the survival of species and human existence was also acknowledged in the Muscat Declaration on Water, adopted by the Group of 77 and China in 2009 at its First Ministerial Forum on Water. The Group of 77 and China holds the view that improving and promoting access to safe drinking water and sanitation, irrigation and hydro-energy production could lead to progress in the eradication of poverty and food insecurity, in accordance with the MDGs and Integrated Water Resources Management. The Muscat Declaration also reiterates the G77's call for enforcing international laws to protect the right to water so that water resources, facilities and infrastructures are not targeted during wars and conflicts.

Co-Chairs,

10. Water is vital to economic development. Most economic activities require water, particularly the agricultural, food and energy sectors. Therefore, to achieve broad-based sustainable economic growth, cooperation is required to promote more efficient and sustainable use of water resources. Better policies, increased investment and greater participation by stakeholders can contribute to addressing these issues.

11. Mismanagement of water has severe economic consequences. A recent study about the water crisis in South Africa (Uasa Economic Impact Study) found that for every percent of water that becomes unusable, 200,000 jobs may be lost, which could lead to a 5.7% drop in disposable income on a per capita basis and a 5% increase in government spending. Worldwide, up to 60 percent of water is lost due to leaky pipes - to the tune of US\$14 billion every year. Without smarter water management, the ability of the water system to meet the critical needs of people and business will be challenged. In an era of water management, cities should be innovative in areas of sanitation and the use of urban used-water to promote wastewater management. An effective wastewater management system or water rehabilitation program, could make water efficiency practices sustainable.

12. We must be active both in the management and development of the relevant resource infrastructures in order to increase affordable access to and effective use of safe drinking water. It is also important for governments to adopt appropriate regulation and enforce 'polluters pay' policies to deter irresponsible commercial activities such as the dumping of toxic waste into streams and rivers.

Co-Chairs,

13. Developing countries are facing significant risks from the adverse impacts of climate change, and are already experiencing increased impacts, including persistent drought and extreme weather events, massive flooding, sea-level rise, coastal erosion and ocean acidification. For small island developing states for instance, climate change and sea level rise represents the gravest of threats to their survival and viability, including for some the loss of territory. To mitigate damage from climate change and to reduce the risk of water-related disasters, the Group of 77 reiterates its call for the fulfillment of climate-related and environmental commitments by developed countries, in particular those under the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol. In this regard, the United Nations development system plays an important role in addressing the issues of water by providing support to the efforts of countries to accelerate progress in water and resources management.

Co-Chairs,

14. Finally, in the context of formulating the SDGs and the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda, the G77 holds the view that consideration must be given to universal access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, while ground and surface water should be managed sustainably in an integrated manner to satisfy human needs while respecting the fragilities of our ecosystem and its limitations.

15. On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I wish the High-level International Conference on Water Cooperation a great success.

Thank you.