



**THIRD SESSION OF THE OPEN WORKING GROUP ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS OF
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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**Statement of Mr. Paolo Soprano
Director for Sustainable Development
Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea of Italy**

**Sustainability Approach in Specified Areas
Water and Sanitation**

Distinguished Co-Chairs,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have the honor to make this intervention on behalf of Turkey, Spain and Italy.

1. We thank the Technical Support Team for preparing the Issues Brief which we consider very useful in guiding the preparation for the third meeting of the Open Working Group.
2. No sustainable development and lasting peace is possible, especially in the areas affected by scarcity of water, without access to water and basic sanitation. Potable water together with food are the components of human survival. An increasing global consensus seems in fact to be building on the notion that availability of and access to these components should be considered as basic human rights.
3. Each year, millions of people, mostly children, suffer from diseases caused by lack of water supply, sanitation and hygiene.
4. This session's topic is one of the main areas that require global action since water is closely linked to a number of key global issues such as poverty, empowerment of women, public health, food and energy security, climate change, natural disasters, peace and stability.

5. As highlighted in the Issues Brief, there are almost 800 million people around the world without access to safe water. Besides, nearly 2.5 billion people are still without improved sanitation and almost three quarters of them live in rural areas. Additionally, the rapid rate of urbanization and slow pace of infrastructure improvement pose a challenge for sustaining improvements in access to safe drinking water in many cities. If we continue to use the resources at the current rate, it will take three extra decades beyond 2015 to meet the sanitation target of MDGs.

6. As we discussed earlier, nearly 1 billion people are facing hunger, famine and undernourishment today. Water for food remains a core issue as agriculture is the biggest user of water on the globe.

7. Climate change is having a profound impact on the quality, quantity and availability of water resources.

8. Many ecosystems have been impacted by water pollution as well as diversion and alteration of natural flows. Degraded ecosystems are creating risks for nature, wildlife and people.

9. Efforts should aim at restoring and maintaining the essential functions and processes performed by ecosystems so as to enhance their resilience to the impact of human activities and restore natural cycles associated with water environment.

Distinguished Delegates,

10. The world has made considerable progress in addressing water related challenges in recent years. The MDG drinking-water target (target 10) has driven visible and substantial change. However, it has neither addressed the fundamental right to safe drinking water and sanitation that every human being should be provided with, nor devised measures to guarantee it.

11. Increasing pressure on water resources and adverse effects of climate change are threatening sustainable water management and development. Those effects are being felt significantly by the population living in water-stressed and vulnerable regions. In some cases, water is considered as a natural asset that can be consumed without any restriction whereas in some countries even expressions like “safe water” becomes meaningless where there is no water or capacity to make use of water resources.

12. Targets and normative related to fresh water are complex, due to geological oddities, uneven resource distribution and excessive utilization of the resource by communities, peoples and states. The major water target should aim at equity and fairness of utilization by all those who use the resource, be it a lake, a river, a glacier, a basin, or an underground source, be it abundant or scarce in relation to the size of the communities that use it. Conservation, recycling and waste water management is more important in those regions affected by water stress or scarcity; however, given the continuously shrinking volumes of available water due to climate change and other factors, measures for water conservation, recycling and waste water management should be devised and strictly applied everywhere.

13. Concerning water and sanitation, a human-right based approach is especially relevant, and there is a need to reaffirm commitments regarding the progressive realization of human right to safe drinking water and sanitation for every individual. This recognition means working towards the elimination of obstacles for all people, in particular for poor and vulnerable groups such as elderly, persons with disabilities, women and children, to access safe drinking water and sanitation.

14. Given the scarcity of water resources in many regions, we should promptly take necessary steps to ensure supply and demand balance including non-conventional water resources. It is obvious that services have to be scaled-up, but it is also necessary to adopt behavioral changes as well. Effective demand management systems together with reuse and recycling opportunities as well as water efficiency and reduction of water losses should be highlighted.

15. The traditional fragmented approach is no longer viable in water resources management. A holistic, integrated and multidisciplinary approach is essential at all levels. There should be a water governance system appropriate to country specific conditions and to the cross-cutting nature of water.

16. Governments' role is crucial in sustainable management of water resources. We consider that the role of international cooperation is vital for the sustainable management of water resources at all levels. Special attention should be given to cooperation in technological research, development and innovation to further build water-related capacity. In this context, increasing the quality, quantity and consistency of hydrological data and information is essential.

17. The global community should put greater emphasis on water and sanitation issues not only in their social and environmental aspects but also as they are key to the well-functioning of the economy and to the quality of life.

18. Urgent action should be taken to prevent floods and drought. There is also an increasing need for adaptation to climate change and measures for reducing their negative effects on water dependent sectors such as energy, agriculture, industry, tourism.

19. Integrated water resources management, which encompasses ecosystem management approaches, is essential and entails multiple benefits not only for water, but also for other related sectors.

20. Planning of water infrastructures and integrated water management should be properly incorporated in urban development, taking into account not only the need to provide for water and sanitation services in all urban areas, but also to prevent floods and disasters that are exacerbated by agglomerations on water bodies.

21. Agriculture requires large quantities of good quality water for irrigation and for various production processes. Major changes in policy and management are also needed to ensure sustainable use of available water resources in meeting growing demands for food and other agricultural products.

22. In several areas of the world the issue of the use and protection of transboundary waters is a vital one, if put in connection with development, energy and agricultural policies of riparian countries, and taking into account the aggravating effects of climate change. Scarcity and uneven distribution of water resources could also induce migration phenomena, as well as could undermine efforts put in place at local and national level in order to reach higher standards for water and sanitation services for the population.

23. Indeed, competition on water resources is increasing particularly in trans-boundary river basins. Exacerbating factors are, inter alia, climate change, desertification and drought, and the scaled-up need for water in different economic sectors for development. There is a risk that disputes on trans-boundary waters would increase in the future. However, history shows that cooperation, rather than conflict, is the most effective response to trans-boundary water issues. Water should be considered as a multifaceted resource that provides opportunities for cooperation and for creating benefits to share. In this context, it is necessary to undertake efforts to increase cooperation on water resources, through bilateral and multilateral agreements as well as joint initiatives.

24. Water agenda should be broader, more integrated and human centered. The inter-linkages among various aspects of water result in the complexity and difficulty to integrate it in a single goal.

25. However, on different occasions and in the water thematic consultations there has been a broad consensus that mainstreaming water in different thematic clusters such as agriculture, food, energy, has not proven to be effective. A specific sustainable development goal on water and sanitation coupled with the inclusion of water related targets in different SDGs could represent an appropriate way forward in order to implement a real comprehensive approach to the water issues. All sectors need water but attention should focus on how water should be properly managed to satisfy various demands of different sectors.

Distinguished members of the Open Working Group,

26. To sum up, access to water and sanitation is one of the most essential policy requirements. Keeping in mind cross-cutting nature of water issues and increasing threats on the resources, water has to be used and treated in socially equitable, environmentally sustainable and economically beneficial way. For the post 2015 agenda therefore, economic instruments have to be directed towards better water management schemes that will contribute to sustainable development.

27. Lack of clean water may cause many undesirable effects on human life. We have been bequeathed the world we live in from the former generations. On behalf of our children and grandchildren, we should guarantee the needs and welfare of all generations to be met throughout water management.

I thank you.