Joint Statement of the High Level Panel on Water

September 21st, 2016

Today we call for a fundamental shift in the way the world looks at water. Today in New York, our High Level Panel on Water, convened by the UN Secretary General and the President of the World Bank Group, issues a Call to Action for a new approach to water that will lead us to achieve the targets to which we have all committed on the 2030 agenda including the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Today, the High Level Panel on Water commits itself to take action on water, and calls upon our fellow Heads of State and Government, and indeed the world, to do the same.

Water is the life-blood of our planet: it is vital for human life and public health; grows the food that we eat; nurtures the environment that sustains our planet; and flows through and connects the economies that we depend on. But today, in many parts of the world, we are struggling to clean the water that we have degraded; share water that is scarce; and live with floods, droughts, and the increasing variability of our climate. Over two billion people in particular women and girls face a daily struggle to find safe water to drink, do not have access to sanitation services that would give them dignity and allow them to keep their communities and cities healthy and clean. Today we recognize as world leaders that whether we are talking about economic or social development, peace and security, or protecting our planet and adapting to climate change, water needs to be at the heart of the conversation.

We recognize the human right to safe drinking water; at the same time we must all take responsibility for managing water better. The need for a comprehensive and coordinated approach to water, as well as increased attention and investment in water-related services, are at the heart of this Call to Action that we are launching together today, and the reason why we – as Heads of States and Government – are committing to lead the way.

We present a transformative agenda that we believe will deliver change on a global scale. The transformation will require increased political will and commitment to tackle water challenges at local, national and international levels; to allocate water equitably across competing demands; to scale up financing and improve policies and institutions; to promote innovation and new technologies; and to increase the cooperation among all stakeholders - the private sector, civil society, and local communities.

The approach we outline is multifaceted. It calls on building more resilient societies and economies – including reducing disaster risks – in the face of growing climate variability; on achieving universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation services; enabling cities to have and manage the water they need in an era of rapid urbanization; nurturing water and the environment; and investing in sustainable water infrastructure. We underpin this approach by promoting a strengthened collective governance of water; driving a water data revolution; and recognizing the unique social, economic and environmental value of the water that we have.

The elements of the Action Plan that accompany this Call to Action are inter-linked and cover areas where many stakeholders are already engaged. As the Panel launches the Action Plan through specific initiatives during the next 20 months, it will call upon all actors to contribute and build on what they are already doing.

Today we announce four initiatives for immediate action:

1. The Panel calls on Leaders at the 22nd Conference on Parties, meeting in Marrakesh in November, to increase the attention to water in the climate action plan as a key measure to achieve national climate
commitments by improving water governance, management and infrastructure for enhanced water security and increased resilience against floods and droughts.

2. Recognizing the enormous financing challenge and opportunities presented by our agenda, the Panel initiates a stocktaking and calls for recommendations on financing opportunities, including innovative financing mechanisms, for water and sanitation services and infrastructure. This stocktaking will also address constraints to countries accessing finance. It will be considered at a meeting of the Panel at the Budapest Water Summit later this year.

3. The Panel makes an appeal to existing global networks, including to cities at the UN Habitat III conference, to the private sector and other innovators at the World Economic Forum in Davos, and other international gatherings to launch challenge events to stimulate thinking that will shift the needle in implementing the new water agenda.

4. And finally, today the Panel calls for the launch of a multi-stakeholder dialogue about the principles and approaches to valuing water. A new global conversation on valuing water needs to recognize the social, spiritual, economic and environmental values as a way to protect, manage and allocate the resource in an equitable, sustainable and resilient manner.

The Panel's Call to Action, through its accompanying Action Plan, provides a platform for engagement by water experts, civil society and the private sector. It intends to build on existing initiatives and make adjustments as needed.

As Leaders, we will operate collectively, with our regional and global partners, and individually to advance this new approach to water and implement our Action agenda. As we reach out to our fellow Heads of State and Government, we also hope to motivate effective action by all, while leveraging ongoing work.

Through these initiatives, we look forward to a greater attention to water as we strive to meet and deliver our individual and collective commitments to the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development in order to deliver a water secure world for our population and our future generations.

21 September
High Level Panel on Water

The High Level Panel on Water, co-convened by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and President of the World Bank Group Jim Yong Kim, was launched in April 2016. Its current membership is as follows:

- H.E. Mrs. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, President of Mauritius (Co-Chair)
- H.E. Mr. Enrique Peña Nieto, President of Mexico (Co-Chair)
- H.E. Mr. Malcolm Turnbull, Prime Minister of Australia
- H.E. Ms. Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh
- H.E. Mr. János Áder, President of Hungary
- H.E. Mr. Hani Al-Mulki, Prime Minister of Jordan
- H.E. Mr. Mark Rutte, Prime Minister of The Netherlands
- H.E. Mr. Pedro Pablo Kuczynski Godard, President of Peru
- H.E. Mr. Jacob Zuma, President of South Africa
- H.E. Mr. Macky Sall, President of Senegal
- H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon, President of Tajikistan
- H.E. Special Adviser, Dr. Han Seung-soo, Former Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea

More information on the Action Plan of the Panel is available at:
https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/HLPWater