

**SRSG Remarks for Side Event on Water  
Somalia Partnership Forum  
1 October 2019**

- Thank you for your leadership, Prime Minister, in convening this meeting to raise awareness of the important issue of water.
- Only around half of the population of Somalia has access to basic water supply. While 83 per cent of the population has access in urban centres, this figure drops dramatically to a mere 28 per cent of those living in rural areas.
- Lack of access to safe drinking water has a huge impact on public health. According to statistics produced by the World Health Organization, diarrheal diseases are responsible for more than 50 per cent of under-five child morbidity.
- Beyond immediate public health concerns, the recurring droughts Somalia faces also have a devastating effect on the agricultural sector, on which so many Somalis depend for the livelihoods. The increasing effects of climate change and demand pressure are expected only to compound this impact.
- Water insecurity is also a major underlying cause and driver of local-level conflict across the country, as communities compete for dwindling resources. If left unaddressed, water insecurity may be expected to cause further instability.
- Transboundary water issues are a significant factor in regional stability and as the countries of the Horn of Africa forge stronger bonds with each other and commit to greater cooperation to address regional threats to peace and security, we should put water at the top of that list for cooperation.

- The United Nations and our humanitarian partners play a major role in responding to water shortages and acute need. In 2018 alone, partners provided 769,100 people with access to clean, safe water. In 2019, more than half a million people had received this assistance as of August.
- As important as such humanitarian assistance is, it is unsustainable and insufficient to address both the causes and effects of water shortage and insecurity.
- Improving water governance is central to economic and social development, and will be key to unlocking Somalia's full potential.
- I am pleased, therefore, to welcome the inclusion of this issue in the Mutual Accountability Framework. The Government has committed to developing a National Water Resources Plan and establishing a Water Development Fund. On their part, international partners have committed to provide financial and technical support.
- We welcome the development of National Integrated Water Resources Management Strategy to bring together national, international and local stakeholders and look forward to working with Somali stakeholders to make progress on these important issues.
- We stand ready to support initiatives such as the National Water Forum, build the capacity of the FGS and FMS to improve water governance, and conduct activities related to watershed management.
- We agree that investing in water must be a priority if Somalia is to build resilience and stay on its path of development, with sustainable economic growth.

Thank you.