

Statement delivered by
Her Excellency Jaana Husu-Kallio
Permanent Secretary for Agriculture and Forestry of Finland
on the occasion of the 43rd Session of the FAO Conference (1-7 July 2023)
3 July 2023

Thank you, Madam Chair.

It is a great honour for me to speak on behalf of Finland and our newly appointed Minister for Agriculture and Forestry, Mrs Sari Essayah, who unfortunately could not be here today.

Finland aligns itself with the statement that will be made by Spain on behalf of the European Union and its 27 Member States. I would also once again like to congratulate Dr Qu Dongyu for his re-election as Director-General of FAO. Finland stands ready to continue working constructively with the Organization in the fight against hunger and malnutrition, and in reaching the SDGs.

As we all know, the world has experienced a food crisis, exacerbated by different conflicts, in particular also the Russian Federation's war of aggression in Ukraine. The Russian Federation must immediately stop its illegal war, withdraw its forces from the entire territory of Ukraine, and fully respect Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I will concentrate on water. Without water there is no food, without water there is not life. The progress towards SDG 6 targets on water and sanitation. That is alarming, alarmingly off track. Among others, progress towards target 6.5 to implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transborder cooperation, has to be accelerated.

To that end, as countries, we all must continue to strengthen and implement national water policies and programmes that are supported by targeted and effective financing. Moreover, we have to intensify integration across sectors and indeed, international cooperation.

Development and application of integrated water resources management has to be a country-owned and driven process. Critical for the process are multistakeholder and multidisciplinary cooperation and an enabling policy environment. Ideally, working across sectors should go a step further.

Finland stresses the nexus approach of food, water, energy and forests. There is not one without the other. In order to solve the great global and local challenges, it is important to see the synergies, but also the trade offs, and take the decisions in an inclusive manner.

To advance the realization of SDG 6, we must turn the positive momentum from the United Nations 2023 Water Conference into action. We need to have regular, high level intergovernmental meetings on water, and a UN special envoy on water should be appointed as soon as possible.

The UN systemwide approach to water should be strengthened to ensure the UN system delivers as one.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Within the UN System, FAO's role as a specialized knowledge based organization targeting at zero hunger is vital. Finland highlights especially FAO's role in establishing global norms and standards based on scientific evidence and knowledge.

We strongly support the renewed attention to water in the work of FAO. Climate change is disrupting the cycle of water and concurrently climatological extremes become more frequent and pronounced. To respond requires adaptation, capable prevention, preparedness, efficient use, protection of available resources, as well as robust monitoring systems, and up to date data.

The agricultural sector is currently the largest water users we have heard, and so the practices and the action taken really matter.

Water flows across administrative borders, the two UN conventions are among the key means to foster progress worldwide where a lack of transparent cooperation is constraining intercredit water resources management implementation in shared bases.

In particular, the 1992 Helsinki Water Convention with its institutional framework and exchange of practice as well as its guidance, can be of great practical assistance.

Madam Chair, in Finland effective water management and high water quality are among the key factors guaranteeing food security and safety, and the sustainability of our food systems. We stand ready to share our experiences and solutions internationally.

Thank you.