

Statement of the Slovak Republic

43rd Session of FAO Conference, July 2023, Rome

Mr Martin Kováč, State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

Ms. Chairperson,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Current and future agriculture depends on sustainable management of water resources and innovative solutions, addressing climate change and improving water governance. Water is critical determinant for achieving internationally agreed goals and targets, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To date, global implementation of SDG 6 has been too slow, too fragmented and poorly coordinated. This has to change.

Slovakia highly appreciates initiative of FAO to fully integrate inclusive water resources management in its work with the aim to bring innovative and holistic solutions in the areas of water, land and soil, climate change, biodiversity, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture.

New Water Paradigm shift provides global system solutions. Keeping rainwater in the land renew small water cycles flow and moisture, water resources, increase carbon sequestration, decrease temperatures, create new jobs and mitigate climate risks, such as floods, droughts and sea level rise.

Fundamental contribution to the acceleration of the restoration of water resources in all countries around the world is to eco-systemically retain rainwater in the

damaged landscape and to restore the functionality of small water cycles on the continents.

Traditionally, management of water resources in all countries has focused on surface water or ground water, but state of water structures depend on water holding capacity of the soil. Without water in the soil, there will be no renewal of groundwater, no evaporation of water from the soil and cooling of the land by plants or forming of clouds. For decades, public water policies have not addressed the aforementioned connections clearly.

In Slovakia, we conduct a research on these issues for more than two decades, and we have implemented solutions in various forms at all levels of public administration. We believe that restoration of the small water cycle in the country is a key element to bridge public policies with climate recovery and cooperation on local, national and regional level. We would be pleased to share our knowledge and practice with other countries to contribute to building healthy ecosystems.

One of the great objectives of the 2030 Agenda is to end hunger. It is clear that we all depend on access to safe water to fulfil essential needs. Without water, there is no food security, there is no safe sanitation or health. I commend that Water as a topic is reaching the highest spotlight during this year which reflects also the topic of the World Food Day – Water is life, water is food. Furthermore, I wish to stress the need to address water integrated management also in process of Food Systems Transformation underlined during the upcoming UN Food Systems Stocktaking moment.

Agriculture is facing growing risks from water scarcity, drought, water pollution, variability in availability and conflicts. We are deeply concerned about the impact of the breach of Kakhovka Dam in Ukraine and partial drainage of its reservoir on agriculture, fishery, forestry, rural communities and rural livelihoods.

To conclude, I would like to sum up, as rightly underlined by FAO, water governance needs to be inclusive and effectively engage key actors, which could be done only with integrated approach - watershed or river basin management, integrated landscape management and restoration, agroecology, climate-smart agriculture and the water-energy-food-ecosystem nexus approach supported by long term strategies, investments and innovative financing and partnerships.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the UN Secretary-General said at his closing speech at UN Water conference: Water needs to be at the centre of the global political agenda. FAO has the unique position to support integrated water resources management. By working together, more ambitious goals can be set and achieved.

Thank you very much.