

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, on World Water Day, we are all gathered here to launch the International Decade for Action 'Water for Sustainable Development'. And to present the recommendations of the High Level Panel on Water. It marks a new beginning. And sends an urgent message to the world: we need to take action now. We need to step up our ambitions and use water as leverage, as the connector for sustainable development, for inclusive growth and to drive the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The risks posed by floods, droughts, water pollution; and the need for fresh water intertwine with the basic needs for food, energy and prosperity. Solving the water crisis is thus a way to ensure progress in most other SDGs. *[Solving the water crisis can boost food security and the fight to end hunger (SDG 2), is the basic condition for gender equality (SDG 5) and a pre-condition for reduced inequalities (SDG10) and for access to quality education (SDG4). As root cause for conflict, water security can create an enabling environment for peace and security (SDG16), can help to ensure energy sufficiency (SDG 7), and help create a safer environment for work and economic productivity (SDG 8), and enforce building resilient infrastructure (SDG 9). At the core of safe, sustainable and inclusive cities (SDG 11) water helps to combat Climate Change (SDG 13) and strengthen worldwide institutional capacity for sustainable development (SDG 17). ]*

Yet, we do not acknowledge the full power of water – its power to create, and its power to destruct with too much, too little and polluted water. And we do not acknowledge its capacity to help drive the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Putting water high on the agenda of the global community, was the main reason the Secretary-General and the World Bank's President convened the High Level Panel on Water two years ago.

Then Secretary General Ban Ki Moon said this was a unicum: 11 sitting heads of state and government: with executive power, and a day to day

responsibility for their countries. Whatever they would come up with, they had to put in to practice. And we as the High Level Panel on Water Member countries are doing just that. We called this "leadership at home." We want to lead by example. But never alone, by collaboration, we need you all to join us, we need the world to lead by example too!

Secretary General Guterres emphasized this message when he received our report "Making Every Drop Count, An Agenda for Water Action". He committed himself to "make sure that the recommendations are effectively implemented."

The 11 heads of state and government including our Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte and a special adviser, call upon all of us to change the way we understand, value and manage water.

The outcome document of the HLPW presents a comprehensive agenda to tackle the global water crisis. The urgency to act is now higher than ever. The HLPW report is the roadmap through which all HLPW members presented 11 initiatives with follow-up actions. Australia will work on their water scarcity initiative and the Water Innovation Engine; South Africa launched its Africa Water Investment Program; and we, as the Kingdom of the Netherlands, together with Mexico and in collaboration with the UN and the World Bank, will establish a Valuing Water Global Leadership Coalition, bringing together governments, businesses, NGO's, indigenous peoples, youth, academia in all regions of the world. And this is just the beginning.

The Valuing Water Initiative resulted in the development of 5 key valuing water principles, which call upon the responsibly we all have to value water better: governments, cities, businesses, farmers, civil societies, communities and individuals.

The five principles for valuing water are:

- 1- Recognize and embrace water's multiple values
- 2- Reconcile values and built trust
- 3- Value and protect the sources of water - We all depend on these sources, now and in the future. Miss Peltier's story is an inspiring example of how our future generation calls upon all of us to take better care of our water.

4- Educate to empower

5- Ensure adequate investment in institutions, infrastructure, information and innovation

Ladies and gentlemen,

We cannot take water for granted.

We must start by recognizing and embracing all values of water. Reconcile values in ways that are equitable, transparent and inclusive. And take the multiple values into account in all decisions affecting water to achieve the so much needed sustainable solutions. In the Kingdom of the Netherlands, we are getting used to doing so. We learned to live with water, instead of fighting it. We now build with nature and give room to the rivers for the safety and quality of our land, of our society. Ladies and gentlemen,

The Kingdom of the Netherlands will continue the "agenda for action" of the High Level Panel on Water, in particular around these Principles of Valuing Water. My Prime Minister Rutte called upon the world to join the Valuing Water Leadership Coalition and today I do the same. We, the Kingdom of the Netherlands with Mexico will launch the Coalition in July alongside the High Level Political Forum. Following the HLPW recommendations, it is imperative that we continue our dialogue about cross-cutting water issues and the implementation of this new water agenda. And that we closely cooperate, as countries and as the UN system, improve and strengthen the way we organize ourselves, also as countries within the UN and collaborate and step up culturally and institutionally to make sure that in 10 years from now we will have achieved a water-secure world for all.

Thank you.