



AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” 2018-228

High-level launch event / 22 March 2018

Plenary

**Statement by HE Gillian Bird
Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Australian Permanent
Mission to the United Nations**

Check against delivery

Thank you Mr President.

Demand for water is increasing worldwide. Over-extraction of water for agricultural and industrial uses, and widespread pollution, threaten the health of our natural ecosystems.

That is why this year’s World Water Day theme of “Nature for Water” is so timely.

But managing water for the environment is about much more than protecting ecosystems.

By 2030, intense water scarcity may displace as many as 700 million people. This underscores the importance of taking action now.

All of us – individuals, communities and governments – urgently need to improve the management of water for the environment.

As a dry continent with highly variable rainfall, Australia is familiar with drought and water scarcity. In response to our ten year drought in the 1990s, Australia undertook major water reforms to better understand, allocate and manage our water resources.

We hope other countries might learn from our successes and failures. We are ready to share our expertise to help minimise the impact of global water scarcity.

Australia was privileged to be a member of the High Level Panel on Water, and we welcome the release of the Panel's report called *Every Drop Counts*.

In the Panel, Australia took the lead on the *World Water Data Initiative* and we established a *Water Innovation Engine* to inspire fresh thinking and create better solutions for urgent water challenges.

Through the *Water Efficiency Initiative*, we drew on our own experience to develop a *WaterGuide* to help others improve water resource management and use.

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We must remember that safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene facilities are particularly important for the safety and health of women and girls.

To help address this, Australia announced in 2016 an *Innovative Water for Women Fund*. This fund has started investing \$110 million in the Indo-Pacific region in partnership with civil society organisations. This assistance will help ensure girls do not miss out on education due to schools not having adequate toilets, and will help free women from the daily burden of carting water.

My thanks, in conclusion

The need for action to improve water management is urgent.

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above
just
remembering)

Australia is committed to assisting global efforts to achieve the water Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG6.

Thank you.

(Word count: 359)