

REPUBLIC OF MALTA



Statement by

H.E. Carmelo Inguanz
**Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Malta
to the United Nations**

**High-level event to launch the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable
Development” (2018 – 2028)**

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(Please check against delivery)

Mr President,

Today marks an important trajectory for the global community, as we jointly launch a ten year process which has at its very core the sustainability of water and the integrated management of water resources at a global level.

Water is central to sustainable development and remains a key resource and essential element for life and a driver for growth. There is indeed no alternative to water for the sustenance of human life, and the availability of safe, clean water - or the scarcity of it – is a key determinant to life or death. If we are to continue to rely on water to reinforce our economies and push societies forward, we equally need to invest more in water security, where synergies between economic growth and environmental protection are fundamental.

Back in 2016, through the adoption of United Nations General Assembly Resolution ‘International Decade for Action’, we all expressed our concern at the increasing levels of water scarcity and desertification, leading to the lack of access to safe, potable water and basic sanitation. We also recognised that gaps are not being resolved and that certain

developments in relation to water remain unsustainable while water scarcity is further encumbered by the effects of climate change.

Mr President,

Malta, despite being in the centre of the Mediterranean, suffers from lack of natural water resources, having no natural rivers or lakes, with the country's freshwater supply stored in groundwater aquifers or through rainwater harvesting. The lack of natural resources is further exacerbated by the high population density, which leads to higher water demand. Given the increased pressure on the islands' aquifer systems, sustainable water management is at the top of the Maltese Government's political agenda.

Malta's approach to water scarcity focuses on the management of the supply of water through a broadening of the water supply base on the one hand, and the managing of demand on the other hand, whilst ensuring the sustainable use of groundwater resources. The availability of alternative sources of water is being invested in, with additional infrastructures planned to treat and polish wastewater for distribution as second-class water, which could be used for agricultural purposes, industry and aquifer recharge.

In addition, the Government of Malta has already undertaken a number of measures, which have proven to be successful in contributing to the sustainability of water across the Maltese islands. These include: a leakage management and repair programme of the public water distribution network; optimisation of desalination reverse osmosis plants to substantially reduce their energy footprint; the commissioning of three wastewater treatment plants which treat all wastewater prior to its discharge in the coastal environment; and the establishment of a register of private abstraction sources and their volumetric metering.

Such measures directly address water supply and environmental protection and preservation. These form part of a wider Programme of Measures within Malta's 2nd River Basin Management Plan, which aims to achieve a high level of integration in the management of water resources. National efforts to increase the efficiency of water consumption are also being encouraged and executed, such as the National Water Conservation Campaign that was launched in January 2018. The Campaign has the aim of generating public awareness on the

challenges facing the water sector and the need for its conservation and management, along with an appreciation of Malta's scarce natural inland water resource, whilst increasing water use efficiency at user level.

Mr President,

Each Member State of the United Nations faces different levels of water challenges, ranging from water scarcity to water flooding. Knowing that the challenge of water security is growing and that it is global, a collective effort by all nations is required to address such challenges. Malta believes that specific regional focus areas addressing specific regional challenges should be undertaken. Synergising our efforts is a key to the success of this International Decade for Action on Water and to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6. May our efforts be meaningful and result-driven, so that we may truly move away from considering water as a luxury, but as a resource that is universally and equitably available for all, including generations to come.

I thank you.