



Predsednica Republike Slovenije

**NATAŠA PIRC MUSAR**

**Speech of the President of the Republic of Slovenia  
Nataša Pirc Musar  
at the plenary opening of the United Nations 2023 Water Conference  
with a more comprehensive list of the country's commitments**

New York, 22 March 2023

*Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*Slovenia is one of the most water-rich countries in Europe. We may be fortunate, but we are not complacent. For starters, we protect our water by law. Our Constitution enshrines water as a fundamental human right. It protects Slovenia's abundant supplies of water as a public good and not a market commodity.*

*We are fully aware that there is still work to be done not only nationally, but also internationally. We must protect our water ecosystems. We must ensure access to clean drinking water for all.*

*Good drinking water must not be an unattainable luxury. It is, after all, an undeniable human right and an irreplaceable public good. This is something my country and its people, including our civil society, resolutely stand for.*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*Water is life. Water is existence. Water is peace. As the author of the Starfish Story said: "If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water."*

*Yet human action has thrown our planet off balance. The water, climate, and biodiversity crises are interacting and exacerbating each other. Our right to a healthy environment stems from the notion of environmental justice.*

*For our climate action to be effective, we cannot ignore human rights to clean water and sanitation for all. We also know water scarcity affects children, women and men differently. We must therefore devise policies that will meet the needs of all. Water equity will help drive a much-needed transformation towards a regenerative economy that preserves natural resources for future generations.*

*How can we get there? Indeed, we need decisive action and global solidarity.*

*Firstly, we urgently need a strong international water voice! We need a **UN Special Envoy for Water**. An appeal to that effect was signed by over 150 countries as an important step towards better coherence of water efforts inside and outside of the UN. Such an envoy would serve to mobilize much needed further action.*

*Secondly, I suggest **regular, high-level inter-governmental UN meetings on water**. **Such a global stock-taking every 2 or 3 years** would not only keep the momentum this conference has generated, but also drive forward its follow-up process.*

*And thirdly, by putting our national **commitments** into action. Let me now list some of Slovenia's most ambitious commitments.*

*We know water scarcity affects children, women and men differently. We must aim for gender-equal water governance and such policies that will meet the needs of all. We and the Coalition on Gender Equality in the Water Domain will contribute financially to the development and launch of a "community of practice" digital platform.*

*People living in armed conflicts also have a right to water. In the Group of Friends on **Water and Peace**, we aim to ensure the protection of water resources, water personnel and infrastructure through better compliance with International Humanitarian Law. We will soon be offering a training course at our Peace Operations Training Centre for practitioners.*

*Technological advances have boosted remote learning, making it readily available to wider audiences. Together with other members of the Green Group, Slovenia is developing an online Water Knowledge platform, based on the concepts of Open Educational Resources and Open Science. The platform will offer cost-free online water management training and capacity-building courses.*

*153 countries have water bodies that cross national borders. A mostly upstream and water-rich country, Slovenia is an active party to the 1992 Water Convention. The Convention is a normative and practical framework for fair and effective transboundary cooperation. I would like to extend my invitation to you to the 10th meeting of the parties of the Water Convention that Slovenia will host in October 2024.*

*Slovenia, together with other members of the International Sava River Basin Commission, commits to upgrading the existing world-class Flood Forecasting and Warning System for even more accurate flood forecasts, as well as for low flow forecasting.*

*Later this year we are also happy to host the 23rd Meeting of the Parties of the Barcelona Convention in Slovenia.*

*The Slovenian-based International Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence under the Auspices of UNESCO is developing a Water Observatory, a state-of-the-art technological tool that will help governments collect, process, and analyse data to automate reporting and improve informed decision-making.*

*The Slovenian Centre of Excellence for Space Sciences and Technologies is developing cost-effective technologies and applications to acquire high-resolution Satellite Data and a generation of innovative Digital Twin Models to support knowledge sharing and advanced transboundary River Basin Management approaches for developing countries.*

*Another Slovenian commitment aims to improve aquatic ecosystem restoration management in the UNESCO Mura River Biosphere Reserve, as part of the first five-country UNESCO Transboundary Biosphere Reserve “Mura-Drava-Danube”.*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*No country can be complacent and we all have room for improvement, including my country. Let us take this conference and the Water Action Agenda to protect and restore our water resources wisely and in an inclusive and transparent manner in our societies.*

*Thank you.*