



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**

New York, 22 March 2023

Check against delivery.

*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. Slovenia has already submitted or is in the process of submitting commitments, which aim to contribute to:*

- Gender-equal water governance,*
- Protection of water resources and infrastructure through better compliance of International Humanitarian Law,*
- Better access to open-source capacity building on water management, and*
- Upgrading transboundary water cooperation through science, technology and aquatic ecosystem restoration management,*
- Upgrading flood forecasting and warning systems.*

*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 as 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.*

*A more comprehensive list of Slovenia's commitments has been distributed throughout the room.*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*No country in the world can be complacent and we all have room to improve upon, 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.*

[And before thanking you for your attention allow me now to take a minute to deliver a Joint Statement of the Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition. Mr. President, with your permission?]