

UN Thematic Debate on Water, Sanitation and Energy, 18 Feb 2014

Opening Statement by Dr. Ania Grobicki

Mr. Chair, honorable representatives and distinguished colleagues,

It is a great honor for me to moderate the panel this morning. I wish to thank the President of the General Assembly for his vision in setting this up as the first thematic debate, the first of six such debates on key topics, preparing for the post 2015 agenda for sustainable development.

It is very significant that water and sanitation are the topics that are first on the list, and I will briefly show why this is so significant.

Water sustains life, it is now recognized as a human right, water is essential for children, women and men, for economies, for energy, agriculture and industry, for ecosystems.

Water as a key strategic resource - long recognized by countries which are water scarce, (not always by countries that have plenty of it). However there are now global changes that are bringing it home to many, that water is not only a local issue, it is also a global issue.

The global water cycle is now being disrupted through climate change, population growth, urbanization and industrialization. Hydrology used to be based upon time series data - no longer possible. Stationarity is dead, and uncertainty is the new norm. In other words, the water situation is rapidly becoming unsustainable.

Yet with all this global change that is now well recognized, water does not yet have a global institutional architecture which can tackle these challenges and move towards sustainability. A global water goal would provide a framework within which the challenges of water supply, sanitation and hygiene, Wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse, water resources development and management, and flood and drought resilience can be dealt with in an integrated way, with improved governance for sustainability and equity. This is our hope for a dedicated water goal.