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**Statement by H. E. Dr A.K. Abdul Momen, Ambassador and  
Permanent Representative of Bangladesh  
at Panel -1 : Water and Sanitation Challenges during the  
Thematic debate on “Water, Sanitation and Sustainable Energy in the Post-2015  
Development Agenda”**

**February 18, 2014, 10:00-1:00 pm, Trusteeship Council Chamber, United Nations**

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Excellencies & distinguished participants,

We have the privilege to listen to a number of informative and thought provoking presentations on “Water and Sanitation Challenges” and we thank all the panelists and the presenters.

Mr. Chair ,

While impressive achievement has been marked by fulfilling the MDG drinking water target [*MDG Target: 7C*] five years ahead of the schedule, 768 million people still do not have access to an improved drinking water source, and 2.5 billion people currently lack access to improved sanitation. Moreover, demand for water is projected to increase by 50 per cent within the next 40 years. Hence, water and sanitation, indeed appear as a basic challenge to be addressed in the post 2015-development framework.

Improved access to safe drinking water has a direct positive impact on people and communities leading to significant social, economic and environmental benefits. Ongoing discussions in the OWG on SDGs have revealed a broad support for addressing water and sanitation challenges. The OWG also rightly emphasized that hydrological cycle calls for integrated approaches to water management at the river-basin level and cooperation between different users, i.e. agriculture, industry and domestic water users.

Bangladesh views water as key for livelihood – in addressing the challenges in agriculture and food security. This is especially so for majority of poor and marginal households, mainly in rural areas. Bangladesh is acting with its utmost, through innovative policy, partnerships, strategies, innovation both in terms of development of water resources and ensuring people’s access to water and sanitation. Bangladesh reached significant success in achieving the relevant MDGs – well ahead of time and we are proud of it.

Also, we are engaged intensely on development of less water-intensive, stress-tolerant varieties of crops that can contribute in the efficient use of water in agriculture. Energy objectives and growing industrial water requirements are also being considered in an integrated manner within national planning.

Yet, we confront challenges in the face of increasing population, unplanned and rapid urbanization, pollution, excessive use of water, over-extraction of groundwater and like. Moreover, water-related disasters are exacerbated by climate change. During the four months of rainy season or Monsoon, Bangladesh which is criss-crossed by 400 rivers of which 57 are transnational has too much water as we carry 90% of it from upstream catchments beyond border. Conversely, during dry season, when there is almost no rainfall, drought-like situation prevails across the country. So, as against the myth that ‘Bangladesh floats on water’, there is clearly spatial and seasonal divergence of water availability.

Management of water resources, therefore, is also a governance challenge for us. We have success in developing water user cooperatives at the grassroots. At the same time, we are also considering scaling up traditional knowledge and practices, especially the community-based ones. These have proved successful in judicious management of limited groundwater resources.

Mr. Chair,

The other challenge lies in managing trans-boundary river waters and we have 57 of them and they are our life-blood. While sharing of trans-boundary river water are complex, almost two decades ago, Bangladesh succeeded to enter into a long-term sharing

arrangement with India on the Ganges waters. We are engaged with India and also with Bhutan, Nepal and China in securing long-term trans-boundary cooperation in river basin management as a win-win proposition.

Mr. Chair,

Trans-boundary cooperation on water resources could contribute to more efficient management, as well as preservation of ecosystem and biodiversity for the well being of all the residents within the catchment area. This will also minimize the possibility of unilateral diversion of water by any country for hydropower, irrigation, agriculture, flushing the ports, creating storage dam or any other unsustainable exploitation of water resources. Such arrangement will reduce conflicts and mistrust, ensure peace and stability and enhance efficient use of water resources plus help improve cooperation, collaboration and cordiality within the region.

Mr. Chair ,

I would like to emphasize another important aspect that requires urgent attention while formulating the post 2015 development framework. For sustainable water management, improved knowledge, research, technology transfer and innovation are essential. These are available in global market, but should be made accessible and affordable to the countries in need. In this regard, the specific needs of the countries in special situation need to be addressed. Particularly the LDCs would need financial support, technology transfer and capacity building assistance to cover deficits in MDGs and to achieve in the post-MDG development objectives.

Mr. Chair,

Water is fundamental for sustainable development encompassing all areas of human life. As against this, it is important to note that the MDG framework addressed water only in the context of safe drinking water ignoring the broader water management issue and its inter-linkage with various other priority areas, such as, food security and nutrition and sustainable agriculture; health and population, biodiversity, ecology, desertification, land

degradation and drought plus human security and dignity. This will be another missed opportunity if we take sectorial approach as against holistic approach to water system management.

We would suggest that water should be integrated in the post 2015 development agenda encompassing two sets of goals. The first set should include universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation; the second set should address economic and ecological aspect and trans-boundary cooperation, collaboration and management of water issue through integrated water resources management and water-use efficiency.

I thank you.