

The President of the Security Council presents his compliments to the members of the Council and has the honour to transmit herewith, for their information, a copy of a **letter dated 8 July 2025 from the Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the United Nations** addressed to the Secretary-General, and its enclosures.

This letter and its enclosures will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2025/453.

9 July 2025



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H.E. Mr. António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations
United Nations Secretariat
New York

Date: 8 July 2025

Subject: Summary and compilation of statements of the Arria Formula meeting entitled "Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under Attack. Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives", 23 May 2025

Excellency,

I have the honour to transmit a copy of the concept note of the Arria Formula meeting entitled "Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under Attack. Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives", which was held on 23 May 2025 at 3 p.m., a Chair's summary of the meeting and a compilation of the statements delivered during the meeting. The recording of the meeting may also be found on the UN Web TV at <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1v/k1v96gaem9>.

I would be grateful if this letter and its annex could be circulated as an official document of the Security Council.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Ambassador Samuel Žbogar
Permanent Representative of the
Republic of Slovenia to the United Nations

Chair's Summary

United Nations Security Council Arria Formula Meeting

Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under Attack Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives

Date: Friday, 23 May 2025, 3.00 – 6.00 pm

Place: CR-1, UN Headquarters

Introduction

On Friday, 23 May 2025, Slovenia, together with Algeria, Panama and Sierra Leone, co-convened a United Nations Security Council Arria Formula Meeting on "Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under Attack. Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives." The meeting was chaired by Ms Melita Gabrič, Deputy Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia and Ambassador Samuel Žbogar, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia to the United Nations. The meeting was open to the public and broadcasted on the UN Web TV. The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Three briefers addressed the meeting: Ms Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); Mr Ted Chaiban, Deputy Executive Director of the UN's Children's Fund (UNICEF); and Ms Mehwash Ansari, Regional Head of Programme for Africa, Geneva Call.

Following the briefings, the 15 Council Members, 27 additional Member States, the European Union (EU), as well as representatives of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) delivered statements. The Philippines spoke on behalf of the Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts, and Finland spoke on behalf of the Nordic Group. Non-Security Council member states who delivered their statements in their national capacity were Hungary, Indonesia, Mozambique, Senegal, Switzerland, Viet Nam, Kuwait, Egypt, Portugal, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, Czech Republic, Armenia, Iraq, Austria, Spain, Croatia, the Netherlands, Japan, Türkiye, Bulgaria, India, Italy, Colombia and Morocco.

The Chair's Summary in front of you aims to summarize the discussion and main messages by the briefers and participating delegations. It provides an overview on the proposals presented in general, as well as recommendations for future action of the UN Security Council.

The Briefings



Ms Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, President of the ICRC, emphasized that water is essential for life, dignity, and survival. Yet in conflict zones, water infrastructure is increasingly degraded, disrupted, and deliberately weaponized against civilians, triggering immediate, severe, and cascading humanitarian consequences. She reminded the audience that all parties to armed conflict have legal obligations under international humanitarian law (IHL), which safeguards water resources and the civilian infrastructure that delivers them - installations, systems, and personnel. She recalled that objects indispensable for civilian survival, including drinking water installations, irrigation systems, and related supplies, receive additional protection under IHL.

Ms Spoljaric Egger emphasized the prohibition of weapons or tactics intended or expected to cause widespread, long-lasting, and severe damage to the natural environment—directly or indirectly—as well as the prohibition of starvation as a method of warfare, including through targeted or indiscriminate deprivation of water. Given the long-term impacts of damage to civilian infrastructure, she noted that a key part of the ICRC’s work is supporting efforts to repair, rebuild, and sustain essential services, an increasingly critical task amid shrinking aid budgets.

She further highlighted that the ICRC and others have put forward concrete operational guidance on how states can uphold protections for water systems, critical infrastructure, and the natural environment in military planning and conduct. These include incorporating protections into national law, integrating water-related legal norms into military doctrines and training, involving multidisciplinary experts such as engineers, legal advisers, and environmental specialists in military planning, embedding environmental considerations into operational decisions, ensuring adequate water provision for populations under control, facilitating humanitarian access, and improving environmental protection measures.

Mr Ted Chaiban, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, reported that disruptions of safe water in armed conflict have immediate and severe consequences. Children suffer and die from cholera, diarrhoea, and dehydration; pregnant and lactating women struggle to feed their infants; and women and girls face increased risks from poor hygiene and exposure to violence during water collection. He highlighted the continued attacks on water and sanitation systems, citing Gaza, where over 70% of infrastructure is damaged and 75% of households lack drinking water, worsened by fuel and spare parts blockades; and Sudan, where nearly 70% of water facilities are nonfunctional and repeated attacks on the Merowe Dam have caused power outages that cripple hospitals, schools, and pumping stations. He noted that climate change, including droughts, floods, and water scarcity, further compounds the consequences.

Leveraging its dual humanitarian and development mandate, UNICEF responds through data collection, emergency action, such as supplying fuel and disinfection materials, and advocacy, including negotiating access to water systems, such as the reactivation of the Alouk water station in Syria. He concluded with three recommendations: first, the Council must ensure compliance with international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, halt use of explosive weapons in populated areas, and promote endorsement of the EWIPA declaration; second, monitoring of attacks

must be strengthened to ensure accountability; and third, the Council should mobilize donor support to fund efforts protecting children and essential water services.

Ms Mehwash Ansari, Regional Head of Programme for Africa, Geneva Call, noted that millions affected by conflict face deliberate or indiscriminate attacks on water infrastructure and restricted access to safe water. She cited Sudan, Ukraine, Gaza, and Yemen, where disrupted systems forced reliance on unsafe sources, undermined agriculture and livelihoods, and displaced communities. She stressed that climate change worsens these challenges, with water scarcity triggering violence, as in South Sudan, where clashes erupt over water access.

Ms Ansari underscored that under international humanitarian law, water and related infrastructure are protected as objects indispensable to civilian survival. Attacks, destruction, or obstruction of access are prohibited, and parties must allow rapid, unimpeded humanitarian relief, including provision of safe water.

With over 60% of today's conflicts involving non-state actors, she emphasized their responsibilities and the need to include them in protection strategies. Geneva Call engages nearly 200 armed groups and de facto authorities globally, promoting IHL through dialogue, training, local accountability, and field engagement. She outlined results such as removing checkpoints, relocating barracks, and releasing control of water facilities, achieved through tools like Unilateral Declarations and Deeds of Commitment.

Ms Ansari presented three recommendations: support an enabling environment for preventive, inclusive and principled humanitarian dialogue with all conflict parties; sustain monitoring and accountability for IHL violations related to water access and infrastructure and support accountability mechanisms; and recognize credible progress as a tool to reinforce positive behaviour.

Discussion

In the ensuing interventions, the majority of intervening UN Member States denounced indiscriminate and disproportional attacks on freshwater resources and related infrastructure as a flagrant violation of international law. Several delegations reiterated that irrigation systems, drinking water facilities, and supplies enjoy special protection under international humanitarian law.

They condemned attacking, destroying, removing or rendering useless objects indispensable to civilian survival and some Member States also reaffirmed the prohibition of the use of starvation as a method of warfare. They urged the prioritization of protection of civilians and called for accountability for violations of international law. A number of delegations expressed concern over the growing trend of weaponizing water and highlighted its use as a weapon of war.

Some delegations also underscored the link between the protection of humanitarian access and the imperative to ensure safe, sustained, and unimpeded assistance to affected populations. Specific references were made to civilian personnel who operate, maintain, and repair water infrastructure, as well as to the delivery of life-saving aid, including access to clean water and sanitation services.

Numerous Member States stressed the obligation of all parties to conflicts to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the protection of freshwater resources and related infrastructure, and to adhere to the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution to minimize risks to civilians and civilian infrastructure.

They cited the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law, notably the Geneva Conventions, as well as international human rights law, especially the human right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation. Delegations also recalled UN Security Council Resolutions 2417 (2018), 2573 (2021), 2286 (2016), and 2730 (2024). One Member State highlighted the importance of ratifying Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions and encouraged all Member States that have not yet done so to consider ratification.

Various Member States noted that attacks on freshwater resources and related infrastructure can act as a trigger or multiplier of conflicts, intensify local grievances, fuel instability, and pose threats to regional and international peace and security. Several others affirmed that protection of water resources and related infrastructure is both a matter of development as well as a matter of peace and security, while one delegation advised against linking water issues with peace and security.

Many contributors highlighted the immediate consequences for the humanitarian situation, public health, displacement, and food security, as well as the disruption of WASH services, hospitals and other health facilities, schools, and electricity production. The interdependence of basic infrastructure and essential services was stressed by a wide range of participating Member States.

A number of delegations pointed to the long-term consequences for public health, food security, post-conflict reconstruction and recovery, and peacebuilding efforts. In this regard, some delegations particularly emphasized the importance of aligning development and humanitarian efforts to address both urgent needs and long-term solutions for restoring and sustaining water access.

Some delegations also drew attention to the environmental consequences of armed conflict and recalled that international humanitarian law provides for the protection of the natural environment during hostilities.

Additionally, several Member States underscored the disproportionate impact on children, women and girls, older persons, and persons with disabilities, stressing the heightened risks of sexual and gender-based violence, maternal and child mortality, and calling for an informed, context-specific humanitarian response.

A number of participants cited past and ongoing examples from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in particular Gaza Strip, Sudan, South Sudan, Yemen, Somalia, Ukraine, West Africa and the Sahel, Lebanon, Syria, Haiti, Myanmar, Colombia, and the Western Balkans. One delegation also highlighted the seizure of dams and water infrastructure and the deliberate withholding of water resources from civilian populations by terrorist groups such as ISIS, Boko Haram, and Al-Shabaab, used to gain tactical advantage and drive recruitment.

Several delegations referred to attacks on water wells, water stations, pumping and desalination facilities, electricity networks and energy systems, water treatment plants, and dams. A few delegations also raised concerns about the compounded impact of the use of explosive weapons in densely populated urban areas, as well as the evolving nature of warfare, which includes cyberattacks on civilian infrastructure.

Given that many of the countries in conflict situations also contend with the adverse effects of climate change and persistent challenges of underdevelopment, some States used the opportunity to stress the broader relevance of water diplomacy. In light of increasing competition over water resources, they called for investments in comprehensive water management strategies, the development of water infrastructure, and enhanced multilateral, regional, and sub-regional transboundary water cooperation. Some delegations further emphasized the importance of conflict prevention and early warning systems, conflict-sensitive water management, climate resilience, community engagement, and the inclusion of traditional knowledge.

Among the concrete advocacy tools, Member States referred to the Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts, ICRC's Global Initiative to galvanize political commitment to international humanitarian law, and the WASH Roadmap Call to Action to improve access to water, sanitation and hygiene in fragile, conflict-affected and violence-affected environments, the UN Group of Friends in Support of WASH in Health Care Facilities and the Global Coalition for Better Policies and Regulation of Water and Sanitation Services, as well as partnerships with the Global Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Cluster, Geneva Water Hub, UN Peacebuilding Fund, UNICEF, UNEP, UNDP and ICRC.

The Geneva Principles on the Protection of Water Infrastructure, the International Law Commission's principles on the protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts, the ICRC Guidelines on the protection of the natural environment in armed conflict, the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences arising from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA), as well as the UNECE Water Convention have been mentioned as useful tools in awareness-raising and capacity-building efforts.

Some suggested that the UN Security Council could build upon the conclusions of previous sessions, such as the Arria Formula Meeting on Protection of Civilians: Achieving a better protection of water-related essential services and infrastructure for the civilian population during armed conflicts from 2023, the Water, Peace and Security Open Debate in 2016 and the One Water Summit in 2024. A few delegations suggested that the 2026 UN Water Conference offers another opportunity for consideration of these issues.

Recommendations

Several recommendations and guidelines emerged from the discussion, highlighting ways for more decisive protection of freshwater resources and related infrastructure, as well as enhanced preventive action. These include the following proposals to:

- **Raise awareness, mobilize political support and strengthen capacities** to reinforce the protection of freshwater resources and related infrastructure as provided by international law;
- **Establish monitoring mechanisms** to track attacks against freshwater resources and related infrastructure and threats to water quality in conflict zones;
- **Consider establishing a panel of experts on water and conflicts;**
- **Generate and promote knowledge** on the direct and indirect effects and long-term consequences of armed conflict on water systems and their impact on the civilian population, especially children, women and girls, older persons, and persons with disabilities;
- **Support an enabling environment for preventive, inclusive and principled humanitarian dialogue** with all conflict parties, including non-state armed groups;
- **Support further examination of the impact of armed conflicts on the natural environment;**
- **Develop operational guidance** on the protection of freshwater resources and related infrastructure in urban warfare;
- **Develop training programmes** for the UN's local partners in the protection, maintenance, and repair of water infrastructure;
- **Integrate the protection of water into military manuals, training, and operational planning;**
- **Mobilize predictable and flexible funding** for rapid response and repair of water supply and sanitation services to mitigate cumulative humanitarian, environmental and public-health consequences;
- **Deliver on the Official Development Assistance commitments** and provide funding, technological, and capacity-building support to developing countries;
- **Support the pre-positioning and rapid deployment** of backup electricity generators, spare parts, treatment chemical, repair equipment, and fuel for the operation of critical infrastructure;
- **Support risk-informed development and management** of integrated water infrastructure;
- **Promote post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation** that prioritizes resilient, inclusive, climate-smart and decentralized water systems, and support post-conflict ecosystem restoration to address environmental damage caused by armed conflict;
- **Leverage the critical role of women** as agents of change;
- **Harness the potential of new technologies**, including satellite imagery, drone surveillance and water-related analytical capacities, in the humanitarian action;
- **Strengthen a comprehensive approach to water diplomacy** and build the capacities of developing countries in water management.

Recommendations directed at the UN Security Council emphasized the need to:

- Systematically **incorporate the protection of water into the UN Security Council's consideration** of the items on its agenda;
- Build on its past achievements related to the protection of civilian infrastructure, and aim for **better and more coherent implementation** of resolutions 2365 (2017), 2417 (2018), 2573 (2021), 2664 (2022), 2761 (2024) and 2730 (2024);
- **Request reporting** on the issue of attacks on freshwater resources and related infrastructure in the Secretary General's reports, including the annual report on the protection of civilians;
- **Request swift, thorough and independent investigations** into the attacks on freshwater resources and related infrastructure, as well as objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population;
- Include monitoring and deterrence of attacks against freshwater resources and related infrastructure within the **mandates of the UN Peace Operations**;
- Consider incorporating attacks against freshwater resources and related infrastructure into the **relevant sanctions regimes**;
- Fully operationalize the **humanitarian carve-out adopted in resolution 2664 (2022)** for spare parts, treatment chemicals, and fuel to reach water treatment and pumping facilities;
- Take into consideration the **impact of water insecurity on the ability of UN Peace Operations to deliver** their mandates.



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Concept Note

United Nations Security Council Arria Formula Meeting

Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under Attack Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives

Date: Friday, 23 May 2025, 3.00 – 6.00 pm

Place: CR-1, UN Headquarters

Briefers

- **Ms Mirjana Spoljaric Egger**, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross
- **Mr Ted Chaiban**, Deputy Executive Director of the UN's Children's Fund
- **Ms Mehwash Ansari**, Regional Head of Programme for Africa, Geneva Call

Introduction

With 120 active armed conflicts globally, 2025 paints a grim picture of daily life for millions of civilians worldwide. Trapped in warzones, forced from their homes, and deprived of essential needs such as food, water, medical care and protection, they bear the brunt of violence, hunger and fear. With an ever increasing number of armed conflicts, underfunded humanitarian operations and a lack of access to those most in need, the suffering of civilians remains an urgent crisis demanding the UN Security Council's attention.

One of the most devastating consequences of armed conflicts is the impact on water and sanitation services. When wells are poisoned, pipelines bombed, water pumping stations disabled, freshwater resources contaminated and access to clean drinking water cut off, water turns into both a weapon and a casualty of war. The destruction, damage and disruption – sometimes deliberate – of water and sanitation services not only threatens the immediate survival of civilians while leaving millions without safe drinking water¹, it also exacerbates long-term public health crises and the spread of waterborne disease. It fuels preventable food insecurity and malnutrition and forces people to flee their homes, triggering displacement.

Access to clean water is a fundamental human right and a matter of survival, in particular in conflict zones. Stronger protection of freshwater resources and related infrastructure in armed conflict is urgently needed.

¹ Report of the Secretary-General, S/2023/345, 12 May 2023.

The impacts of armed conflict on the provision of water, namely on freshwater resources and related infrastructure can take various forms. Attacks can directly affect infrastructure and supplies or prevent essential staff from managing, operating or repairing infrastructure. In urban areas, the risks are even higher, as damage from explosive weapons to interconnected infrastructure amplifies the consequences on the provision of water. In protracted conflicts, the cumulative effects of repeated attacks on already damaged water-related infrastructure can lead to an irreversible collapse of the water and sanitation services. Additionally, water infrastructure is also misused for military purposes, further disrupting essential services.

Finally, the arbitrary denial of humanitarian access might prevent the humanitarian workers from operating, maintaining or repairing infrastructure related to the provision of water and sanitation as well as block the passage of supplies needed for repairs. These obstructions may not only violate international humanitarian law obligations but also prolong suffering and displacement, making long-term recovery even more challenging.

For millions, attacks on freshwater resources and related infrastructure bring dehydration, malnutrition, public health outbreaks, and the collapse of livelihoods and entire communities.

While these attacks affect all civilians, certain groups are particularly vulnerable. Children, women, older persons, and persons with disabilities, especially, endure the brunt of disruptions through dehydration, malnutrition, waterborne diseases, displacement, deprivation of health care, education and other basic services, and ultimately protection, dignity and survival.

In many regions, women and girls are primarily responsible for water collection, child rearing, and caring for older persons and persons with disabilities, all of which become more dangerous and burdensome during conflicts.² Lack of access to nearby freshwater sources forces them to walk long distances, which can leave them exposed to harm, including the threat of sexual and gender-based violence.³

When water becomes scarce or expensive, civilians are forced to rely on unsafe water or leave their homes in search of a new source. Families are forced to divert their income to purchasing water and away from other essential needs such as education and health, increasing the risk of child labour and exacerbating social inequalities.⁴

These crises not only result in immediate suffering, but also undo decades of development, with lasting consequences for the protection, dignity and survival of the civilian population and the environment.

² UNICEF, 'Progress on Household Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene [Special Focus on Gender]' (2020-2022), 15.

³ UNICEF, 'Reimagining WASH-Water Security for All' (2021), 3.

⁴ UNICEF, 'Water Under Fire [Volume 3] - Attacks on water and sanitation services in armed conflict and the impacts on children', 2021.

Objectives of the meeting

The basic principles and rules of international humanitarian law and international human rights law are clear. Therefore, the persistence of attacks on or affecting freshwater resources and related infrastructure is not due to a lack of legal protections.

International humanitarian law unequivocally prohibits indiscriminate or disproportionate attacks and attacks that target civilian objects. Objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, including but not limited to drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works, receive special protection under international humanitarian law. In no event may action be taken against such objects that would be expected to cause starvation of or force the movement of the civilian population. Violations of these and other rules protecting water infrastructure and resources, and aimed at ensuring civilian access to them, can constitute war crimes for which those responsible must be held accountable.

Such attacks not only exacerbate the humanitarian crisis, they also negatively impact international peace and security, and prolong the conflicts and their devastating consequences. The growing number of attacks on freshwater resources and related infrastructure requires the UN Security Council's attention.

The UN Security Council has reaffirmed the importance of protecting civilian infrastructure in resolutions such as **2365 (2017)**, **2417 (2018)**, **2573 (2021)**, **2664 (2022)**, and **2730 (2024)**. However, implementation remains inadequate. This UN Security Council Arria Formula Meeting seeks to address three key questions:

- **First, how do we reverse the trend of normalisation of attacks on or affecting freshwater and related infrastructure and foster a culture of compliance with international humanitarian law and UN Security Council resolutions? Which tools and mechanisms can be leveraged?**
- **Second, in protracted crises, how can the UN system and the humanitarian actors more effectively address the immediate and the long-term and cumulative impacts of attacks on or affecting freshwater resources and related infrastructure? Beyond immediate effects, how can we mitigate the environmental and public health consequences of such attacks?**
- **Third, how can the UN Security Council transform existing evidence into meaningful action? Building on its Protection of Civilians Agenda and past discussions, including the UN Security Council Arria Formula Meeting on "Achieving a better protection of water-related essential services and infrastructure for the civilian population during armed conflicts" in March 2023, what concrete steps should be taken to ensure water protection remains a priority in conflict settings?**

Modalities

The meeting, organised by Slovenia together with Algeria, Panama and Sierra Leone, and supported by Costa Rica, Hungary, Indonesia, Jordan, Mozambique, the Philippines, Senegal, Switzerland and Viet Nam, will be chaired by Ms Melita Gabrič, Deputy Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia. Interpretation into the official languages of the UN will be provided, subject to availability.

All UN Member States, Observers and UN Agencies are invited to participate. In order to allow as many delegations as possible to participate, interventions **should not exceed three minutes**. Time management will

be closely observed. Delegations are kindly invited to inscribe to the list of speakers by **20 May COB** at slomission.newyork@gov.si.



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Compilation of Statements

United Nations Security Council Arrria Formula Meeting

Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under Attack Protecting Water in Armed Conflict - Protecting Civilian Lives

Date: Friday, 23 May 2025, 3.00 - 6.00 pm

Place: CR-1, UN Headquarters

1. Slovenia

Statement by

Ms Melita Gabrič

Deputy Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia

at the

**United Nations Security Council Arria Formula Meeting
Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under Attack.
Protecting Water in Armed Conflict - Protecting Civilian Lives**

New York, 23 May 2025

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues,

Welcome to today's Arria formula meeting on "Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under Attack. Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives".

This event is organized in partnership with fellow Security Council members Algeria, Panama and Sierra Leone. We are extremely grateful also to our co-sponsors from the Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflict, namely Costa Rica, Hungary, Indonesia, Jordan, Mozambique, the Philippines, Senegal, Switzerland and Viet Nam.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the essence of today's meeting is plain and simple. How much longer will we allow water to come under attack?

Stories of tens of thousands of civilians caught in armed conflicts around the globe are a testimony to the relevance of this question.

A story of a Palestinian boy in Rafah, forced to drink from a puddle in the blistering summer heat - after explosives wired to the Canada Water reservoir damaged a facility that once held three million litres of life-sustaining water.

Or a Sudanese mother in Khartoum - one among 2,5 million people - struggling to access safe water, as drone strikes on the Merowe Dam shattered the operations of vital water stations.

It is about the humanitarian workers and repair personnel in Southern Lebanon who paid with their lives while attempting to restore basic water services for the few residents who remained there.

It is about an older Syrian farmer striving to recover after years of war and despair, trying to rebuild in the fragile peace - standing before the ruins of once vital irrigation system.

It is about an internally displaced family searching for a shelter after the destruction of Kakhovka Dam and consequent flooding in Ukraine.

One of the most pressing and often overlooked consequences of war is the disruption of water and sanitation services.

Wells are poisoned, pipelines cut off. Irrigation systems dismantled, pumping stations silent, water treatment plants bombed. Freshwater resources contaminated.

As the Secretary-General's report on the Protection of Civilians documents attacks on water infrastructure in Gaza, Sudan, Lebanon and Syria, this Council needs no reminder: Access to clean water is a fundamental human right and a matter of survival, anywhere, but in particular in conflict zones. And yet, time and again, we witness water turning into both a weapon and a casualty of war.

For millions of civilians, especially children, attacks on water bring dehydration, malnutrition, waterborne disease and collapse of livelihoods, with devastating immediate and long-term consequences for public health.

Attacks on water undo years of development, deepen the humanitarian crisis, and threaten international peace and security. The rising number of attacks on freshwater resources and related infrastructure demands the UN Security Council's attention.

This is why the conveners of today's meeting bring the question of protection of civilians and public health to the forefront.

Allow me to bring to the discussion the following three points in my national capacity:

Firstly, protection of civilians and civilian objects under international humanitarian law is non-negotiable. Slovenia strongly condemns indiscriminate and disproportional attacks on freshwater resources and related infrastructure, and against the dedicated civilian personnel who operate, maintain, and repair these vital lifelines.

Irrigation systems, drinking water facilities, and supplies enjoy special protection under international humanitarian law, and Slovenia urges all parties to armed conflicts to take constant care to spare civilian objects.

The Council should systematically incorporate the protection of water into the consideration of the items on its agenda, and work with the UN system and the humanitarian actors to address the immediate, long-term, and cumulative impact of attacks on freshwater resources and related infrastructure.

Secondly, beyond the legal imperative, protecting water is a moral imperative. The effects of damaged water systems and broken dams linger long after the guns fall silent. Collapsed water treatment plants stall a nation's path towards recovery. Destroyed irrigation systems exacerbate food insecurity. Polluted springs and rivers hamper the promise of newly won peace. Safe water is essential both to human lives and for restoring peace and stability, post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding.

We must safeguard, protect, respect, and promote the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation during armed conflicts and prevent the cascading, generational and often gendered humanitarian consequences.

And thirdly, it is vital to allow the civilian operators, maintenance and repair personnel to deliver what they do best: restoring the water flow.

We must ensure that men and women working quietly to provide millions of civilians with life-sustaining safe drinking water, carry out their work in safety and security.

Excellencies,

We need a collective action to reverse the trend of normalizing attacks on water. Countless civilian lives – that of the Palestinian boy and other children, that of the Sudanese mother and other women, that of the Syrian farmer and other older persons, that of that Lebanese engineer and other humanitarian personnel, and that of the Ukrainian and other families – living in the active zones of conflict and protracted crises depend on it.

It was with this in mind that, exactly a year ago, Slovenia launched the Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts, joining forces with states, international organizations and civil society partners. A joint mission to prevent weaponization of water brought us together in this arria meeting today.

2. Ms Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

Speech given by Mirjana Spoljaric, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, United Nations Security Council Arrria Formula Meeting Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives, 23 May 2025

Mr. Chair, Excellencies, esteemed colleagues,

Water is an issue of immense humanitarian concern that cannot be emphasised enough and cannot be placed high enough on states' agendas.

I thank the Permanent Mission of Slovenia and co-sponsors for their leadership in placing this topic squarely on the Security Council's agenda.

Because water is life, it is health, it is dignity, and it is survival.

And yet, in conflict zones, water infrastructure is increasingly degraded, disrupted and very deliberately used as a weapon against civilians.

This triggers immediate, severe, and cascading humanitarian consequences because children die from unsafe water; hospitals shut are down; people flee their homes; food insecurity deepens.

These are not hypotheticals. They are realities that the ICRC confronts every day, and in nearly every armed conflict in which we operate.

International humanitarian law provides vital safeguards for water resources and the civilian infrastructure that delivers them – installations, systems, and the personnel who keep them running.

In other words, all parties to an armed conflict have non-negotiable legal—but also moral—obligations to ensure that water remains accessible during war.

Objects indispensable for civilians' survival, including drinking water installations, irrigation systems, and related supplies receive additional protection under IHL.

Belligerents must avoid actions that expose water sources and related infrastructure and personnel to attack or incidental harm. This means they should also avoid using them for military purposes.

Because of its importance to all life, using weapons or tactics intended or expected to cause widespread, long-lasting, and severe damage to the natural environment directly or indirectly—for example by poisoning or contaminating water sources—is prohibited.

And starvation of civilians as a method of warfare, including by targeted or indiscriminate deprivation of water, is strictly prohibited.

This Council has reinforced this legal framework through resolutions 2573, 2417, and 2730. These resolutions are important and must be translated into action.

IHL is only as effective as our collective commitment to uphold it. Protecting water is included in the protection of civilian infrastructure, a vital workstream within the global initiative on IHL launched by the ICRC together with six states last September. I commend and thank Slovenia, Algeria, Costa Rica, and Sierra Leone for taking an active lead in this important process.

When civilian infrastructure is not spared, or even deliberately targeted, civilians suffer the consequences not just for the weeks and months to come – but long after the conflict has ended. We see this in Syria, in Iraq, and many places around the world.

An essential component of our work, whether in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, Syria, or elsewhere, is supporting—either financially or as a neutral intermediary—efforts to repair, rebuild, and sustain essential infrastructure.

This approach represents a sustainable form of humanitarian intervention because the cost of the collapse of water or electricity distribution systems would lead to catastrophic consequences in already dire humanitarian circumstances.

If humanitarian aid budgets are to significantly reduce, as we can see today and is debated in these times, more must be done by states and non-state armed groups to protect civilian infrastructure, notably water distribution plants—because both are linked together. You don't have water if you don't have electricity, and you don't have hospitals if you don't have water.

The costs—both human and economic—are simply too high.

The ICRC and others have put forward concrete operational guidance on how states can respect the rules protecting water systems, critical infrastructure, and the natural environment in military planning and in the conduct of hostilities.

This includes:

- Avoiding permissive interpretations of IHL that could undermine humanitarian objectives – especially where fighters and civilians coexist.
- Incorporating protections for water resources, infrastructure, and personnel into national law.
- Integrating water-related legal norms into military doctrines and military training.
- Including multidisciplinary experts in military planning, such as engineers, legal advisers, and environmental specialists.
- Embedding environmental considerations into operational decision-making.
- Providing adequate water for populations under their control and facilitating humanitarian access.
- Adopting practical improvements to environmental protection; and
- Recognizing that protecting water is a matter of survival.

To conclude, I urge this Council to take meaningful steps to uphold the protection of water in armed conflict, and to remind all parties—state and non-state—of their clear and legal obligations under international humanitarian law.

We invite the international community to engage actively in the Global Initiative to galvanize political commitment for IHL because this is one of the questions that is at the forefront of reducing the humanitarian cost of conflict.

Seventy-five states as I mentioned yesterday in the Security Council have joined us so far in this effort and I hope after this meeting many more of you will do so.

Water is not a bargaining chip. It is not a target. It is not a weapon.

It is a lifeline that must never become a tool of war.

Thank you.

3. Mr Ted Chaiban, Deputy Executive Director of the UN's Children's Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF Deputy Executive Director Ted Chaiban's remarks at the United Nations Security Council Arria Formula Meeting: Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under Attack - Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives

"Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

"I am grateful for the initiative taken by Slovenia to bring attention to this critical peace and security topic.

"Water is a matter of life and death for civilians during conflict, especially for children. When the flow of safe water stops, civilians are forced to spend a greater sum of their time and income towards securing water. Time is spent travelling long distances in search of water, and those who directly depend on water for their livelihoods, like farmers, struggle immensely.

"The consequences on children are dire and immediate. Without water, public health quickly deteriorates - children suffer and die from cholera, diarrhoea and dehydration, underlying health conditions are exacerbated, and pregnant or lactating women are unable to feed their infants. Women and girls face heightened vulnerabilities, including due to reduced hygiene and to the exposure to violence during water collection.

"Since UNICEF last addressed this Council on this topic two years ago, attacks on water and sanitation continue to take place with alarming frequency in contexts as diverse as Burkina Faso, the State of Palestine, Sudan and Ukraine. Let me focus on a couple of these:

"In Gaza, following 20 months of conflict, more than 70 per cent of water and sanitation infrastructure has been either destroyed or damaged, and at least 75 per cent of households report that they do not have enough water to drink. In parallel, repeated blockades have prohibited the entry into the Gaza Strip of fuel and critical components to run water facilities.

"Currently, the desalination plant in southern Gaza is working at reduced capacity on backup generators. We urgently need the power supply to the desalination plant to be switched back on to provide at least 600.000 internally displaced Gazans in the south of the Strip with access to safe water.

"In Sudan, nearly 70 per cent of water facilities - including treatment plants, boreholes, reservoirs, and water networks - are nonfunctional due to damage sustained in both

direct and indirect attacks, in particular due to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

"The energy systems that support water infrastructure have also been targeted. The Merowe Dam, which previously supplied 60 per cent of Sudan's power, has suffered repeated attacks. The resulting power outages have rendered 100 pumping stations inoperative and have brought 30 hospitals, 60 healthcare facilities, and 100 schools to a complete halt.

"In these contexts - as in many others - climate change compounds the consequences of the attacks as intensifying droughts, flooding, and water scarcity intersect with conflict to deepen the water crisis.

"Leveraging our dual humanitarian and development mandate, UNICEF both responds to and prevents the impacts of attacks, employing a broad range of tools.

"First, we generate data on attacks against water and sanitation systems in coordination with WASH Cluster partners. This data helps us prioritize urgent WASH interventions, target the most vulnerable and advocate for interventions that strengthen water systems and prevent attacks. One example of this is through our leadership of the WASH Insecurity Analysis, an evidence-based framework that supports peacebuilding by helping us identify disparities in water access and develop plans that reduce risks and promote social cohesion and stability.

"Second, we respond to immediate and urgent needs. We supply fuel, spare parts, and consumables to keep water facilities operational. We partner with local actors to rehabilitate damaged infrastructure and distribute chlorine and disinfection tablets to reduce disease risk. When needed, we provide alternative water sources or use water trucking as a last resort.

"Third, we advocate for children's right to water. This includes 'water diplomacy', engaging conflict parties on their responsibility to protect water systems and personnel and facilitating agreements that ensure safe access to water. In Syria, for example, UNICEF and others played a key role in re-establishing operations of the Alouk water station in Al-Hasakeh Governorate, negotiating with different parties to serve over 1 million people with water. And as the global WASH Cluster lead, we collaborate with partners like the Geneva Water Hub and the Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflict, to leverage our collective advocacy and ensure greater impact.

"Your excellencies, I would like to leave you with three recommendations:

"First, we need the full weight of this Council to seek compliance by state and non-state actors with their legal obligations under international law and in line with relevant Security Council resolutions 2573, 2286 and 2601 to respect essential services during

conflict - including the personnel working in these facilities. Children desperately need an immediate halt to all actions that impact their access to water.

"Water infrastructure is especially vulnerable when conflict parties use explosive weapons in populated areas. All parties must refrain from such attacks and Member States who have not yet done so should swiftly endorse and implement the Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA) declaration. We also urge Member States to use their leverage and influence with parties to ensure safe, timely and unimpeded access for humanitarian organisations to maintain or repair water infrastructure or to ensure the passage of necessary supplies.

"Second, there is a need to strengthen the monitoring of attacks on water and sanitation to ensure a relevant response and to promote accountability. As Security Council members, you may integrate the collection of data into an existing mechanism, call for the consistent inclusion of attacks on water and sanitation in Secretary General reports or products or consider extending the scope of peace operations to include water mediation- when relevant-, recognizing the crucial link between water and peace.

"This brings me to my last recommendation. I request this Council to engage donors to prioritize this issue and provide the resources we need to continue to support children, their families and the systems they rely upon in the face of attacks on water and sanitation.

"I thank you for your attention."

4. Ms Mehwash Ansari, Regional Head of Programme for Africa, Geneva Call

STATEMENT – MEHWASH ANSARI

Arria-Formula Meeting of the United Nations Security Council

23 May 2025

Mr. Chair,

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

Good afternoon.

I will begin by expressing my earnest appreciation to the organizers of this timely and vital discussion. Geneva Call is grateful for this opportunity to participate and commends the Council for drawing attention to the protection of water — a resource that is not only indispensable for human survival, but necessary for all of us to thrive with health, dignity, and peace.

"Water has no enemy," says a Yoruba Proverb. Or in other words, to fight over water is to forget that every single person needs it to survive. But this wisdom, shared across many cultures, is not the reality of millions of conflict-affected people across the world.

With our current reality marred by an unprecedented surge in armed conflicts, water security for millions has been compromised. From Sudan, to Ukraine, to Gaza, to Yemen, we are increasingly witnessing deliberate or indiscriminate attacks on water infrastructure, as well as control and disruption of water supplies, that have compromised crucial access to safe water for vulnerable people, threatening their health and survival.

In Sudan, water facilities, including dams, pipelines, and water points, have been targeted and destroyed on multiple occasions, with civilians forced to rely on contaminated sources or driven into displacement to access water. In Ukraine, the targeting of power plants has dramatically diminished the capacity of the water supply infrastructure to pump, treat, and supply safe water. Moreover, in conflicts from the Middle East to Africa, armed groups have taken control of water points or established their barracks around them, while cutting off access to civilian populations. Diminished access to water due to conflict has also disrupted agriculture and pastoralism, damaging food systems and livelihoods, impacting both short and long-term food security of affected people.

At the same time, water scarcity in countries facing severe climate change is no longer a looming threat, but a hard reality, becoming a catalyst for intensifying conflicts. In South Sudan, for example, when the dry season arrives, pastoralist families with cattle, searching for water, move across payams and confront farming communities. This search for water in the context of mobilization and weapons bearing along ethnic lines can lead to armed groups seizing control of water points and tens of civilians being killed in a day.

Under International Humanitarian Law, water and water infrastructure are protected as objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population under both treaty law and customary law. Consequently, it is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or otherwise render useless water and water infrastructure, including drinking water installations and irrigation works.

Furthermore, parties to conflict are obliged to allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded humanitarian relief, which includes the provision of safe water to all civilians. Any obstruction of such assistance not only deepens suffering but constitutes a breach of humanitarian law.

Despite the state of affairs, we believe that progress is possible.

Comprehensive efforts towards increasing the protection of civilians, nonetheless, need to reflect today's conflict realities: over 60% of armed

conflicts involve non-state armed groups. These actors therefore must bear significant responsibilities under IHL and must be included in any meaningful civilian protection strategy.

This is Geneva Call's approach. We engage in humanitarian dialogue with nearly 200 armed groups and de facto authorities across the world, with a clear mission: to enable greater protection for civilians by working pragmatically and constructively with those who have direct control or influence over them.

Our engagement with armed groups spans establishing contact, holding face-to-face dialogues, providing trainings and trainings for trainers on IHL, field accompaniment, and convening discussions with empowered community representatives to allow for local accountability. All of these pathways progressively encourage and incentivize armed groups to take concrete initiatives to reduce violations of IHL.

These initiatives can vary from a checkpoint no longer impeding humanitarian access; to an armed group moving its barracks away from water points; to a de facto authority releasing control of a water facility, and to a group moving combatants away from routes that women may frequent to fetch water.

In our work, we employ innovative legal tools to secure commitments from armed groups, such as Unilateral Declarations and our Deeds of Commitment—voluntary pledges publicly signed by armed groups, containing clear obligations and concrete action plans.

Our Unilateral Declarations include pledges on the Protection of Civilian Objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, which explicitly include water sources and farms. We have a Deed of Commitment on preventing famine and addressing food insecurity that explicitly recognizes the right of access to water.

Where implemented, our comprehensive engagement leads to real results:

- Reduced attacks on water infrastructure;

- Improved humanitarian access to water;
- Reduced water-borne diseases due to water contamination;

In light of these findings and our experience, Geneva Call wishes to offer the following recommendations to the respected Council:

1. Support and Enable Humanitarian Dialogue with All Conflict Parties:

Preventive, inclusive, and principled engagement with all parties—state and non-state—is vital. Geneva Call’s humanitarian diplomacy demonstrates that engagement with armed groups is possible, lawful, and impactful. We urge member states and the Council to support an enabling environment for such dialogue, including through political will, protection frameworks, and humanitarian access.

2. Sustain Monitoring and International Pressure: Continued monitoring of IHL violations related to water access and infrastructure must be paired with accountability mechanisms. This includes ensuring that both state and non-state actors understand the consequences of non-compliance.

3. Recognize Progress as a Leverage for Change: In our work, we have seen that recognition of progress achieved—when credible and substantiated—can serve as a powerful tool for reinforcing positive behavior. Acknowledging steps taken by conflict parties to prevent damage or improve access to water or repair infrastructure can catalyze further change and open doors for deeper commitments.

In closing, Geneva Call reiterates that water must never be used as a weapon of war or a bargaining chip in armed conflict. It is a common good, a human right, and a cornerstone of resilience for communities in crisis.

The international community, including this Council, has a responsibility not only to condemn violations but also to enable solutions—solutions

that are inclusive, forward-looking, and above all, protective of human life and dignity.

I thank you for your attention and we commit to collaborating with all actors present in pursuit of this goal.

Thank you.

Algeria Statement

**Freshwater resources and related infrastructure under attack
Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – protecting Civilian Lives
Arria formula – 23 May 2025**

Madam President,

- I would like to thank all the briefers.
- We are delighted to join others in organizing this meeting.
- I promise, I will be very brief.
- The link between attacks on water and sanitation services and the violation of basic human rights— particularly the rights to life and health— is evident and is deeply concerning.
- Moreover, the targeting of water infrastructure leads to mass displacement, as we are tragically witnessing in Palestine, especially in Gaza and in Sudan.

Madam President,

- We would like to emphasize on the following elements:

1- Call for the establishment of an early warning mechanism

to monitor violations related to water systems,

including attacks on water infrastructure

and threats to water quality in conflict zones.

2- Mobilize the necessary resources,

particularly financial support,

to rapidly restore water supply and sanitation services

in areas affected by armed conflict.

3- Call for accountability,

including through the incorporation of violations and attacks

against freshwater and sanitation infrastructure

into relevant sanctions regimes.

4- Activate all available tools of the Security Council

to strengthen safeguards for freshwater resources

and related civilian infrastructure in conflict settings.

- Let us unite our voices in solidarity with
the millions deprived of water, this basic necessity due to conflicts
- This is not only about preserving human health and dignity—
This is also about protecting life.

Thank you.

6. Panama

Misión Permanente de Panamá ante las Naciones Unidas
Intervención de S. E. ELOY ALFARO DE ALBA
Embajador, Representante Permanente de Panamá ante las NN. UU.
Fórmula Arria, CR-1, UN HQ
“Protegiendo el agua en los conflictos armados”
23 de mayo de 2025

I want to extend a warm welcome to Ms Melita Gabrič, Deputy Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia.

Sin agua, no hay vida... el acceso al agua es un derecho humano y constituye una necesidad esencial para el pleno desarrollo de la vida, que, lamentablemente, se ha convertido en blanco de ataque y herramienta de guerra.

Durante los conflictos armados, no solo se ve afectado el acceso al agua para el consumo humano, también existe un gran impacto en los sistemas de saneamiento básico, la producción de alimentos y el suministro eléctrico.

La falta de acceso a servicios seguros de agua, saneamiento e higiene afecta de manera diferenciada a mujeres y niñas.

En muchas comunidades ellas son las responsables de la recolección y el manejo del agua en el hogar, incrementando su vulnerabilidad ante la falta de estos servicios básicos.

Según la UNICEF, los niños menores de 15 años que viven en zonas afectadas por conflictos prolongados tienen casi tres veces más probabilidades de morir por enfermedades estomacales que por la violencia.

Debemos establecer mecanismos para invertir la tendencia en Gaza, expresada por la UNICEF, donde alrededor de un millón de personas -incluidos 400.000 niños- reciben actualmente una ración diaria de seis litros de agua por persona, lo que supone una marcada disminución respecto a la media anterior de 16 litros.

Los ataques deliberados a las represas y a la infraestructura energética afectan también la disponibilidad de agua.

El acto de sabotaje al canal de Iber Lepenc, en Kosovo, y el ataque a la presa de Nova Kajovka, en Ucrania, nos han recordado el impacto múltiple que producen en diversos aspectos de la vida cotidiana de la población civil.

En Haití, la violencia de las bandas armadas nos demuestra que no solo mediante el ataque deliberado a la infraestructura del agua se afecta su acceso.

La inseguridad, la falta de gobernabilidad y la capacidad de proveer los servicios básicos a la población producen las mismas consecuencias y carencias.

Ante este escenario, es imperativo que la comunidad internacional refuerce su compromiso con la Resolución 2573 (2021), que condena los ataques contra bienes civiles esenciales, y la Resolución 2417 (2018), que reconoce el vínculo entre conflictos armados y la inseguridad alimentaria.

Presidente,

Panamá otorga especial atención al acceso al agua como un Derecho Humano fundamental. Por ello, formamos parte de iniciativas exitosas como la Alianza Mundial para Preservar el Agua de los Conflictos Armados.

Hemos demostrado el firme compromiso de nuestra nación con la gestión sostenible de este recurso. Consideramos prioridad la disponibilidad del agua para el consumo humano, al mismo tiempo que logramos que la operatividad del Canal de Panamá, bajo administración panameña, sea la más exitosa de su historia.

Por lo cual, creemos que debemos levantar nuestra voz por aquellas personas que sufren en los conflictos armados, ellos no están viviendo, apenas están sobreviviendo.

En medio de tanta tragedia, el agua puede y debe ser un símbolo de acuerdo, allí donde las divisiones amenazan con profundizarse, el acceso al agua ofrece una oportunidad para el entendimiento común.

Muchas gracias.

7. Sierra Leone

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT

BY

H.E. MR. KALILU IBRAHIM TOTANGI

AMBASSADOR AND DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE /
CHARGÉ D’AFFAIRES a.i.

AT THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL ARRIA FORMULA
on "Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under
Attack: Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting
Civilian Lives"

CONF RM 1, UNHQ

23 MAY 2025

1. Thank you, and welcome Ms. Melita Gabrič, Deputy Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia.
2. I thank Slovenia for convening this timely Arria Formula meeting which Sierra Leone is proud to co-sponsor, noting the impact of conflict on freshwater infrastructure and resources, and the environment in general.
3. I also thank Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and Ms. Mehwash Ansari, for their insightful briefings.

Madam Chair, Colleagues,

4. Although international law enshrines the right to water as a fundamental human right, vital for survival, public health, and economic stability, and international humanitarian law prohibits attacks on water-related infrastructure and services, increasing disregard for civilian lives and objects continue to worsen humanitarian situations during conflict and increase the burden on States during post conflict reconstruction.
5. As the nexus between climate and security becomes more evident, it is critical for the Protection of Civilians (PoC) agenda to formulate and adopt practical approaches specifically aimed at upholding the right to water and protecting freshwater resources and water- related infrastructure.
6. Although the Security Council has highlighted the protection of civilian infrastructure and explicitly condemned the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare, highlighting the need to maintain essential services in Resolution 2417 (2018) and Resolution 2730 (2024), these commitments must now translate to meaningful, targeted and tangible actions.
7. We have seen the devastating results of attacks on civilian infrastructure all across the globe. These include attacks on freshwater resources and related infrastructure which are threat multipliers to the environment and public health globally, disproportionately affecting women, children, and other vulnerable groups.
8. In some parts of the African continent, access to safe water is not just a development issue, it is a matter of survival and peacebuilding. Across

the continent, millions of people, especially in conflict-affected areas, depend on a single borehole, a shared river, or seasonal rain to meet their most basic needs. When these are destroyed or contaminated during hostilities, the entire ecosystem of life is disrupted. Health systems falter under the weight of preventable waterborne diseases. Agriculture, the backbone of many African economies, is undermined. Women and girls walk farther, at risk of sexual violence to fetch water. Additionally, families, already displaced by violence, are forced yet again to flee in search of water.

Madam Chair,

9. We acknowledge the efforts of various organizations like the International Committee of the Red Cross ICRC, UN Water, International Water Management Institute, Global Water Partnership among others, in promulgating strategies to address water scarcity during and beyond conflict situations.

On this note, we would like to make the following points:

10. **First**, parties to a conflict must distinguish between civilian populations and military objectives. In response to the alarming increase in flagrant violations of IHL and targeted attacks on civilians and heavily populated areas, Sierra Leone calls for swift, thorough, and independent investigations and prosecutions of these war crimes, including deliberate attacks on civilian infrastructure. We lend our full support to the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and commend its continued efforts to uphold justice and accountability.
11. **Secondly**, let me highlight the importance of “water diplomacy” as proffered during one of the briefings of the Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), particularly in addressing protracted transboundary tensions in West Africa and the Sahel. Competition for this increasingly scarce resource is heightening tensions, exacerbating economic instability, and exacerbating climate fragility within communities. In this context, Sierra Leone calls for enhanced support to improve access to water and investment in the development of water infrastructure. This is a key step in resolving conflicts and improving the resilience of communities, particularly

by creating better opportunities for the youth, who are often vulnerable to recruitment and radicalization.

9. Finally, Sierra Leone advocates for fostering a culture of protection for water sources and the right to water through inclusive, community-driven peacebuilding approaches. Limited access to water has been a significant driver of conflict, especially in regions where scarcity and increased competition for resources exacerbate tensions, particularly among vulnerable groups such as women, girls, and forcibly displaced persons. This vulnerability, particularly to sexual and gender-based violence, underscores the urgent need for a holistic peacebuilding strategy that also addresses water scarcity. Sierra Leone urges states and international partners, including donor organizations, to align development and humanitarian efforts to meet both immediate needs and provide sustainable solutions for maintaining access to water.

10. Drawing from our experience, Sierra Leone successfully implemented the Women for Water and Peace (W4WP) project, a community-led initiative in partnership with the Freetown City Council, funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund and supported by the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the International Labour Organization (ILO). This two-year project, which ran from January 2022 to July 2024, focused on addressing community conflict and sexual violence related to equitable access to water. The project centered on empowering women in the community to take control of water sources, combining social and economic empowerment with the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence.

11. In closing, let me state that today's meeting is an opportunity to discuss this complex and rapidly evolving issue. We look forward to hearing the perspectives that will be shared today in a bid to advance this important agenda during our tenure on the Council, in collaboration with like-minded states and stakeholders.

I thank you.

8. Pakistan

Final to be delivered

**Statement delivered by Deputy
Permanent Representative
Ambassador Usman Iqbal Jadoon
at the
Arria Formula Meeting on
Protecting Water in Armed Conflict
23 May 2025**

*Venue: Conference Room No:1
1500-1800 hrs*

Mr. Chair,

I would like to thank Slovenia and the co-organizers for convening this meeting. Slovenia's strong advocacy for the protection of water resources and related infrastructure in situations of armed conflicts is commendable.

2. I also extend my gratitude to the briefers for their insightful briefings.

Mr. Chair,

3. There has been a growing recognition of access to clean water being a **fundamental human right**, inextricably linked with the **right to life** with dignity.

Mr. Chair,

4. Today, in a world rife with both internal and inter-state conflicts, regional and global peace and security remains on a precipice with increasing challenges for the civilian population affected by conflicts. This, *interalia*, includes attacks against freshwater resources and its related infrastructure with the aim to render them unfit for use and measures to impede access to water resources.

5. In this context, **Mr. Chair**, I would like to make the following three points:

First, the international law, including both the human rights law and the IHL, are clear. Attacks against water resources, related infrastructure, and denial of access to these resources constitute a flagrant violation of established norms, and widely accepted principles. The UNSC too, through its various resolutions, has reaffirmed these principles and has also strongly condemned the unlawful

denial of such access and depriving civilians of objects indispensable to their survival.

Second, all parties to a conflict have an obligation to abide by the IHL principles and must refrain from actions that could have serious and incalculable humanitarian consequences.

Third, while protection of water resources in situations of armed conflict is of vital importance, my delegation firmly holds that use of water as a weapon, either in a situation of armed conflict or for political purposes endangers regional peace and security, especially when livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people depend on this valuable and finite resource.

6. Regrettably, **Mr. Chair**, we have seen the malevolent designs of one country to weaponize water and to repeat what the President of ICRC warned against earlier, the use water as a bargain chip. India's decision to illegally and unilaterally suspend the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), aiming to impede the flow of water guaranteed to Pakistan under the Treaty, is a grave violation of international law, including human rights law, the treaty law and customary international law. Troubling pronouncements by Indian leadership to "starve the people of Pakistan" depict a highly dangerous and perverse thinking. We strongly condemn India's unlawful announcement to hold the Treaty in abeyance and call upon India to strictly abide by its legal obligations and refrain from stopping, diverting or restricting rivers that are a lifeline for 240 million people of Pakistan. We will never accept any such moves.

7. To conclude, **Madam Chair**, we lend support to the calls for full compliance with the IHL and international human right laws, especially for protection of water resources and related infrastructure. Equally important is the need to formulate a resolute, principled and united stand against all attempts to weaponize water for political purposes.

8. The UN Security Council is the primary body of the UN entrusted with the responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security. It must play a role by identifying situations where violations of international law, including IHL principles could jeopardize peace and security or lead to catastrophic humanitarian crisis, and act preventively.

I thank you, Madam Chair

9. Russian Federation

**Постоянное представительство
Российской Федерации
при Организации
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**ВЫСТУПЛЕНИЕ
представителя Российской Федерации
на заседании Совета Безопасности ООН по теме:
«Защита воды в условиях вооруженного конфликта: защита
гражданских лиц»**

23 мая 2025 г.

Господин Председатель,

Отмечаем вклад докладчиков в дискуссию по вопросу о защите воды в условиях вооруженного конфликта. С интересом выслушали брифинги Президента Международного Комитета Красного Креста гжи Мирьяны Споляр-Эггер и Заместителя исполнительного директора Детского фонда ООН гна Теда Чайбана.

Господин Председатель,

Международное гуманитарное право в его нынешнем виде уделяет достаточное внимание вопросам обеспечения доступа населения к питьевой воде в условиях вооруженного конфликта. Контроль за соблюдением норм данной отрасли, а также обеспечение неотвратимости наказания для лиц, виновных в их нарушении, возложен на стороны вооруженного конфликта.

Однако проблема целостности режима международного гуманитарного права применительно к рассматриваемому вопросу заключается в том, что ряд стран, обладающих значительными военными потенциалами и являющихся крупнейшими производителями и экспортерами оружия, по истечении почти 50 лет с даты принятия Дополнительного протокола 1 к Женевским конвенциям, регулирующим данный вопрос, так и не стали его участниками. Необходимо призвать все государства, которые еще не сделали этого, скорейшим образом присоединиться к числу участников данного важнейшего документа.

Господин Председатель,

Говоря о важности обеспечения доступа к питьевой воде, нельзя не вспомнить о водной блокаде Крыма, которая была начата киевскими

властями вскоре после референдума 2014 года и задолго до начала СВО. Речь шла фактически о попытке коллективного наказания жителей полуострова за выбор в пользу воссоединения с Россией. Эта ситуация осталась за пределами внимания нашей Организации и мировых СМИ. Также не получили первоочередного внимания атаки ВСУ на водную инфраструктуру Донбасса, которые шли постоянно, начиная с 2014 года.

Затем украинские военные инженеры минировали сооружения Каховской ГЭС, велись ее постоянные обстрелы, которые в итоге закончились ее подрывом, и ракетно-артиллерийскими ударами по Новокаховской плотине. Недавний обстрел Донецкой Народной Республики со стороны ВСУ привел к обесточиванию Верхне-Кальмиусской фильтровальной станции. Это лишь некоторые примеры многочисленных атак Украины на водную инфраструктуру.

Господин Председатель,

Продолжающийся палестино-израильский конфликт также имеет водное измерение. Здесь речь и об озвученных Израилем планах по затоплению водой подземных сооружений Хамас и непосредственно об ограничении доступа к питьевой воде для жителей Газы. Так,

9 марта было принято решение отключить подачу электричества на единственную опреснительную станцию в районе Дейр-Аль-Балаха. Это поставило сотни тысяч людей под угрозу смерти и распространения инфекционных заболеваний. Сведениями о том, что эта станция возобновила работу, мы не располагаем.

Господин Председатель,

Твёрдая приверженность сотрудников Секретариата ООН статье 100 Устава Всемирной организации это краеугольный камень Организации. Не должно быть место «двойным стандартам» при освещении вооружённых конфликтов в зависимости от того, о какой стороне идет речь. Подобный подход формирует у его бенефициаров, чувство вседозволенности и безнаказанности.

Господин Председатель,

Мы последовательно выступаем за конструктивный диалог по водной проблематике на всех уровнях в контексте Повестки -2030 и в рамках имеющихся межправительственных форумов. Наиболее эффективным форматом международного взаимодействия в сфере водных ресурсов считаем договоренности на региональном и двустороннем уровне.

Призываем избегать увязывания водной проблематики с вопросами мира и безопасности. Исходим из нейтрального характера природных ресурсов, их наличие или отсутствие не могут рассматриваться как угроза миру и безопасности, требуют ситуационного анализа и должны рассматриваться отдельно в соответствующих форматах.

Благодарю Вас, господин Председатель.

10. United Kingdom

"Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under Attack. Protecting Water in Armed Conflict"

UNSC Arria Meeting, Friday 23 May

Statement

Chair,

I thank Slovenia for organising this important meeting.

As we have heard throughout this week, water insecurity can be both a trigger and multiplier of conflict. It can escalate local grievances and drive wider instability.

In Sudan, the destruction of water treatment plants and attacks on the Merowe (Marrawee) dam have left millions without access to water and fuelled displacement.

In Gaza, the already dire water crisis, alongside the collapse of other critical infrastructure, has left children vulnerable to preventable diseases.

In Ukraine, attacks on electricity networks have severely disrupted water supplies, putting millions at risk during the colder months.

Action is needed.

First, parties to conflict must uphold their obligations under International Humanitarian Law. This includes protecting water infrastructure, such as irrigation systems, dams and dykes and respecting the principles of distinction and proportionality.

Second, humanitarian actors must be protected and granted safe, sustained, and unimpeded access to affected populations. This is essential to ensure the delivery or restoration of life-saving assistance, including clean water and sanitation services.

Third, we should support tailored and coordinated international responses to conflict, which address their drivers, including climate change and water insecurity, to achieve sustainable solutions. This requires greater coordination and collaboration between different parts of the UN system too, including humanitarian, development, peacebuilding and climate, and

a greater focus on building resilience. Such work can bring communities together, support resource-sharing agreements and prevent conflicts.

Chair, the lack of access to clean water is not only a matter of survival – it is a human right. And it must never be politicised or weaponised.

11. Somalia

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL ARRIA FORMULA

PROTECTING WATER IN ARMED CONFLICT

**STATEMENT BY GULED IBRAHIM, DEPUTY POLITICAL
COORDINATOR OF SOMALIA**

23 MAY 2025

check against delivery

Mr. President,

We extend our sincere gratitude to Slovenia, Algeria, Panama, and Sierra Leone for convening this important Arria Formula Meeting. We thank the co-sponsors and also express our appreciation to the Director-General of the WHO, the President of the ICRC, and the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF for their comprehensive briefing on a crisis that strikes at the very heart of human survival.

Today's discussion addresses a pressing issue: in too many conflicts, water has become a tool of war rather than a resource for life. The deliberate destruction of water systems and the denial of access to clean water pose a significant threat to the basic survival of millions. These tragedies are not inevitable; they stem from institutional weaknesses, resource scarcity, and insufficient support for vulnerable communities.

Across many regions, we see how climate-related pressures and insufficient governance exacerbate competition for water resources. Communities frequently lack both the tools and knowledge necessary to resolve disputes before they escalate into full-blown conflicts. However, with targeted investment in capacity building and conflict prevention, we can alleviate water insecurity and protect precious lives.

Mr. President,

My delegation believes a shift in approach is needed—from reacting to crises to preventing them. To that end, we propose a prevention strategy based on three pillars:

First, strengthen the capacity of developing countries in water governance and conflict prevention. This involves support for early warning systems and national water security strategies that

incorporate conflict-sensitive practices, placing particular emphasis on community engagement and traditional knowledge.

Second, establish predictable, long-term funding for preventive water infrastructure. International financial institutions should prioritize projects that foster regional cooperation and community ownership, ensuring that water becomes a foundation for peace.

Third, invest in local water management and resilience. Empowering communities through training, conflict resolution mechanisms, and technical support will help prevent disputes and promote sustainable solutions.

Mr. President,

Protecting water resources is essential for peacebuilding and sustainable development. Investing in the capacity of developing countries to manage water effectively is crucial for advancing conflict prevention, climate resilience, and human dignity.

In conclusion, we stand at a crossroads where we can either continue to respond to water crises after they occur, or we can prioritize prevention and invest in capacity-building measures. My delegation is committed to working together to secure a future defined by water as a foundation for peace and prosperity.

I thank you.

12. Denmark

Statement for the Arria Formula Meeting on Protecting Water in Armed Conflict

23 May 2025, 3:00 PM

CR-1 UN Headquarters

528 Words

Let me begin by thanking Slovenia, Algeria, Panama and Sierra Leone for hosting this Arria-formula meeting. Denmark also thanks President Spoljaric, Deputy Executive Director Chaiban, and the Regional Head of Programmes for Geneva Call in Africa, Ms. Mehwash Ansari, for their compelling briefings today.

Mr. Chair,

The destruction and weaponization of water in armed conflict has devastating consequences for civilian populations.

As we have heard today, we are witnessing a proliferation of attacks on critical infrastructure such as water wells, pumping, and desalinations stations. Such deliberate actions are an unconscionable assault on the most fundamental requirement of human life.

Mr. Chairman, allow me to make three points.

First, Denmark underscores that parties to armed conflict must immediately halt such attacks. From Gaza to Ukraine, Syria and Sudan, we have seen the targeting and defiling of critical water infrastructure; depriving millions of clean drinking water, leading to the

outbreak of deadly communicable diseases and placing great strain on the civilian population.

The legal obligations of parties to conflict are abundantly clear. International humanitarian law prohibits attacking, destroying, removing or rendering useless objects indispensable to civilian survival.

This has been reaffirmed through multiple Security Council Resolutions. Yet, regrettably, accountability remains the exception, not the rule.

Denmark underscores the need to ensure greater accountability for those who have ordered or carried out such attacks. Accountability is not only important to end impunity but also to deter new illegal attacks.

Second, Mr. Chair, we must mitigate the cumulative humanitarian, environmental and public-health consequences of denying access to water resources in armed conflict. This demands predictable, flexible funding for rapid response and repair teams, as well as the pre-positioning of essential supplies.

Safe and unimpeded humanitarian access is also critical so engineers can reach damaged facilities. Investment in climate resilient and decentralised water systems that keep functioning when power grids fail is also crucial.

Furthermore, women, children, older persons, and persons with disabilities, shoulder the heaviest burden when water sources collapse. As such, humanitarian response plans must be informed and tailored to the specific needs of this population also; employing risk reduction strategies that protect those forced to travel long distances to fetch water.

Third, Mr. Chair, the Council must transform evidence into concrete action.

Building on the reflections made in the Secretary General's Annual Protection of Civilians report, collective efforts to develop operational guidance on protecting water infrastructure in urban warfare would be a valuable tool for member states.

Peace operation mandates could also require language on monitoring and deterrence when it comes to attacks on, and defilement of, water systems. The humanitarian carve-out adopted in resolution 2664 (2022) must be fully operationalised so that spare parts, treatment chemicals, and fuel reach water treatment and pumping facilities without delay; even in contexts where sanctions may be enforced.

Chair, to conclude,

Denmark reaffirms the centrality of protecting access to water and water resources in armed conflict settings. The loss of water is the loss of dignity, health and hope.

Our children deserve to inherit rivers that flow, not pipelines reduced to rubble. Let us match our words with decisive action and safeguard the wells, pipes and pumps that sustain civilian life.

Thank you.

13. France

PROTECTION DE L'EAU DANS LES CONFLITS ARMES

INTERVENTION DE MME ELISABETH MEYER, COORDINATRICE POLITIQUE ADJOINTE DE LA FRANCE AUPRÈS DES NATIONS UNIES

RÉUNION DU CONSEIL DE SÉCURITÉ EN FORMAT ARRIA

New York, le 23 mai 2025

Monsieur l'Ambassadeur,

Ma délégation remercie la Slovénie, l'Algérie, le Panama et la Sierra Leone d'avoir organisé cette réunion. Je remercie également les intervenants pour leur présentation.

1/ D'abord, les infrastructures liées à l'eau et à l'assainissement sont trop souvent prises pour cibles dans les conflits armés ou détournées à des fins militaires. Le droit international humanitaire leur accorde pourtant une protection particulière. Les attaques visant ces infrastructures civiles essentielles peuvent entraver l'accès des civils à l'eau potable. Elles peuvent provoquer la pollution et la contamination de l'eau et de l'environnement, qui est protégé en vertu du droit international humanitaire. Elles peuvent nuire au droit à l'eau, au droit à la santé et aux droits de l'Homme qui y sont liés.

Tout cela emporte des conséquences dramatiques pour les civils comme cela a été détaillé dans les briefings : souffrances, maladies, déplacements forcés, impossibilité de cultiver la terre pour se nourrir, pour ne citer que ces conséquences.

En Ukraine, les frappes délibérées de la Russie ont provoqué des dommages considérables aux infrastructures hydrauliques, menaçant l'approvisionnement en eau d'un grand nombre de foyers. La destruction partielle du barrage de Kakhovka le 6 juin 2023 a inondé près de 80 localités ukrainiennes, avec un coût humain, économique et écologique considérable. A Gaza, les obstacles israéliens à l'acheminement de l'aide humanitaire entravent l'accès à l'eau potable des populations. La suspension de l'approvisionnement en électricité et en carburant a mis quasiment à l'arrêt les usines de désalinisation.

Les parties à un conflits sont toujours tenues de respecter le droit international humanitaire.

La communauté internationale doit agir pour mettre un terme à ces violations. Nous appelons donc tous les Etats qui ne l'ont pas encore fait à rejoindre l'Initiative mondiale lancée par le CICR aux côtés de six Etats dont la France. Un groupe de travail porte d'ailleurs spécifiquement sur les infrastructures civiles.

Les résolutions du Conseil de sécurité, dont la résolution 2417 et 2573 doivent aussi être mises en œuvre.

2/ Deuxièmement, de nombreux pays touchés par des conflits sont de surcroît confrontés au changement climatique et aux catastrophes qui y sont liées. C'est le cas du Yémen ou de la

République démocratique du Congo. En outre, les phénomènes météorologiques extrêmes dus au changement climatique contribuent à l'insécurité alimentaire. Au Soudan du Sud, les inondations et la sécheresse accentuent les difficultés humanitaires et sécuritaires auxquelles sont confrontées la population. En Somalie, les effets conjugués des crises sécuritaires et climatiques ont aggravé la crise humanitaire.

Face à ce constat, la France et ses partenaires agissent. Et la France appelle la communauté internationale à l'action.

En 2023, nous avons signé l'appel à l'action de la WASH Roadmap afin d'accroître notre action en matière d'accès à l'eau, d'assainissement et d'hygiène dans les environnements de fragilité, de conflit et de violence. L'un des objectifs de cet appel était la création d'un envoyé spécial de l'ONU pour l'eau qui est maintenant chose faite. Nous nous réjouissons de travailler avec Mme Retno Marsudi et de poursuivre la coopération avec le Rapporteur spécial pour le droit à l'eau et le droit à l'assainissement.

La France souhaite également un renforcement de la gouvernance mondiale de l'eau, dans la perspective de la conférence des Nations unies sur l'eau qui se tiendra en 2026 pour une prise en compte cohérente de l'ensemble des enjeux liés à l'eau, y compris les risques qui pèsent sur les populations les plus vulnérables face aux crises comme face au changement climatique. Le Président de la République française l'a rappelé lors du One Water Summit à Riyad en décembre dernier.

La question de l'eau mobilise donc à la hauteur des enjeux pour que le droit à l'eau soit être assuré partout et pour tous.

Nous avons une responsabilité collective d'agir pour assurer la protection des civils et le respect du droit international humanitaire. La France se mobilise en ce sens.

Je vous remercie.

**WATER PROTECTION IN ARMED CONFLICTS
STATEMENT BY MS. ELISABETH MEYER,
DEPUTY POLITICAL COORDINATOR OF FRANCE TO THE UNITED NATIONS
SECURITY COUNCIL ARRIA-FORMULA MEETING
(TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH)**

New York, May 23, 2025

Mr. Ambassador.

My delegation thanks Slovenia, Algeria, Panama, and Sierra Leone for convening this meeting. I would also like to thank the briefers for their briefings.

1/ First, water and sanitation infrastructure are too often targeted in armed conflict or diverted to serve military purposes. International humanitarian law however provides them with special protection. Attacks targeting these critical civilian infrastructures can hinder civilians' access to drinking water. They can cause pollution and contamination of water and the environment, both protected under international humanitarian law. They can undermine the right to water, the right to health, and related human rights.

All of the above has devastating consequences for civilians, as laid out in details by the briefers: they include suffering, disease, forced displacement, and the inability to cultivate land for food, to name but a few.

In Ukraine, Russia's deliberate strikes have caused considerable damage to water infrastructure, threatening the water supply to a vast number of homes. The partial destruction of the Kakhovka dam on June 6, 2023, flooded around 80 Ukrainian municipalities, with considerable human, economic, and ecological tolls. In Gaza, Israel obstacles to the provision of humanitarian aid hinder people's access to drinking water. The suspension of electricity and fuel supplies has brought desalination plants almost entirely to standstill.

Parties to a conflict are always obliged to uphold international humanitarian law.

The international community must act to put an end to such violations. We therefore call on all States that have not yet done so to join the Global Initiative launched by the ICRC alongside six States, including France. Incidentally a working group is also focusing specifically on civilian infrastructure.

Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 2417 and 2573, must also be implemented.

2/ Secondly, many countries affected by conflict are moreover facing climate change and its intended disasters. This is the case in Yemen and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition, extreme weather phenomena resulting from climate change are increasingly contributing to food insecurity. In South Sudan, floods and drought are exacerbating the humanitarian and security difficulties facing the population. In Somalia, the combined effects of the security and climate crises have worsened the humanitarian crisis.

In light of this situation, France and its partners are taking action. And France calls on the international community to take action.

In 2023, we signed the WASH Roadmap call to action to step up our actions to improve access to water, sanitation, and hygiene in fragile, conflict-affected, and violence-affected environments. One of the goals of this appeal was the creation of a UN Special Envoy for Water, which has now been done. We are delighted to work with Ms. Retno Marsudi and to be continuing cooperation with the Special Rapporteur on the right to water and the right to sanitation.

France also wishes to see global water governance be stepped up, in view with the upcoming United Nations Water Conference to be held in 2026. That will allow all water-related challenges to be coherently addressed, including the risks facing the most vulnerable populations to crises such as climate change. The President of the French Republic reminded us of the following during the One Water Summit in Riyadh last December.

The issue of water therefore mobilizes us to the level of the challenges so that the right to water is guaranteed everywhere and for everyone.

We need to act collectively to protect civilians and ensure the respect for international humanitarian law. France is committed to this end.

Thank you.

14. Guyana

Statement by Her Excellency Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, Permanent Representative of Guyana to the United Nations, to be delivered during Arria Formula meeting on protecting water in armed conflict
23 May 2025

Thank you, Madam Chair,

Guyana welcomes the convening of today's Arria Formula meeting on protecting water in armed conflict in the context of protecting civilian lives.

We thank Slovenia and the co-organizers for their leadership in bringing attention to this issue and extend our appreciation to the briefers for their insightful contributions.

Madam Chair,

My country is endowed with an abundance of freshwater resources. Indeed, the word “guiana”, comes from an Indigenous language and means "land of many waters". Protecting and managing water and its related infrastructure is therefore a top priority for my government. Emphasis is placed on integrated water resource management, guided by the country's Low Carbon Development Strategy 2030.

Madam Chair,

Water is fundamental to life and livelihoods. We must therefore be concerned when access to water is restricted during war or armed conflict, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Regrettably, such restrictions are becoming a prominent feature in several active conflicts. Parties to conflicts are deliberately attacking civilian infrastructure, including water treatment plants, pumping stations, dams and energy facilities. Bombs and missile strikes in urban areas cause damage to water infrastructure, disrupting or cutting off the supply of water to the civilian population. We have noted, for example, the destruction of the Nova Kavokha Dam in Ukraine and the attacks on civilian infrastructure, including essential water mains, and the lack of fuel to power desalination facilities in Gaza. The consequences of such deprivations include illness, hunger and dehydration, with women and children bearing the brunt. Entire food systems can be affected.

Madam Chair,

International humanitarian law (IHL) prohibits indiscriminate attacks and attacks against civilian objects. Therefore, attacking, destroying, removing or rendering useless the objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, can never be justified and constitutes a grave breach of IHL. Guyana calls upon conflict parties to uphold their obligations under IHL and to prioritize the protection of civilians. This includes protecting water resources.

On this note, Madam Chair, allow me to recall that the weaponization of water also constitutes a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. Access to water is protected under the laws of armed conflicts and must be fully respected and upheld by all.

Guyana further wishes to underline the centrality of upholding international law, including the 1929 Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War, which protects access to water for specific categories of people, including prisoners of war, the wounded, and the sick. We denounce the intentional deprivation of water services, the provision of unhealthy drinking water to civilians, and the pollution of water resources by parties to an armed conflict, which could also be considered as ecocide.

Against this backdrop, allow me to make four suggestions:

Firstly, those who deliberately weaponize water as a war tactic must be held accountable. This approach should not be normalized. The UN Security Council has a special responsibility to ensure that all its relevant resolutions on this subject are fully implemented.

Secondly, technology can be helpful in addressing the immediate, long-term, and cumulative impacts of attacks on freshwater resources and related infrastructure.

By employing the use of satellite imagery and drone surveillance, humanitarian actors can have real-time information on the condition of damaged water infrastructure. This can strengthen their rapid response mechanisms. This approach will not only be cost-effective but also help relief agencies prioritize the allocation of resources for areas most in need.

Investing in new technologies also strengthens the predictive analytics capabilities of the UN response system and can help anticipate and mitigate potential impacts.

Thirdly, the UN Security Council can enhance the protection of civilians agenda by utilizing existing evidence for meaningful action. This could include expanding the mandate of special missions to enhance the capacity of local communities in prevention and reconstruction. Local community leaders are often the first responders to the challenges related to essential services, especially during times of conflict.

Empowering local actors through training and resources to maintain and repair complex water systems to meet their water security needs is essential.

Finally, as the impacts of climate change intensify affecting the availability of water in some parts of our world, we must be cognizant that this could be a driver of conflict. Already we are witnessing transboundary water challenges between some countries. The Council must promote cooperation and clear agreements on shared benefits as a means of prevention.

In closing, Madam Chair, we urge states to enact legislation to ensure the protection of water infrastructure during conflict, guarantee the protection of civilians and support efforts to protect the environment.

I thank you.

15. Greece

Security Council Arria Formula Level Meeting on Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives 23 May 2025

Greece's Statement delivered
by Mr. Konstantinos Thanopoulos
Political Coordinator of the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations, New York

Colleagues,

We welcome the Arria Formula meeting organized by Slovenia together with Algeria, Panama and Sierra Leone on a grave aspect of armed conflicts, their impact on water and sanitation services. I would also like to thank our distinguished briefers for their insightful remarks.

Water resources and infrastructure are critical for human health and well-being. The exploitation by adversaries of human dependence on water is as old as war itself. Water and its infrastructure can be a root cause, a weapon or a collateral damage of an armed conflict.

In international and regional armed conflicts, as is the case in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, Syria, Yemen, the Sahel, there is a serious escalation of attacks on water systems in these last few years.

Violence over water leads to attacks on water and sanitation infrastructure and workers, contamination of sources, disruption of access to clean water and basic sanitation services, food insecurity, forced displacement, and the spread of infectious diseases.

Moreover, the right to safe drinking water and sanitation is critical to the survival of children in conflicts. The impact of unsafe water on children can be deadly, as water and sanitation-related diseases remain along the leading causes of death in children under five.

As the protection of water resources and systems is a vital aspect of the protection of civilians, we would like to stress following points:

Access to clean water and sanitation is a fundamental human right. International humanitarian law, international human rights law and Security Council Resolutions have all provisions for the protection of this right. It is our responsibility therefore to improve the enforcement of these provisions and the respect to the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution, in order to minimize the risks to civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Greece has placed the climate, peace and security nexus among its priorities during the 2025-2026 term in the United Nations Security Council, and aims to promote, in cooperation with other countries, the systematic mainstreaming of climate and environmental issues into the UN Security Council's agenda.

Multilateral cooperation on the water security issues is critical and it should be enhanced towards:

- First, improving awareness of water-related security risks, by enhancing understanding of the links between freshwater resources and security
- Second, integrating climate and water security concerns into early warning and conflict prevention systems, with the aim of strengthening foresight capabilities to anticipate new security and geopolitical challenges for a more effective prevention of crises
- Third, improving the design and construction of water infrastructure and developing programs to restore services in the event of destruction
- Fourth, developing joint monitoring systems, data sharing, and technical cooperation between countries that share water resources

Dear colleagues,

Water security and water scarcity, seriously impact peace, stability, food security, energy, biodiversity and social welfare, and determine the sustainability of our future.

But water must be, and can also be a trigger for cooperation and peace, not conflict and war. Let us all make it so.

I thank you.

16. China

Remarks by Counselor Teng Fei at the UN Security Council Arria Formula Meeting: Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under Attack - Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives

2025-05-23

Chair,

I thank Slovenia, Algeria, Panama, and Sierra Leone for initiating the meeting today. I have listened attentively to the briefings by the four briefers.

Water is fundamental to human survival and development. Protecting water resources and related infrastructure is not only a development issue, but also a matter of peace and security. I wish to emphasize three points.

First, we must adhere to the political settlement of hotspot issues. People in conflict-affected regions already suffer immensely from war. Attacks on water resources and related infrastructure would result in severe water supply crises, exacerbating the hardships of the local population, especially the most vulnerable groups. We must actively promote the political settlement of hotspot issues to fundamentally eliminate the damages caused by armed conflicts to water resources and related infrastructure, and to create a world where everyone has access to safe water.

Second, we must strictly abide by international humanitarian law. Under no circumstances should water resources and related infrastructure be targeted. We call on parties to the conflict to put the people first, protect water resources and related infrastructure with utmost efforts, and facilitate the work of humanitarian agencies as much as possible. It is imperative for the international community to increase humanitarian assistance on the basis of neutrality, impartiality, justice, and

independence, to provide clean and safe water to people in conflict zones and to help repair and renovate damaged water infrastructure.

Third, we must stay committed to dialogue and cooperation. It is often the people in developing countries who are most severely plagued by water use and water supply crises. We support the UN in coordinating and facilitating global water cooperation. Developed countries need to earnestly fulfill their ODA commitments and provide developing countries with the necessary funding, technological, and capacity building support. Disputes concerning water resources should be resolved peacefully through dialogue and consultation among riparian states on the basis of international law.

Chair,

China remains highly committed to the sustainable development of water resources and international cooperation in this area. With mere 6% of the world's fresh water resources, China has ensured water supplies for nearly 20% of the global population. We also actively assist the vast number of developing countries with water conservancy projects, engage in results-oriented cooperation, and support the development of water conservancy cause worldwide. We stand ready to work alongside the international community to make greater contributions to the protection of water resources.

I thank you, Chair.

17. United States

Remarks at a Security Council Arria-formula meeting on “Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under Attack.”

Jonathan Shrier

Acting Representative to the UN Economic and Social

Council New York, New York

May 23, 2025

AS DELIVERED

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and the cosponsors, for organizing this meeting and to the briefers for highlighting the seriousness of threats to water security, particularly in conflict areas.

Excellencies, Colleagues, through President Trump’s leadership, the United States seeks to restore and maintain safety and security around the world. As today’s briefers have pointed out, few issues shape our safety, security, and prosperity as much as the availability of fresh water.

In a world where mismanagement, overuse, and aging infrastructure already pose challenges to water security worldwide, it is alarming to see evidence of critical water supplies and related infrastructure falling prey to those who would use water as a weapon against their enemies and civilian populations.

In Iraq and Syria, ISIS seized dams and water infrastructure to gain tactical advantage and deprive local populations.

In the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, terrorist groups like Boko Haram and al-Shabaab, respectively, have repeatedly sought to capitalize on droughts and fragile water systems by withholding water resources to further destabilize regions and drive recruitment.

Colleagues, to fulfill its founding mission of maintaining international peace and security, the United Nations plays an essential role in helping resolve complex international challenges. Working to ensure access to safe and reliable water sources can prevent conflicts, support economic development, and promote stability in vulnerable regions.

At the same time, national ownership in both conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts is critical to lasting peace. International actors alone cannot prevent conflict, nor can they ensure water security without national government commitment and action. By prioritizing risk-informed development and management of integrated water infrastructure, nations can reduce the potential for water-related conflicts and threats to water and other critical infrastructure, increase resilience, and promote national and international security and prosperity.

Bilateral and regional transboundary river basin and watershed management institutions play a crucial role in fostering cooperation among nations sharing water resources. These platforms can serve as vital mechanisms for conflict resolution, even during periods of growing hostilities.

We call on all UN member states to work together toward a peaceful and prosperous world for all.

In closing, we call on fellow members of the Security Council to consider how the challenges posed by water insecurity may affect the ability of UN Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions to carry out their mandates.

I thank you.

18. Republic of Korea

Statement of the Republic of Korea

Security Council Arrria-Formula meeting on PoC(Water infrastructure)

New York, 23 May 2025

<As delivered>

Thank you, Madame Chair. We thank Slovenia for convening today's meeting, and we express our appreciation to the briefers for their compelling insights.

[As today's briefings clearly underscored,] IHL affords special protection to both the supply of water to civilians and water infrastructure itself, as water is the most basic necessity of life. Yet, it is also a sobering reality that today's conflicts are increasingly marked by the systematic erosion of access to water. I would like to highlight three points in this regard.

First, the Council must spare no effort in condemning attacks on water-related infrastructure, as well as the denial of access to freshwater resources.

We are gravely concerned by the persistence of both practices to the point where they risk becoming normalized. In Taizz, Yemen, the deliberate restriction of water access in 2023 sharply

exacerbated the humanitarian crisis, fueling disease outbreaks and contributing to the collapse of essential public services.

In Syria, repeated strikes near the Tishreen Dam placed tens of thousands at risk, creating the looming threat of catastrophic flooding and the failure of critical infrastructure.

If left unaddressed, such actions will set a perilous precedent that civilian infrastructure may be treated as a permissible target.

Second, we must strengthen compliance through credible monitoring and accountability. The Council has already adopted a number of resolutions affirming the protection of civilian infrastructure. In particular, resolution 2573 (2021) strongly condemned attacks depriving civilians of objects indispensable to their survival as flagrant violations of IHL and underscored the imperative to put an end to such practices.

Yet its continued violation highlights the urgent need to translate such commitments into enforceable action. In this regard, the Council could consider options to introduce mechanisms for documentation, monitoring, and reporting through its resolutions. A consistent and principled application of these tools is the surest path to reversing impunity.

Third, we must embed the protection of water infrastructure and resources into long-term peacebuilding strategies. As repeatedly highlighted in recent Secretary-General reports on the Peacebuilding Fund, water scarcity is not merely a consequence of conflict, but also a driver of local and regional tensions.

It is therefore essential to mainstream access to clean water and sanitation services as a core element of conflict prevention and post-conflict stabilization.

In this regard, we commend the efforts of the Peacebuilding Fund to address water-related challenges, including initiatives to enhance the meaningful participation of women in water management and conflict resolution in water-scarce areas of Yemen.

It is equally important that we foster a whole-of-UN approach to delivering coherent water and sanitation strategies. Special political missions, UN country teams, and development and humanitarian agencies must work in concert to ensure sustainable water management and promote effective water governance.

In closing, Mr. Chair,

Water is not a commodity of war; it is the essence of life. Its protection is not merely a humanitarian concern, but a legal and moral imperative. Under no circumstances can attacks on water resources be justified, as they constitute a violation of the principle of proportionality and distinction.

The Republic of Korea reaffirms its commitment to the full implementation of IHL and calls on all parties to uphold their obligations; not in word, but in practice. Thank you. /END/

19. World Health Organization

Opening remarks

UN Security Council “Arria formula” meeting on Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure Under Attack: *protecting water in armed conflict - protecting civilian lives*

Organizers: Slovenia and other Member States

United Nations HQ - New York USA

23 May 2025

Honourable chair, Deputy Minister Melita Gabric,

Members of the Security Council, Excellencies, dear colleagues and friends,

I thank Slovenia for convening this important meeting, and for inviting me to speak.

Almost 50 years ago, article 54 of the Geneva Conventions prohibited attacks on drinking water, irrigation, and other objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population.

Access to safe water and sanitation are human rights.

When water is attacked, health is attacked.

When there is no clean water in the home, children can become dehydrated or sick from drinking from contaminated sources.

When there is no water, sanitation and hygiene in schools, education is interrupted, and dignity is compromised—particularly for girls.

When there is no water in health facilities, surgery is delayed and infection control is compromised, endangering both patients and health workers.

Attacks on civilian water and related infrastructure are a clear violation of international humanitarian law.

And yet, these violations are all too common.

In Gaza, people only have access to less than 5 litres of water per day, when the minimum requirement is 15 litres per person per day during emergencies.

In Sudan, a water treatment plant serving nearly 400,000 people was attacked recently, increasing the risk of cholera and other waterborne diseases.

In Eastern Ukraine, over one third of health facilities report water shortages.

And in the Sahel, attacks on water and health infrastructure in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso threaten an already-vulnerable population, which suffers from some of the world's highest rates of maternal and newborn mortality.

WHO recommends practical action in five key areas to mitigate the impacts of attacks on water.

First, mapping and monitoring:

Health systems must identify which facilities are the most vulnerable to water cuts, and which depend on centralized water networks.

In Ukraine, Gaza, and Sudan, WHO has supported mapping of health facilities' water sources and storage capacity, and we have strengthened monitoring of water quality and surveillance for waterborne diseases.

This has enabled rapid deployment of backup generators, repair of damaged water pipes, and provision of additional water storage and treatment capacities in healthcare facilities.

Second, prepositioning supplies and power resilience:

A lack fuel for generators for water suppliers and in health facilities in Ukraine, Gaza, Yemen and Sudan has resulted in shutdowns of their water service.

This can be prevented by installing backup power for water pumps, solar panels and portable water disinfection units.

Third, infection prevention and control:

In Ukraine, WHO has provided essential hygiene kits to all health facilities;

And in Gaza, partners adopted WHO guidance on alternative measures for WASH and infection protection and control in devastated conflict areas.

Fourth, training and contingency planning:

When infrastructure is attacked, it's too late to plan.

So facility managers need protocols, standard operating procedures and checklists for emergency water sourcing, treatment, and safe re-use.

And fifth, engaging local communities in risk planning and management:

In Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, in areas where even our staff cannot access, WHO is supporting community groups to repair water pumps, supply handwashing stations and promote good hygiene practices.

Excellencies,

I leave you with three requests.

First, I call on the Security Council to fully implement Resolution 2286 to halt attacks on health facilities and workers,

Second, I call on the Security Council to demand that all parties to armed conflict comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law not to attack civilian water infrastructure, and to facilitate safe passage for water and sanitation operators and other humanitarian personnel.

And third, I call on Member States to develop plans to provide all health facilities with water, sanitation and hygiene.

My thanks again to Slovenia for drawing attention to this critical issue.

WHO is committed to working with Member States, our UN-sister agencies, and partners to build sustainable water, sanitation, and hygiene services, as we work together for Health for All.

I thank you.

[644 words]

20. Philippines

Joint Statement by the Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts

Arria Formula Meeting on “Freshwater resources and related infrastructure under attack: Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives”

Friday, 23 May 2025, CR1, UNHQ, New York

Delivered by: Noel M. Novicio

Minister, Permanent Mission of the Philippines to the UN

Excellencies,

It is my honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts, a group of states and institutions committed the protection of water resources by preventing and reducing their misuse and damage during armed conflict, in order to protect civilians and the environment.

We would like to thank Slovenia for convening today's Arria Formula Meeting on “Freshwater resources and related infrastructure under attack: Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives.”

The past year was another grim year for the protection of civilians breaking yet another record in number of active armed conflicts and impacted civilians. Destruction, disruption, and denial – sometimes deliberate – of water and sanitation services, as well as the pollution of freshwater sources, have become a regular occurrence. These acts are depriving millions of civilians of water – a basic means of survival, health, dignity, and livelihoods.

We express our serious concern about the impacts of armed conflict – including ensuing violations of international law – on the provision of water, namely on freshwater resources and related infrastructure, particularly in urban areas. Dehydration, food insecurity and malnutrition, waterborne diseases, displacement, deprivation of healthcare and education – all have long-lasting and well-documented humanitarian consequences. Particularly on children, women, older persons and persons with disabilities.

Furthermore, beyond immediate humanitarian concerns, the lack of protection and deliberate destruction or degradation of water and sanitation systems and related infrastructure constitute violations of international humanitarian law and fundamental human rights, including the right to life, and jeopardizes prospects for sustainable development and peace.

Today's meeting offers an opportunity for reflection on concrete actions, tools and mechanisms that the international community shall utilize to better protect civilian lives.

The Global Alliance for Sparing Water from Armed Conflict, launched during last year's Protection of Civilians Week in New York, was created as a tool for advocacy, knowledge sharing and partnerships to galvanize international efforts to protect civilians in armed conflict.

The Alliance advocates for better protection of water before, during, and after armed conflict, ensuring its safeguarding through the effective enforcement, of international humanitarian law, the human right to water and sanitation, and the core principles of humanitarian action.

Let me share some of the tools that the Alliance has been using or is planning to use in its work:

Firstly, generating and promoting knowledge on the direct and indirect effects and long-term consequences of armed conflict on water systems and their impact on the civilian population, especially children, women, older persons and persons with disabilities.

Secondly, raising awareness, leveraging political support and strengthening capacities to reinforce the protection offered by international law, including through calls for the respect of International Humanitarian Law, and the dissemination of the Geneva Principles on the Protection of Water Infrastructure, the International Law Commission's principles on protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts, the ICRC Guidelines on the protection of the natural environment in armed conflict, and other relevant policy instruments to better protect water and civilians.

And thirdly, fostering partnerships to increase preparedness and resilience, to amplify our impact and foster collective and global action to protect civilians and preserve essential services.

Protection of civilians requires strong commitment and sustained collaboration among diverse partners and actors from the peace, development, and humanitarian communities, which is essential for enhanced resilience of water infrastructure in contexts of continued, recurrent, or emerging armed conflict.

With the ultimate goal to ensure the protection of the lives of civilians, as well as their dignity, even during war, we continue to call upon all states and parties to conflicts to fully respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law, in all circumstances; and to build a global culture of compliance; and call upon the UN Security Council:

- to further build on its past achievements related to the protection of humanitarian access and of civilian infrastructure, and to aim for implementation of resolutions **2365 (2017), 2417 (2018), 2573 (2021), 2664 (2022), 2761 (2024) and 2730 (2024)**;
 - to systematically incorporate the protection of water into the consideration of the items on its agenda;
 - And to work with the UN system and the humanitarian actors to address the immediate and long-term and cumulative impact of attacks on freshwater resources and related infrastructure providing essential services to the population.
- The Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts stands ready to support the Council in its efforts. Thank you.

21. Hungary

**Statement on behalf of Hungary
UNSC Arria Formula Meeting
Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives**

23 May 2025

Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues,

As a member of the Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts, Hungary is a co-sponsor of today's event and thanks Slovenia for convening this important meeting. We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the European Union and wish to add the following in our national capacity.

We gather today with a pressing imperative: to protect freshwater resources and water-related infrastructure in times of armed conflict. Hungary has long recognized water as a strategic, diplomatic, and security issue and therefore believes that this topic merits the attention of the Security Council.

Access to water is not only a vital necessity—it is a human right and lies at the intersection of peace, stability, and development. Yet, we are witnessing a disturbing trend where water can become a weapon of war. The deliberate targeting of water infrastructure, contamination of drinking sources, and obstruction of humanitarian repairs are unacceptable and must be addressed with urgency. In addition, climate change and water scarcity significantly compound the challenges of water protection.

It is essential to reinforce the international normative framework, including Security Council resolutions 2417 and 2573, that protects water in times of conflict and ensures accountability for its violation. Moreover, international humanitarian law offers clear protection for water installations and supplies.

We must focus our efforts on preventive approaches: establishing robust monitoring mechanisms, promoting data-driven early warning systems to prevent the weaponization of water, and ensuring that the protection of water infrastructure is systematically integrated into peacekeeping and humanitarian mandates. The international community must also encourage multilateral, regional and sub-regional water cooperation, including through establishing joint water commissions in conflict-prone basins. We recall that the UNECE Water Convention offers a comprehensive legal and institutional framework for the sustainable use of transboundary waters. We encourage all to consider joining the Convention, as this comprehensive instrument promotes peace, security, and cooperation among states sharing water resources.

As a landlocked country with significant water resources, Hungary places great importance on cooperative water diplomacy and international water law. Our longstanding commitment stems from our belief that water can be a catalyst for cooperation – not conflict. As a downstream

country with extensive experience in transboundary water cooperation, Hungary understands the importance of dialogue, legal frameworks, and building trust.

We also stress the importance of post-conflict reconstruction that prioritizes resilient, inclusive and climate-adaptive water systems. Hungary remains ready to share its technical expertise in water management and stands committed to supporting initiatives that safeguard water as a lifeline for civilians—so that it does not become a casualty of conflict.

Finally, we underscore the importance of aligning our efforts with SDG 6 on water and sanitation for all. Hungary has been a proud advocate for providing WASH services in healthcare facilities, co-chairing the Group of Friends in support of WASH and, spearheading the consensual adoption of GA resolution 78/130 on “*Sustainable, safe and universal water, sanitation, hygiene, waste and electricity services in health-care facilities.*” Ensuring safe water and sanitation is not only a development priority – it is fundamental enabler of health, dignity and peace.

I thank you.

22. Indonesia

INTERVENTION

Arria Formula Meeting

Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under Attack: Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives

1. We thank Slovenia in leading the organization of this Arria Formula... with specific focus on a pressing issue... but most of the time is under-looked by the Council.
➔ Indonesia is honored to support this initiative as a Co-Sponsor.
2. We also thank the Briefers... echoing the pertinent messages they delivered, on the urgent need to protect water in armed conflicts...
3. We regret that water sources and water-related infrastructures are **among the most frequently targeted sectors during armed conflicts...**
➔ Water is life... and no circumstance can justify efforts to reduce its meaning...
➔ Attack on water in armed conflicts – reflects **ignorance** to the **most basic and fundamental value of humanity...**
4. Currently, millions of people in conflict areas are without access to clean and safe water and sanitation...
➔ This particular situation is evidence in Gaza, as access to water is used as weapon to intentionally diminish the life of Palestinian people... this has to stop.
➔ We must scale up efforts to **make sure that water and sanitation facilities are protected in armed conflicts.**
5. In this regard – we would like to emphasize **2 points...**
 - a. **First, international humanitarian law must be upheld and implemented without exception.**
 - We must strongly advocate that international community have the obligation to **fully and meaningfully implemented international humanitarian law**, to ensure humanity is upheld particularly in time of war.
 - As water is critical to every individual's life, the protection of water in armed conflicts is therefore preserving humanity...
 - b. **Second, we must intensify dialogues on the issue in all relevant international forum...**

- Indonesia supports the consistent and continuous efforts to increase the attention on the issue.
- Through **constructive dialogues**, common understanding on the importance of protecting water in armed conflict can be strengthened...
- In this regard, the UN Security Council through its mandate has a crucial role, to ensure measures to protect water in conflict is given a high priority...

Mr. President,

6. Indonesia stands ready to support the **collective efforts** of strengthening the protection of water in armed conflicts...

I thank you

*(Count: 328 words)
Time limit: 3 minutes*

23. Mozambique

REPUBLIC OF MOZAMBIQUE

STATEMENT

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY AMBASSADOR DOMINGOS FERNANDES
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC
MOZAMBIQUE TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

AT

**THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL ARRIA
FORMULA MEETING
“FRESHWATER RESOURCES AND RELATED
INFRASTRUCTURE UNDER ATTACK
PROTECTING WATER IN ARMED CONFLICT – PROTECTING
CIVILIAN LIVES”**

23 May 2025, (15:00 AM)

CR 1

United Nations

New York

Chair,

1. Thank your Chair and fellow co-sponsors for this vital discussion and the briefers for their sobering insights.
2. We echo the statement made by the Philippines on behalf of the Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts and will add a few reflections in our national capacity.
3. We recall our own joint Ministerial Arria with Switzerland in March 2023, and the subsequent launch of the Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts, last year, which Mozambique has supported from the outset.
4. Our support for the Global Alliance reflects our commitment to raising awareness and mobilizing action against the targeting of water in times of war, in light of what we see as a deeply troubling paradox.
5. While attacks on hospitals and schools rightly provoke global condemnation, strikes on water

systems—one of life’s most vital resources—too often go unreported, despite causing equally devastating consequences.

6. We have recently witnessed a surge in water-related attacks: dams breached, pipelines bombed, and rivers blocked—turning water into a weapon of war.
7. Despite clear provisions under international humanitarian law and Security Council resolutions implementation remains inconsistent and insufficient.
8. These violations must be exposed, documented, and prosecuted—a task that lies at the heart of the Global Alliance’s *raison d’être*.
9. To deliberately weaponize thirst is not only inhumane; it is an assault on the sanctity of life and a grave breach of humanitarian norms.
10. Climate change adds yet another layer of urgency, ever shorter cycles of droughts and floods are compounding water scarcity and insecurity acting as a powerful multiplier of tensions and instability across fragile regions from the Sahel to the Levant.

11. But if anything, climate change is also an equal opportunity disruptor impacting both rich and poor countries alike, it is rapidly turning water scarcity into a global conflict multiplier, thus demanding our undivided attention to today's theme.

Madame Chair,

12. Our own experience has shown that protecting water can help pave the way to peace.

13. With over 100,000 kilometers of river systems—and 60% of our surface water originating outside our borders—Mozambique understands the critical importance of transboundary cooperation and water diplomacy.

14. In our post-conflict recovery, rehabilitating water infrastructure and expanding access were essential steps toward rebuilding trust and restoring livelihoods.

15. We therefore urge that the protection of water in conflict be elevated to a core international priority.

16. Mozambique stands ready to help advance this call—through the Alliance, within this Council, and in partnership with nations across Africa and beyond.

17. Let us spare water from the horrors of armed conflict—and in doing so, protect the lives of all who depend on it, especially in their greatest hour of need.

Thank you.

24. Senegal

REPUBLIQUE DU SENEGAL

Un Peuple – Un But – Une Foi

**MINISTRE DES AFFAIRES ETRANGERES
ET DES SENEGALAIS DE L'EXTERIEUR**

**MISSION PERMANENTE DU SENEGAL
AUPRES DES NATIONS UNIES**

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL ARRIA FORMULA MEETING

**“FRESHWATER RESOURCES AND RELATED INFRASTRUCTURE UNDER ATTACK
PROTECTING WATER IN ARMED CONFLICT – PROTECTING CIVILIAN
LIVES”**

NEW YORK, MAY 23TH 2025

TALKING POINTS

**DE SON EXCELLENCE COLY SECK,
AMBASSADEUR, REPRESENTANT PERMANENT**

Mme la Présidente,

Le Sénégal voudrait remercier la présidence slovène pour avoir organisé cette importante réunion que mon pays, ainsi que 08 autres pays membres de l'**Alliance mondiale pour préserver l'eau des conflits**, ont l'immense plaisir de soutenir. Ma délégation souscrit à la déclaration **prononcée** par les Philippines au nom de l'Alliance et voudrait ajouter ce qui suit :

Après l'initiative sénégalaise d'inscrire, pour la première fois en avril 2016, la **thématique Eau, Paix, Sécurité** dans l'agenda de ce Conseil, c'est un sentiment particulier qui anime ma délégation en prenant part à cette nouvelle étape de la prise de conscience internationale sur les risques élevés liés à l'eau dans les conflits. Opportunité ne pouvait être plus grande que cette semaine célébrant la protection des civils.

Qu'il me soit également permis de remercier les panelistes pour la qualité des interventions qui ont permis de mieux appréhender les nombreuses implications des conflits sur les ressources en eau et les infrastructures connexes ainsi que leurs conséquences sur les populations.

Mme la Présidente,

Alors que nos efforts devraient être concentrés sur l'accessibilité de l'Eau, ressource vitale inégalement répartie et menacée par les changements climatiques, nous constatons une tendance inquiétante de son utilisation comme arme de guerre.

Dans les nombreux conflits ouverts partout dans le monde, les infrastructures hydrauliques et connexes sont devenues des cibles stratégiques et militaires, rendant leur accès extrêmement dangereux. Que

dire des conséquences humanitaires sur les populations civiles privées d'un accès vital à cette ressource.

A elle seule, **Gaza** illustre bien ce fait et consolide notre conviction que l'accès à l'eau, **en toutes circonstances, dans la guerre comme dans la paix**, est essentiel à la réalisation de tous les autres droits humains.

Nul besoin de rappeler que la protection des infrastructures hydrauliques est un principe fondateur du droit humanitaire, donc une obligation juridique et morale qui s'impose à toutes les parties au conflit.

C'est pourquoi, il est essentiel que le Conseil de Sécurité reste ferme sur le respect de cette obligation et sanctionne tout manquement à cette astreinte.

Il appartient également au Conseil d'intégrer la question de la protection des infrastructures hydrauliques dans les mandats des opérations de maintien de la paix pour mieux contrôler le strict respect de ses dispositions pertinentes.

Il est tout aussi essentiel de réserver une attention particulière à la réhabilitation des infrastructures hydrauliques endommagées dans les efforts de reconstruction et de consolidation de la paix dans les zones post-conflit.

Mme la Présidente,

Pour autant, apaiser les tensions liées à l'eau et faciliter l'accès universel à la ressource requièrent également d'exploiter tout le potentiel de coopération de l'Eau afin de favoriser une gestion pacifique, concertée et durable des ressources hydrographiques.

C'est là toute la pertinence de la démarche du Sénégal, en tant que pays du Sahel, qui a décidé très tôt de faire de l'hydro-diplomatie une priorité dans le cadre de sa politique étrangère.

Dans la poursuite de cette dynamique, mon pays plaide pour le **renforcement des mécanismes de coopération transfrontalière pour la gestion des bassins hydrographiques partagés**. Le Sénégal offre l'OMVS comme modèle qui a récemment reçu un score élevé dans une comparaison mondiale des indicateurs de coopération sur l'eau, démontrant comment la gestion collaborative des ressources en eau peut contribuer à la paix et à la sécurité régionales.

Il est tout aussi essentiel de **mettre en place des systèmes de régulation efficaces et socialement équitables** et de développer **davantage l'économie circulaire d'assainissement** pour stimuler le potentiel socio-économique de l'eau.

Enfin, il convient de promouvoir davantage l'échange d'expériences et l'innovation scientifique et technologique pouvant aider à une utilisation optimale de l'eau.

Madame la Présidente,

Le Sénégal reste convaincu que le relèvement du niveau d'accessibilité de l'eau potable au profit du plus grand nombre, ainsi que le respect de nos engagements pour la protection des ressources en eau en période de conflit, nous rapprocheraient davantage d'un monde plus sûr, plus paisible et donc davantage prospère.

Je vous remercie de votre aimable attention.

25. Switzerland

United Nations Security Council Arria-Formula Meeting
Protection of Civilians

Freshwater resources and related infrastructure under attack
Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives

United Nations Headquarters, Conference Room 1
New York, 23 May 2025, 15:00

Excellences,

Mesdames et Messieurs,

L'eau est essentielle à toute forme de vie sur terre. Son accès est un droit fondamental qui doit être garanti en tout temps, y compris en temps de guerre.

Pourtant, malgré les engagements pris au sein même du Conseil de sécurité, et malgré leur protection prévue par le droit international humanitaire, les installations hydrauliques continuent d'être détruites ou endommagées dans des conflits armés avec des conséquences dramatiques pour la population civile. Cela doit changer sans délais.

Soyons clairs : que ce soit au Soudan, à Gaza, en Ukraine, au Myanmar, en RDC ou partout ailleurs, la protection des civils dans les conflits armés

ne peut être réduite à une question de bonne volonté. C'est une obligation qui incombe à toutes les parties au conflit, en toutes circonstances, et même si l'adversaire ne la respecte pas.

La Suisse souhaite souligner les trois points suivants:

Premièrement, les dommages causés aux infrastructures hydrauliques entraînent des répercussions directes sur l'accès à la nourriture, à la santé, et à l'éducation. Les enfants et les personnes âgées en sont souvent les premières victimes. Attaquer l'eau, c'est attaquer les plus vulnérables d'entre nous. Le respect du droit international humanitaire est fondamental pour protéger les populations des effets des conflits armés : en accordant une protection spécifique aux objets essentiels à la survie de la population, notamment en interdisant les attaques à leur encontre et l'usage de la famine en tant que méthode de guerre, il protège également l'eau, l'accès à celle-ci et sa gestion en temps de conflit.

Deuxièmement, les infrastructures de base et les services essentiels, tels que l'eau, l'assainissement, les soins de santé et l'énergie, sont souvent interdépendants. Il est donc impératif d'investir dans des mesures préventives afin d'assurer la continuité de ces services essentiels, y compris dans le cadre de la conduite des hostilités. Le respect du droit international humanitaire exigeant la protection des infrastructures essentielles par les parties au conflit est une condition indispensable pour assurer la poursuite des programmes en matière d'eau, d'assainissement et d'hygiène ainsi que pour favoriser un relèvement post-crise. Cela permet également de limiter les risques d'urgences de santé publique, en évitant par exemple l'aggravation d'épidémies de maladies infectieuses en cours telles que le choléra, dont les effets peuvent perdurer sur le long terme.

Troisièmement, l'accès humanitaire doit être garanti, conformément au droit international humanitaire et réitéré par la résolution 2730 du Conseil sur la protection du personnel humanitaire et du personnel des Nations Unies, y compris lorsqu'il est assigné à la maintenance ou à la réparation des infrastructures hydrauliques ou liées à l'eau.

Au cours de notre récent mandat au Conseil de sécurité, la Suisse a organisé conjointement avec le Mozambique en 2023, pour la première fois, une réunion Arria sur cette thématique. Dans cette même perspective, nous avons organisé un atelier avec des experts gouvernementaux sur les bonnes pratiques visant à améliorer la protection de l'environnement en temps de conflit armé. Nous remercions la Slovénie et les co-organisateurs pour l'organisation de cette réunion ainsi que pour leur engagement en faveur de cette thématique.

La Suisse reste activement engagée au sein de l'**Alliance mondiale** pour préserver l'eau dans les conflits armés, une coalition des Etats et des organisations lancées en 2024. Son objectif est de mobiliser un soutien politique et de renforcer les capacités afin d'améliorer la protection prévue par le droit international. La Suisse salue l'initiative mondiale sur le droit international humanitaire et son axe de travail sur la protection des biens et infrastructures civils auquel cette Alliance peut contribuer, y compris par la promotion de la « Liste de Genève des principes relatifs à la protection des infrastructures hydrauliques dans le contexte de conflits armés ».

La Suisse continue à s'engager en faveur de la protection des infrastructures hydrauliques et les services essentielles pour la population civile.

Merci pour votre attention.

Unofficial translation

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Water is essential to all forms of life on earth. Access to it is a fundamental right that must be guaranteed at all times, including in times of war.

Yet, despite commitments made within the Security Council itself, and despite the protection provided under international humanitarian law, water infrastructure continues to be destroyed or damaged in armed conflicts, with dramatic consequences for the civilian population. This must change without delay.

Let us be clear: whether in Sudan, Gaza, Ukraine, Myanmar, the DRC or elsewhere, the protection of civilians in armed conflict cannot be reduced to a matter of goodwill. It is an obligation incumbent upon all parties to conflict, in all circumstances, even if the adversary does not respect it.

Switzerland would like to emphasize the following three points:

First, damage to water infrastructure has direct consequences on access to food, health, and education. Children and the elderly are often the first to suffer. Attacking water means attacking the most vulnerable among us. Respect for international humanitarian law is fundamental to protecting populations from the effects of armed conflict: by granting specific protection to objects essential to the survival of the population, including prohibiting attacks against them and the use of starvation as a method of warfare, it also protects water, access to it and its management in times of conflict.

Second, basic infrastructure and essential services, such as water, sanitation, healthcare and energy, are often interdependent. It is therefore imperative to invest in preventive measures to ensure the continuity of these essential services, including during hostilities. Compliance with international humanitarian law, which requires parties to conflict to protect essential infrastructure, is a necessary condition to ensure the continuation of water, sanitation and hygiene programmes and to support post-crisis recovery. It also helps to reduce the risk of public health emergencies, for example by preventing the spread of ongoing infectious disease outbreaks such as cholera, whose effects can be long-lasting.

Third, humanitarian access must be guaranteed, in accordance with international humanitarian law and as reiterated in Security Council Resolution 2730 on the protection of humanitarian and United Nations personnel,

including when assigned to the maintenance or repair of water and water-related infrastructure.

During our recent term on the Security Council, Switzerland co-organized, together with Mozambique, the first-ever Arria-formula meeting on this topic in 2023. In the same vein, we organized a workshop with government experts to share good practices aimed at strengthening the protection of the environment in armed conflict. We thank Slovenia and the co-organizers for convening today's meeting and for their continued commitment to this important issue.

Switzerland remains actively engaged in the **Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts**, a coalition of states and organizations launched in 2024. Its objective is to mobilize political support and to strengthen capacities to improve protection under international law. Switzerland welcomes the Global Initiative on International Humanitarian Law and its focus on the protection of civilian property and infrastructure, to which this Alliance can contribute, including by promoting the "Geneva List of Principles for the Protection of Water Infrastructure in Armed Conflict".

Switzerland remains committed to protecting water infrastructure and essential services for the civilian population.

I thank you.

26. Vietnam

STATEMENT

Of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

at the UN Security Council Arria Formula Meeting

**Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under Attack
Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives**

New York, 22 March 2023

Please check against delivery

Mr./Madam Chair,

1. I thank Slovenia for convening this important Arria-formula meeting, which Viet Nam is pleased to co-sponsor. We appreciate the briefers for their insights.

2. Water is essential to life and human dignity. In situations of armed conflict, the destruction or disruption of water infrastructure and services not only threatens the immediate survival of civilian populations, but also undermines the communities' long-term recovery, stability, and overall well-being.

The humanitarian consequences are especially acute in densely populated or climate-vulnerable areas, where access to clean and safe water is already limited.

In our view, there are some key areas that need our attention to better protect water resources in armed conflict:

First, the Security Council should integrate water security more effectively into its conflict prevention strategies, peace operations, and post-conflict recovery frameworks. Water is not only a potential driver of conflict but also a powerful tool for

peacebuilding. As such, considerations of water access and management should be incorporated into the mandates of peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions, particularly in regions that are climate-vulnerable and already facing limited access to fresh and clean water.

Secondly, Viet Nam underscores the binding legal obligations under international humanitarian law that prohibit attacks on objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, including water infrastructure and irrigation systems. These protections are not discretionary — they are mandatory norms that must be upheld by all parties to a conflict. Relevant Security Council resolutions, including Resolution 2573, which emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach to preventing the destruction of civilian infrastructure, must be fully implemented and rigorously enforced.

Thirdly, to enhance prevention and protection of water resources, strengthening transboundary water cooperation is essential. Over 3,600 river basins around the world cross national borders.

As a downstream country in the Mekong River Basin, Viet Nam has long engaged in regional and multilateral mechanisms such as the Mekong River Commission, which fosters joint management, information sharing, and dispute resolution among riparian states. We believe such cooperative frameworks play a vital role in preventing water-related tensions from escalating into broader conflicts, especially under the added stress of climate change, environmental degradation, and growing demand for resources.

To conclude, Viet Nam reaffirms our commitment to the protection of water in armed conflict and the promotion of

transboundary water cooperation. Water must never be used as a weapon of war and must be safeguarded as a fundamental human right and a foundation for lasting peace. You can count on Viet Nam as a reliable partner in regional and global efforts in protecting water resources and infrastructure, as well as initiatives to enhance transboundary water cooperation.

I thank you./.

27. European Union

**UNSC ARRIA FORMULA MEETING:
PROTECTING WATER IN ARMED CONFLICT – PROTECTING
CIVILIAN LIVES**

22 May 2025, New York

Statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

**H.E. Ambassador Hedda Samson
Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations**

Check against delivery

STATEMENT

Excellencies, Colleagues, the European Union and its member states welcome today's Arria Formula meeting convened by Slovenia together with Algeria, Panama and Sierra Leone on protecting water in armed conflict to protect civilian lives.

The Candidate Countries North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia*, Albania*, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina* and Georgia, as well as Armenia and San Marino align themselves with this statement.

Civilian objects are protected under IHL. Furthermore, objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, including water infrastructure, receive special protections. The civilian character of the natural environment is also well established.

* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

Universal access to safe drinking water, without any discrimination, is an internationally recognized human right. Yet today, we are all witness to the continued destructive impact of armed conflicts on water and sanitation services, personnel, infrastructure and resources. Whether through direct attacks, incidental damage, contamination or denial of access, it is civilians who often pay the highest price. Suffering and death, loss of livelihoods, displacement, health crises, disease, and lowered resilience to shocks are just some of the risks faced. This becomes much more urgent still considering the detrimental impact the climate crisis is having on water availability in many places around the world, heightening the risks of fragility and conflict. Furthermore, the changing nature of warfare, including cyberattacks, have amplified protection concerns for water infrastructure.

Excellencies, Colleagues, we have three points for the Council's consideration and for action by member states.

First, **we have the tools and the framework of international humanitarian law to prevent these violations.** The Security Council and member states must demand and ensure compliance with these obligations. The Global Initiative on IHL launched by the ICRC and a group of states [Brazil, China, France, Jordan, Kazakhstan, South Africa] is an important process to galvanize political commitment to IHL compliance, and includes a workstream on the protection of civilian infrastructure.

Second, we must **continue to ensure timely and dignified access** to sufficient and safe water services for people caught in humanitarian crises. There is also a broader need to consider the overall impact of conflict on water systems, and focus on their resilience and sustainability beyond the short term. These interventions should be closely linked with mediation efforts and support shared governance of key natural resources to ensure a triple nexus approach. The impact of conflict on the natural environment must also be considered.

Third, rapid, effective and sustainable responses also depend on good coordination, which is essential for assessing and prioritising needs. The EU is working closely with the Global WASH Cluster and UNICEF to coordinate humanitarian operations in WASH assistance, while also acknowledging the nexus between armed conflict and the natural environment. The recently launched Humanitarian Reset also makes important commitments towards localization, and prioritizing agency advantages in responses.

Excellencies, Colleagues, we must translate our commitments into action. The European Union will continue to play its part to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law to prevent civilian suffering in armed conflicts globally. Thank you.

28. Finland

Statement on behalf of the Nordic countries

Arria Formula meeting on Protecting Water in Armed Conflicts

23 May 2025

President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic countries Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Finland.

The Nordic countries welcome this Arria meeting on the protection of water in armed conflict and thank Slovenia, Algeria, Panama, and Sierra Leone for organizing it.

President,

Access to water and sanitation are fundamental human rights belonging to all without discrimination. Women, children, and people in vulnerable situations, such as persons with disabilities, suffer the most when safe water and sanitation are unavailable due to conflicts.

Safe water and sanitation are essential for civilian survival and should never become targets of armed attacks. International humanitarian law protects water infrastructures and natural water reserves as civilian objects. Furthermore, water is recognized as indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, granting it enhanced protection under IHL.

Water should never be weaponized or used as a means of warfare. Denying the civilian population access to water is a collective punishment and a war crime. Attacks on dams and dykes are prohibited, given the devastating effects on civilians when such installations are damaged or destroyed. The human cost and environmental damage caused by the destruction of Kakhovka dam in Ukraine two years ago is a stark example.

The environment is often called a silent casualty of war. The Nordic countries have consistently stressed that armed conflicts cause serious damage to the environment and bring long-lasting consequences to populations that depend on it. Environmental damage caused by conflict often affects natural water reserves, having a severely adverse impact on access to water.

President,

With a record number of armed conflicts since the Cold War and an increasing disregard for international law, all States must resume their obligation to both respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law. Collectively, we must pursue accountability for those who deliberately target such resources in armed conflict.

Water is essential for sustainable development. With progress on SDG 6 already alarmingly off-track, we cannot risk further backsliding caused by armed conflict and IHL violations.

President,

The Nordic countries call on the Security Council to assume its Charter-enshrined role of preventing conflicts before they erupt. Cooperative, inclusive, and equitable water management, guided by relevant UN conventions and supported by water diplomacy, is the only sustainable way to ensure that water does not increasingly become a driver of conflicts.

I thank you.

29. Kuwait

سعادة نائبة وزير الشؤون الخارجية والأوروبية لجمهورية سلوفينيا ال صديقة، أصحاب
السعادة، ال زملاء ال كرام،

أودبداي "ة أن أتقدم بـ خالص ال شكر لسعادتك ول جمهورية سلوفينيا ال صديقة، وللشركاء كذلك على
تنظيم هذه الجلسة الهامة، والتي تأتي اليوم في ظل واقعة دولي متزايدة في النزاعات المسلحة، وتتفاقم فيه الأزمات الإنسانية
الناجمة عنها، لا سيما تلك المرتبطة بالمياه ومواردها الحيوية.
السيدة الرئيسة،

لقد شهد التاريخ أن الماء كان عبر العصور باعثاً للتعاون، غيّر أن الواقع المؤلم الذي نشهده اليوم، يرينا كيف
تجول في ساحات الحرب إلى أداة للصراع المباشري وغير المباشر، فأصبحت الآبار تسبب وموت محطات الضخ تفصف والموا
ردت قطع عمداً عن المدنيين، هذا ما نشهده اليوم في غزة، ما أدى في السابق ولا يزال اليوم إلى انتشار الأمراض وتفشي
المجاعات ونزوح المدنيين من مسانئهم وأوطانهم.

إن دولة الكويت، إذ تؤمن إيماناً راسخاً بالوصول إلى مياه آمنة هو حق إنساني أساسي لا يسقط تحت أي
ظرف، تؤكده على ضرورة حماية البنية التحتية ال متصلة بالمياه في أوقات النزاع، واتخاذ إجراءات عاجلة وفعليّة لضمان
عدم استخدامها كسلاح في الصراعات أو كوسيلة ضغط تمارس على الشعوب، وفي هذا الصدد، يسرني أن أعلن عن ان
ضمام بكدي إلى التحالف الدولي لحماية المياه من النزاعات المسلحة.

السيدة الرئيسة،

لقد أكدت قواعد القانون الدولي الإنساني، ولا سيما اتفاقيات جنيف، على ال حماية الخاصة للمرافق الحيوية ال كزمامة
لبقاء المدنيين، وعلى رأسها المياه ومرافق الصرف الصحي، ونشدد هنا على أن أي انتهاك لهذه القواعد يمثل خرقاً
الجسيم الذي يرقى إلى جرائم حرب تستوجب المساءلة.

كما أثبتت التجارب أن استهداف البنية التحتية للمياه لا يهدد حياة الأفراد فحسب، بل يوقض ألسنة
النارية ويغري موجة الفجوة في تحقيق أهداف التنمية ال مستدامة ال لعام 2030، ويخلل الأمن البيئي
والاجتماعي للدول المتأثرة، وهو ما يتطلب من المجتمع الدولي، تحركاً مشتركاً يربط بين المساءلة والوقاية والاستجابة، بما
يكفل صون الكرامة الإنسانية في كل الأوقات.

وتؤكده دولة الكويت ختاماً السيدة الرئيسة على أهمية تعزيز التزام الدول الأعضاء بقرارات مجلس الأمن ذات ال
صلة، ومنها القرارات 2417 و2573 و2730، وتشدد على ضرورة أن تكون حماية المياه عنصرًا محوريًا في
أجندة حماية المدنيين في النزاعات المسلحة، وأن نواصل جهودنا لضمان ألا يتجول الماء، هذا المورد النقي، إلى ضحايا
أخرى من ضحايا الحروب

وشكراً جزياً.

30. Egypt

Thank you, Madame President.

1. Water is a lifeline and a necessity, of which access to is a basic human right. Water must never be used for political means, nor should it ever be weaponized or be a source of conflict. Cooperation over shared water resources and transboundary water streams is imperative, for the preservation of international peace and security and development.
2. This is why IHL prohibits to attack or destroy objects indispensable to civilians' survival, including water installations. Yet, despite IHL being clear, we witness the weaponization of water with attacks on water resources and installations, and the denial of access to drinking water, with deplorable impacts on civilians.
3. Nowhere is this evident more than in the Gaza Strip, where Israel, in addition to using starvation as a weapon of warfare, its' military operations are causing shortages of water due to forced displacement and the obstruction of fuel in desalination and hygiene plants.
4. According to OCHA, the largest desalination plant in north Gaza is in an area slated for displacement, which has disrupted water access for 150,000 people. South Gaza is not connected to the water network and relies on water trucking. Furthermore, in the West Bank, Israeli settlers continue to attack water infrastructure with 62 cases recorded since January.
5. The international media reports that without immediate fuel deliveries, a full shutdown of water and sanitation facilities is possible by the end of the week in Gaza, with reports of children growingly drinking salty water – resulting in a rise in kidney illness. Indeed, this inhumane war led to grave impacts on deteriorating public health, sanitation and hygiene, agriculture and nutrition.

6. We, therefore, call for the following:

- i. An urgent call by the Security Council for an immediate ceasefire, unhindered humanitarian access to avail relief and humanitarian assistance.
- ii. A renewed call on parties to armed conflict to respect and uphold their obligations under IHL, including to ensure the protection of water sources and installations and avoid their use as a weapon of warfare.
- iii. The Council must remain seized of these violations to ensure that parties refrain from attacking or destroying objects indispensable to the survival of civilians, using water and food as a weapon of war, or denying humanitarian access. We heard yesterday in the PoC open debate the cost of not taking action.

7. You can count on Egypt's support to all efforts towards upholding humanity.

31. Portugal

United Nations Security Council

Arria Formula on Protecting Water in Armed Conflict Protecting Civilian Lives

New York, May 23rd, 2025

Statement by Portugal

Speaking time: 3'

Mr. President,

Portugal thanks the promoters of this meeting for raising this critical issue.

Water is life – yet in today’s armed conflicts, freshwater resources and infrastructure are increasingly under attack. From deliberate sabotage of pipelines to contamination of reservoirs, these actions violate international humanitarian law and endanger millions.

Portugal agrees that decisive action must be taken at 3 levels:

First: Reversing the Normalization of Attacks on Water Infrastructure

The growing disregard for International Humanitarian Law protections on water must end. We must strengthen monitoring and reporting, by enhancing UN mechanisms like the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Cluster and Civilian Harm Tracking to document violations in real time.

At the same time, we must leverage legal accountability, by seeking investigation and prosecution of deliberate attacks on water infrastructure.

Furthermore, we should engage non-State actors, by ensuring that armed groups understand their obligations under the Geneva Conventions and UNSC Resolution 2573.

Second: Addressing Immediate and Long-Term Impacts in Protracted Crises

When water systems are affected, the consequences can endure for decades. As such, we must prioritize Rapid Repair and Sustainability, supporting local water authorities to restore services quickly. To mitigate Public Health Crises,

emergency water purification and disease surveillance should be deployed.

In terms of Environmental Remediation, it is essential to partner with UNEP and the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction to clean polluted water sources and prevent long-term ecological damage.

Third: Transforming Evidence into Action at the UN Security Council

The Council has discussed water protection – now it's time to act. For instance, by establishing Monitoring Mechanisms, through a Panel of Experts on Water and Conflict, which could report on compliance and recommend sanctions. Or by integrating Water into Peace Operations, in line with the third entry point of the UN System-Wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation, ensuring that mandates include protecting water infrastructure and supporting its local governance, namely through the development of national prevention strategies.

Portugal launched in 2023 an international cooperation platform called Global Coalition for Better Policies and Regulation of Water and Sanitation Services. We are willing to share this and other experiences, including our recently adopted Water Management Strategy as well as the Albufeira Convention, a binding instrument for transboundary water management, which we have signed with Spain 25 years ago and has allowed our two neighbouring countries to swiftly react to water scarcity, droughts and floods.

Mr. President,

Water is not just a resource – it is a fundamental right. Let us ensure that water remains a shield of peace, not a weapon of war.

Thank you.

32. Ukraine

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**Statement
by the delegation of Ukraine
at the United Nations Security Council Arria Formula Meeting
“Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under Attack:
Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives”
(23 May 2025)**

Mr. Chair,

Ukraine thanks the delegation of Slovenia for convening this timely and highly relevant meeting, and the briefers for their insightful remarks.

Today’s topic deserves the full attention of this Council. Attacks on freshwater resources and infrastructure have become a devastating feature of armed conflict – threatening the lives of civilians, particularly women, children, and persons with disabilities. When pipelines are bombed, pumping stations are disabled, and water sources contaminated, water becomes both a casualty and a weapon of war.

Ukraine speaks from painful and ongoing experience. As we continue to defend ourselves against the full-scale aggression by the Russian Federation, we have witnessed deliberate and systematic targeting of critical civilian infrastructure – not only residential buildings, schools, and hospitals, but also essential water facilities and freshwater systems.

One of the most shocking examples was the deliberate destruction of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant dam in June 2023. This terrorist act by Russian forces triggered massive flooding in southern Ukraine, displacing thousands of civilians, destroying homes, and devastating ecosystems.

Before the attack, the Kakhovka Reservoir contained approximately 18 cubic kilometers of freshwater – an essential resource for the population, agriculture, and biodiversity in the region. Over 70% of this water was lost due to the dam's destruction, causing long-term ecological degradation and the collapse of water supply systems for large communities.

More broadly, one of the most severe impacts of the war has been the intentional destruction of water management facilities across my country. To date, more than 744 such facilities have been damaged or destroyed. These include drinking water supply systems, wastewater treatment plants, and irrigation networks. This destruction has severely compromised the ability to manage water resources safely and effectively, leading to acute water shortages, pollution, and a breakdown of sanitation services – all of which have compounded the humanitarian crisis in war-affected regions.

These acts are clear violations of international humanitarian law and must not be tolerated.

Ukraine strongly supports all efforts aimed at strengthening the protection of water-related infrastructure during armed conflict. We stand ready to share our experience in mitigating the consequences of such attacks and in supporting affected civilian populations.

I thank you.

33. United Arab Emirates

**Statement of the United Arab Emirates
At the Security Council Arria Formula Meeting on
“Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under Attack:
Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives”
Delivered By:
Ms. Fatema Yousuf
Acting Deputy Permanent Representative
New York, 23 May 2025**

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Word Count: 398 words.

Mr. Chair,

I would like to thank the co-organizers for spotlighting this incredibly important topic during Protection of Civilians Week, as well as the briefers for their sobering presentations today.

In conflict settings around the globe, water is increasingly becoming a weapon of war, a casualty of conflict, and a driver of instability and displacement.

When armed conflict destroys water infrastructure or disrupts water access, the consequences for both civilians and the environment are catastrophic.

So, when we protect water sources in conflict settings, we protect civilians.

But achieving this demands that we move beyond simply acknowledging the issue of water to actively integrating its security into our humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts.

To that end, the United Arab Emirates would like to share three recommendations:

First, we must harness the potential of emerging technologies, including Artificial Intelligence.

From developing early warning systems to detecting contaminated water or waterborne diseases, these advancements offer us powerful tools for managing and protecting water in challenge environments.

Second, we need to incorporate climate resilience and ecosystem restoration to address environmental damage caused by conflict.

By restoring damaged ecosystems, we can prevent future water crises and bolster long-term stability.

And finally, we must leverage the critical role of women as agents of change in climate action.

Water insecurity, exacerbated by armed conflict, disproportionately impacts women and girls, however they continue to be excluded from relevant decision-making processes around water management.

Their inclusion is essential, as it can lead to more effective solutions that reflect the realities of those who are often primarily responsible for securing access to water.

As a co-host of the 2026 UN Water Conference with our friends from Senegal, the UAE is committed to raising ambition and generating action on the global water agenda.

While we prepare for an ambitious and action-oriented conference next year, we will continue to support the UN's system-wide strategy on water and sanitation, as well as call for the implementation of Security Council resolutions that highlight and affirm the importance of protecting civilian infrastructure.

Mr. Chair,

For civilians caught in the crosshairs of conflict, access to water is a matter of life or death.

The stakes are simply too high for indifference and passivity.

We need to step up, take action, and deliver on our commitments to ensure that water becomes not a casualty of war, but a foundation for peace.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

34. Czech Republic

CZECH REPUBLIC

Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the United Nations

**United Nations Security Council Arria Formula Meeting:
„Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives“**

Statement by

H.E. Mr. Jakub Kulháněk

Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic

New York, 23 May 2025

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One Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, 48th floor
885 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Czechia aligns itself with the statement (to be) delivered by the European Union.

I thank the co-sponsors for convening this important meeting today.

Water is essential to life on Earth.

Access to safe drinking water and sanitation is not merely a necessity but a fundamental human right.

When managed sustainably and equitably, water can foster peace, prosperity and stability. Conversely, water scarcity, pollution, and restricted access to resource can exacerbate tensions and trigger conflicts, especially in fragile contexts.

We are deeply concerned about the insufficient progress in achieving SDG6. Climate change has increased the frequency and severity of extreme weather event globally, causing devastating floods and droughts. To effectively respond, we must address the root causes of vulnerability and strengthen resilience to the impacts of climate change through evidence-based, conflict-sensitive adaptation measures and disaster risk management.

In fragile and conflict-affected regions, Czechia promotes an integrated approach linking humanitarian response with development cooperation and post-conflict stabilisation. We invest in resilient water systems and advocate for unimpeded humanitarian access to essential services.

We also emphasize the urgent need to protect women, children, older persons, and persons with disabilities, who are disproportionately affected by water scarcity in conflict zones. Czechia actively promotes inclusive, gender-sensitive solutions that ensure equitable access to water and sanitation.

The 2023 UN Water Conference rightly called for strengthening transboundary water cooperation.

Czechia strongly encourages the implementation of relevant international water agreements, particularly the UN Water Convention, and advocates for collaborative management of shared water resources.

We express our deep concern regarding the growing use of attacks against freshwater resources and water-related infrastructure as a tactic of warfare. Czechia unequivocally condemns the weaponization of water – a stark example being Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Such deliberate targeting of civilian water infrastructure, including treatment plants, distribution systems and dams, polluting water and denying access to water resources, constitutes a violation of international law.

To conclude, I am happy to report that Czechia has recently joined the ICRC's Global Initiative, specifically focussing on the protection of civilian infrastructure, including water installations.

I thank you.

35. Armenia

**Statement by
H.E. Mr. Paruyr Hovhannisyan,
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Armenia to the UN,
at UN Security Council Arrria Formula meeting on «Protecting Water in Armed Conflict –
Protecting Civilian Lives»
23 May 2025**

Madame Chair,

I would like to thank the Permanent Mission of Slovenia along with Algeria, Panama and Sierra Leone, for organizing this Arrria Formula meeting on such a pertinent topic of «Protecting Water in Armed Conflict». I also thank the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross Ms. Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF Mr. Ted Chaiban and briefers representing civil society for outlining the challenges in protecting critical civilian infrastructure, especially water pipelines and other related infrastructure in situation of armed conflicts.

Armed conflicts accompanied with massive use of heavy weaponry and indiscriminate attacks on residential areas have a devastating impact on civilian infrastructure that is essential for survival. Targeting of drinking water installations, pumping stations and irrigation networks deprives the civilian population of access to water and sanitation, with a particularly heavy toll on the most vulnerable, children, women, elderly and persons with disabilities.

Lack of water hampers healthcare services and undermines the ability of authorities to respond to the spread of infectious diseases in the conflict-affected areas. Damage of irrigation infrastructure destroys agricultural livelihoods and worsens food insecurity. Such tactics amount to the use of starvation as a method of warfare.

Armenia knows from its own experience the consequences of such actions. Just several years ago, the civilian population of Armenia's bordering regions faced disruption of water as a result of hostilities. These actions clearly demonstrated how deliberate attacks on water infrastructures can be weaponized in conflict severely affecting the daily life of civilian population.

At the Open Debate held under the agenda item on «Protection of Civilians» the Delegation of Armenia underscored its long-standing position on the necessity of full and unconditional

compliance with international humanitarian law. Implementation of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols is crucial for the effective protection of infrastructure indispensable to the survival of the civilians. There can be no justification for targeting of water infrastructure, which constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Too often, parties to conflict deliberately deny international humanitarian access to conflict areas abstracting efforts to restore the damaged infrastructure.

Madame Chair,

In light of the above challenges, parties to conflict should ensure safe and unhindered access for the ICRC and other humanitarian actors, in line with humanitarian principles, to ensure availability of clean water and sanitation.

The Security Council must firmly respond to cases where the access of humanitarian personnel to the conflict-affected population is obstructed.

The activities of the ICRC are critical for providing water supplies to the most vulnerable in conflict zones. It remains a crucial priority to ensure adequate rehabilitation of damaged infrastructure, such as water systems, pumping stations, and power networks to ensure proper operation of medical facilities and avoid disease outbreaks.

We reaffirm the imperative of acting in full compliance with international humanitarian law in protecting objects indispensable to the survival of civilians, in line with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. At the same time, we believe the international community must take more resolute steps to strengthen the protection of water infrastructure during conflict, including through enhanced international safeguards and accountability mechanisms to ensure that such violations are duly addressed.

Thank you.

36. Iraq

*Iraqi Permanent Mission
Statement on the Protection of Water Resources in Armed Conflict
Arria-Formula Meeting – United Nations Security Council
23 May 2025*

1. Thank you, Excellency. At the outset, my delegation wishes to thank Slovenia, Algeria, Panama, and Sierra Leone for convening this important meeting, and we express our appreciation to the distinguished briefers for their valuable contributions.

2. The increasing use of water as a weapon in armed conflict or as a means to impose political will is a serious breach of International Law. It is worsening poverty, hunger, public health crises, and human suffering, particularly among vulnerable populations. It also fuels forced displacement and demographic changes. Things that unfortunately happen in many regions in the world, especially in Gaza.

3. The responsibility to safeguard water resources lies with all relevant international bodies, especially the Security Council. This requires transboundary cooperation, adherence to international law, equitable sharing of benefits and burdens, and accountability for violations, alongside robust preventive and humanitarian efforts.

4. In this context, my delegation supports the establishment of an early warning system focused on water-related conflict risks within the UN's development and environmental framework. This system should include a reporting mechanism to the Security Council where tensions risk escalating into threats to international peace and security.

5. We also look forward to the upcoming UN Water Conference, co-hosted by the United Arab Emirates and Senegal, and encourage it to address the roots of threats related to water conflicts. We hope it will help identify durable and equitable solutions that prevent the use of water as a means of political coercion or a driver of prolonged conflict.

Thank you.

37. Austria

**United Nations Security Council
Arria Formula Meeting**

**Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under Attack
Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives**

Statement by the Republic of Austria

delivered by

H.E. Gregor W. Koessler

Permanent Representative

New York, 23 May 2025

Check against delivery

Mr. President,

Thank you for convening today's timely meeting.

Austria aligns itself with the statement by the European Union and would like to state the following in its national capacity:

Water and sanitation systems are at the heart of any community and protected under International Humanitarian Law. Yet, the most recent report of the UN Secretary-General on the state of the protection of civilians with a distinct section on water is alarming: water facilities destroyed, dams damaged, attacks on electricity infrastructure causing water supply disruptions, access to water cut off deliberately by parties to the conflict and civilians exposed to waterborne disease.

The effects of those attacks are often devastating for civilians. This is especially true for populated areas, where the harm caused by explosive weapons extends far beyond the weapons' impact area. Vulnerable groups – children, women, older persons, and persons with disabilities – are disproportionately affected.

Mr. President,

Attacks against civilian objects and civilian infrastructure are illegal and can amount to war crimes. One concrete action to enhance compliance with IHL is the political declaration on explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA) which offers a concrete toolbox of measures. It has been endorsed by 88 States so far and Austria strongly encourages all States to support the Declaration.

As climate change exacerbates water scarcity, the protection of water infrastructure is a humanitarian and a peace and security imperative. The Security Council must act to prevent the weaponization of water and mitigate climate-related security risks.

Mr. President,

Maintaining international peace and security requires that the Security Council upholds the Rule of Law and respects the standards it

has set for the international community. When International Humanitarian Law is violated or the Council's resolutions are not respected, swift and united action is essential to hold violators accountable.

I thank you.

**INTERVENCIÓN DE LA EMBAJADORA
REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE ADJUNTA**

Excma. Sra. D^a. Ana Jiménez de la Hoz

CONSEJO DE SEGURIDAD DE NACIONES UNIDAS

Reunión informal bajo Fórmula Arria:

“Recursos de agua dulce e infraestructuras conexas atacados -

Protección de recursos acuíferos en conflictos armados -

Proteger la vida de los civiles”.

Nueva York, 23 de mayo 2025

(Cotejar con intervención definitiva)

Señor Presidente:

Agradecemos a Eslovenia, Argelia, Panamá y Sierra Leona por convocar esta importante reunión bajo la fórmula Arria.

España reconoce los derechos humanos al agua potable y al saneamiento como pilares esenciales para la paz, el desarrollo sostenible y la protección de los civiles. Desde 2006, junto a Alemania, hemos impulsado resoluciones en la Asamblea General de Naciones Unidas para su reconocimiento, convencidos de que son condiciones previas para el ejercicio de otros derechos fundamentales.

Es urgente revertir la peligrosa tendencia a la normalización de ataques contra infraestructuras hídricas. Estos ataques, además de violar el Derecho Internacional Humanitario, comprometen gravemente la supervivencia de las poblaciones. La implementación de la resolución 2573 del Consejo de Seguridad, el fortalecimiento de mecanismos de documentación y rendición de cuentas y el fomento de la educación en DIH son medidas clave para evitar la impunidad y proteger bienes civiles indispensables.

En contextos de crisis prolongadas, la respuesta humanitaria debe ser inmediata pero también sostenible. Esto implica garantizar el acceso seguro y sin trabas del personal humanitario, reparar infraestructuras esenciales y fortalecer la resiliencia mediante tecnologías sostenibles y la participación activa de las comunidades locales. España ha impulsado buenas prácticas en restauración ambiental y gestión del agua que pueden inspirar soluciones resilientes en otros contextos.

El Consejo de Seguridad debe seguir transformando la evidencia en acciones concretas, incluyendo esta cuestión en los mandatos de protección de civiles.

España reitera su compromiso con la defensa del agua como derecho humano, como bien civil protegido, y como motor de paz y desarrollo.

Muchas gracias.

39. Croatia

United Nations Security Council Arria Formula Meeting

Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under Attack Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives

Thank you chair,

Excellencies, distinguished colleagues,

Croatia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union on behalf of its member states and I would like to add a few remarks in my national capacity.

I would like to start by expressing our gratitude to Slovenia and the cosponsors for convening this important meeting. We thank the distinguished briefers for their insightful presentations.

Mr. President,

One of the most recognizable symbols of the Homeland war and Croatia's fight for independence is the water tower in Vukovar city. Although no longer in its original function at the time of war, the water tower was heavily bombarded and became a symbol of resistance and endurance. It also stood and still stands as a reminder of the vulnerability of water infrastructure in times of war.

Protecting freshwater resources and infrastructure in armed conflict is a critical issue. Water is life — and in times of war, the deliberate or indiscriminate targeting of water systems not only endangers public health but also undermines the very foundation of human survival and dignity.

During the armed aggression, Croatia endured heavy damage to water infrastructure - as it was deliberately targeted and used as a weapon of war. The aggressor was not only targeting supply, but occupied a crucial hydroelectric dam Peruča and attempted to demolish it with 30 tons of explosives; thereby endangering the homes and lives of more than 50 000 people. The damage was mitigated and lives saved only by the heroic actions of the Croatian army and two members of the UN Military Observer mission; a Brazilian military engineer and a British Royal Marine.

Mr President,

Lessons learned from these experiences - first of all - point to building resilience. In protracted crises, the UN system and humanitarian actors, as well as states themselves, must bridge the divide between emergency response and long-term resilience. Addressing water insecurity demands an integrated approach: emergency repairs must be paired with sustained investments in infrastructure rehabilitation, risk assessments, and climate adaptation strategies. Water systems must be considered critical civilian infrastructure — not just in humanitarian terms, but as a pillar of peacebuilding.

Finally, to reverse the dangerous trend of the normalization of attacks on water-related infrastructure, we must foster a robust culture of compliance with international humanitarian law. This begins with reaffirming the principles enshrined in the Geneva Conventions and relevant Security Council resolutions. States must integrate IHL into military training and operational planning, including explicit prohibitions against targeting water systems vital for civilian survival.

Thank you.

40. The Netherlands

United Nations Security Council Arria Formula Meeting **Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under Attack Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives**

Madam President,

I would like to thank you for convening this Arria meeting, which is a good opportunity to underline the importance of protecting water in armed conflict, and the briefers for their valuable insights.

There are a number of points about which we must be crystal-clear:

First: Water is life. It is as simple – and serious – as that.

Second: International humanitarian law is also clear: objects and infrastructure essential for civilians to survive must never be targeted. This includes water facilities.

Yet in Ukraine, Sudan, Gaza and in other conflicts around the globe, water infrastructures are severely and systematically being damaged, with civilians bearing the brunt.

This brings me to a third point: Protecting water in armed conflict is not just a legal obligation – it is a humanitarian imperative.

My country The Netherlands – low-lying, coastal, wet and flat - has some unique historic insights into both the immense challenges water can bring, and, the tremendous opportunities that come with managing water effectively. We use our expertise of lessons learned, in our centuries of battling water, to help partners worldwide.

In situations of conflict, access to clean, safe, and adequate water is more than a public health issue – it is a matter of survival.

Contaminated water can be a source of diseases. Damaged infrastructure drives displacement. After a conflict ends, environmental degradation may persist for years and hinder future recovery.

The impact of attacks may not always be immediately visible and seemingly minor attacks can have cascading effects.

Moreover, as time passes, it becomes more difficult to attribute harm to specific incidents. This is why early, accurate, and transparent investigations are crucial: to assess impact, to be able to hold perpetrators accountable and to prevent future violations.

It is also important to emphasize the cascading negative effects of water stress – including as a risk multiplier. This is why the Kingdom of the Netherlands invests in

preventive action to mitigate water stress, and fosters cooperation between nations around water resources.

It is also why we invest – even in times of conflict – in supporting integrated water resource management in partner countries.

Madam President,

Let me conclude by stressing that we must ensure access to water is never politicized. Humanitarian personnel must be protected. Aid, including water, must flow freely and must never be used as a weapon of war, or tool of coercion.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands will continue to advocate for stronger protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, including water, in all conflict settings.

Thank you.

41. Japan

**Remarks by H.E. Ambassador UMETSU Shigeru
Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations
United Nations Security Council Arria Formula Meeting:
“Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives”
23 May 2025**

(As delivered)

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Access to water is essential for human survival, dignity, and security. Issues related to water are interlinked with conflict in complex ways, amplifying global risks and threatening international peace and security.

Water-related services and infrastructure are unequivocally protected under international humanitarian law (IHL). Japan calls on all parties to conflict to uphold and comply with IHL, as well as Security Council resolutions 2417 and 2573. Access to humanitarian assistance that provides water-related services should never be impeded.

Japan is committed to protecting the dignity of all civilians, particularly those who experience the disproportionate effects of restricted access to water under armed conflicts, such as women, girls, and persons with disabilities.

At present, Japan is providing humanitarian assistance for water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) and the procurement of water service equipment in several conflict affected areas, including Gaza, the West Bank, Sudan, and Ukraine.

Furthermore, for many years, Japan has been supporting projects to improve the stability of conflict-affected areas and the well-being of civilians by strengthening public services, including water services, based on a Humanitarian-Development- Peace Nexus approach.

Mr. Chair,

We must not allow civilians who are already in vulnerable environments to fall into even more fragile situations. We as the international community must renew our full respect for obligations under IHL and redouble our efforts to protect and strengthen water services under armed conflict, which lie at the core of human security.

Thank you.

42. Türkiye

"Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under Attack. Protecting Water in Armed Conflict" TÜRKİYE

Türkiye wishes to express its gratitude to Slovenia for organizing this debate in collaboration with Algeria, Panama, Sierra Leone, and other Member States.

We also extend our appreciation to the briefers for sharing their invaluable insights.

The Security Council has a significant responsibility in ensuring the survival, security and dignity of civilians in conflict.

The protection of freshwater resources and related infrastructure on which civilians depend in the context of armed conflict is a critical component of international peace and security.

Ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all is also a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development.

There can be no poverty eradication, no food security, no energy security, no hygiene and no gender equality without water.

Water is fundamental for meeting basic human needs.

It is an essential source of life, which is now under serious threat due to climate change.

It must never be utilized as a weapon of war.

Regrettably, in numerous regions around the world, water is currently under siege in conflict zones.

Recent crises illustrate the magnitude of this devastation.

In Gaza, the population has been deprived of essentials of life. The destruction of vital infrastructure has left only a fraction of water systems operational, while humanitarian agencies struggle to provide even the minimum water necessary for survival. Civilians, predominantly women and children, are enduring severe water

scarcity. Wastewater treatment facilities have been rendered inoperative, leading to a surge in disease.

This situation transcends the confines of war; it is actually a humanitarian crisis. We are deeply concerned that conflicts in other regions of the world also deliberately target or inadvertently damage water infrastructure. As such, the imperative **to uphold international humanitarian law remains as urgent as ever.**

As a party to the Geneva Conventions and as a country situated at the crossroads of regions affected by conflicts and serious humanitarian crises, Türkiye emphasizes that respect for international humanitarian law is not merely a choice; but a legal obligation.

On this occasion, we reiterate Türkiye's steadfast commitment to the principles of international humanitarian law and enhanced protection of water-related essential services and infrastructure for civilian populations, especially in armed conflict situations.

Humanitarian relief efforts must be complemented by sustainable development initiatives focused on rebuilding and maintaining freshwater infrastructure. This includes investment in resilient water systems, the promotion of water conservation, and the assurance of equitable access for all affected communities.

Türkiye, as one of the countries providing the highest levels of humanitarian assistance relative to its national income, has implemented various water-related projects in multiple regions across the globe.

Türkiye approaches the water issue solely from a humanitarian perspective at all times.

We view water as a “catalyst” for cooperation rather than conflict among nations.

Türkiye will continue to its efforts towards protection of civilians and the civilian infrastructure they depend on, and achieving just, lasting and peaceful solution to conflicts.

We take this opportunity to urge all Member States to refrain from weaponizing water and to utilize water resources in an equitable, reasonable, optimum and efficient manner, without causing significant harm to others.

Thank you.

43. Bulgaria

Statement

by Mr Ivaylo Gatev, Second Committee Expert, Permanent Mission of Bulgaria to the United Nations

Security Council Arria-formula Meeting “Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under Attack: Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives”

23 May 2025

Thank you, Mr Chairman,

Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the EU. I would like to further highlight some additional points.

Let me express my appreciation to Slovenia, but also Algeria, Panama and Sierra Leone, for convening this meeting, as well as to the briefers for their insightful reflections.

Mr Chairman,

Civilian infrastructure is sadly one of the casualties of armed conflict. Because of the interconnected nature of this infrastructure, attacks against power generating facilities for example have a knock-on effect on essential services, chief among them water, sanitation and hygiene.

The disruption, degradation and destruction of water-related services and infrastructure during armed conflict entail severe and far-reaching consequences for those who depend on them. They affect the most vulnerable, particularly displaced persons, many of them women and children.

The need to protect civilian populations during armed conflict entails the protection of water-related infrastructure. The rules on the conduct of hostilities enshrined in international humanitarian law oblige all parties to armed conflict to recognise water resources and related infrastructure as a protected entity.

Compliance with International Humanitarian Law is not optional. We must foster a culture of compliance with international humanitarian law, thereby ensuring that water services remain off-limits as tools of war. This could be done through enhanced monitoring of attacks on water installations, strengthened accountability and the integration of water security into peacekeeping mandates.

Fostering long-term resilience through investments in sustainable water management systems, such as decentralised purification stations and off-grid water installations, can mitigate the public health consequences of armed attacks.

Mr Chairman,

The preservation of water systems is a matter of survival, stability, and solidarity and Bulgaria is committed to this global effort.

I thank you.

44. India

Permanent Mission of India

New York

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Arrria Formula Meeting: Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives

Statement by Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish, Permanent Representative

23 May 2025

Mr. President,

- We are constrained to respond to the disinformation being carried out by the delegation of Pakistan with regard to Indus Water Treaty.
- India has always acted in a responsible manner as an upper riparian state.
- I would like to highlight four aspects to expose the disinformation of Pakistan.
- FIRST, India had entered into the Indus Water Treaty, 65 years ago, in good faith. The Preamble of the Treaty describes that the Treaty was concluded ‘in a spirit of good will and friendship’.
- Throughout these six and a half decades, Pakistan has violated the spirit of the treaty by inflicting three wars and thousands of terror attacks on India. In the last four decades, more than 20,000 Indian lives have been lost in terror attacks, the most recent of which was the dastardly targeted terror attack on tourists in Pahalgam last month.
- India has shown extraordinary patience and magnanimity throughout this period.
- Pakistan state-sponsored cross border terrorism in India seeks to hold hostage the lives of civilians, religious harmony and economic prosperity.
- SECOND, in these 65 years, far-reaching fundamental changes have taken place not only in terms of escalating security concerns through cross-border terror attacks, but also growing requirements for producing clean energy, climate change and demographic change. Technology for dam infrastructure has also transformed to ensure safety and efficiency of operations and water use. Some of the old dams are facing serious safety concerns.
- However, Pakistan has continued to consistently block any changes to this infrastructure, and any modifications of the provisions, which is permissible under the Treaty.

- In fact, in 2012 terrorists even attacked the Tulbul Navigation Project in Jammu and Kashmir.
- These cynical acts continue to endanger safety of our projects and lives of civilians.
- THIRD, India has formally asked Pakistan to discuss the modifications of the Treaty on several occasions in the past 2 years.
- However, Pakistan continues to reject these. Pakistan's obstructionist approach continues to prevent the exercise of full utilisation of legitimate rights by India.
- FOUR, it is against this backdrop that India has finally announced that the Treaty will be in abeyance until Pakistan, which is a global epicenter of terror, credibly and irrevocably ends its support for cross-border terrorism.
- It is clear that it is Pakistan which remains in violation of the Indus Water Treaty.

45. Colombia

Intervención Representante Permanente de Colombia, Fórmula Arria del Consejo de Seguridad: "Recursos Hídricos e Infraestructura Relacionada bajo Ataque: Protegiendo el Agua en el Conflicto Armado"

Muchas gracias, señora Viceministra, y gracias a Eslovenia, Argelia, Panamá y Sierra Leona por convocar a esta reunión, a todos los países co-patrocinadores y a quienes han realizado sus presentaciones, incluyendo el Comité Internacional de la Cruz Roja, la OMS, el Fondo para la Niñez de Naciones Unidas, y la ONG el "Llamado de Ginebra".

Comienzo destacando que Colombia reafirma su compromiso con el Protocolo Adicional I a los Convenios de Ginebra, que exige proteger el medio ambiente en conflictos armados. Este marco respalda nuestra labor de proteger las fuentes hídricas y su infraestructura, vitales para la vida y la dignidad humana.

Quiero ofrecer los distinguidos representantes y delegados aquí presentes, un relato sobre la visión de Colombia en la práctica legal interna. Hemos desarrollado una mirada innovadora sobre el agua y su protección en los últimos años, gracias a la cual el Estado colombiano hoy cuenta con nuevos mandatos y herramientas para velar por la protección de la naturaleza y los recursos naturales como sujetos de derechos.

En 2016, la Corte Constitucional de Colombia reconoció al río Atrato como sujeto de derechos a la protección, conservación, mantenimiento y restauración. Este hito le permitió al país dar un paso más allá en la protección del agua, pues ya no sólo es entendida como un bien a ser protegido por su conexidad con los derechos humanos y el

DIH, sino también como un sujeto en sí mismo que es representado y defendido por las comunidades en los territorios.

En 2023 la Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz (JEP) acreditó como víctima del conflicto armado al Río Cauca. Este es el primer caso en el que se reconoce como crímenes de guerra las afectaciones graves a la naturaleza cometidas en desarrollo del conflicto armado.

En este marco, los Consejos Comunitarios Afrocolombianos del norte del Cauca señalaron a la JEP las graves afectaciones que ha sufrido el río Cauca a causa de su utilización como fosa común (debido el lanzamiento de personas asesinadas por grupos paramilitares al río), el uso de mercurio para la minería ilegal y el vertimiento de químicos derivados de la producción de sustancias ilícitas, por parte de los grupos armados al margen de la ley.

En marzo de 2024, se realizó un acto restaurativo entre la Jurisdicción y las comunidades locales, en la que se notificó al afluente de su acreditación como víctima y se dio un primer paso hacia la sanación y la reconciliación de las personas con el río.

Con este espíritu, invito a que en conjunto busquemos las vías para aterrizar en la práctica el respeto al común acuerdo en el DIH, y que contemos con más espacios como este que nos permitan dar a conocer las experiencias de los países en aras de avanzar en la aplicación efectiva de las normas y los principios.

Muchas gracias.

**Intervention of the Permanent Representative of Colombia,
Arria-formula Meeting of the Security Council: "Water Resources and
Related Infrastructure Under Attack: Protecting Water in Armed
Conflict"**

Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Minister, and thank you to Slovenia, Algeria, Panama, and Sierra Leone for convening this meeting, as well as to all the co-sponsoring countries and those who have delivered presentations—including the International Committee of the Red Cross, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, and the NGO Geneva Call.

I begin by emphasizing that Colombia reaffirms its commitment to Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, which requires the protection of the environment in armed conflict. This framework supports our efforts to safeguard water sources and related infrastructure, which are vital for life and human dignity.

I would like to offer the distinguished representatives and present delegates an overview of Colombia's approach in domestic legal practice. In recent years, we have developed an innovative framework for water and its protection, which has enabled the Colombian State to adopt new mandates and tools to ensure that nature and natural resources are treated as subjects of rights.

In 2016, the Constitutional Court of Colombia recognized the Atrato River as a subject of rights to protection, conservation, maintenance, and restoration. This landmark ruling allowed the country to go beyond viewing water merely as a resource to be protected due to its connection to human rights and international humanitarian law, toward recognizing it as a subject in its own right—represented and defended by the communities inhabiting the territory.

In 2023, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) recognized the Cauca River as a victim of the armed conflict. This marks the first case in which serious harm to nature committed during armed conflict has been recognized as a war crime.

Within this framework, the Afro-Colombian Community Councils of northern Cauca informed the JEP of the serious harm suffered by the Cauca River. This includes its use as a site for the disposal of bodies by paramilitary groups—effectively turning it into a mass grave—the use of

mercury in illegal mining, and the discharge of toxic chemicals resulting from the production of illicit substances by illegal armed groups.

In March 2024, a restorative act was carried out between the Jurisdiction and local communities, during which the river was formally notified of its recognition as a victim, and an initial step was taken toward healing and reconciliation between the people and the river.

In this spirit, I invite us all to work together to give practical effect to the shared framework of international humanitarian law and to promote more spaces like this one, where States can share their experiences and thus advance the effective implementation of its norms and principles.

46. Italy

23/05/2025 - Security Council Open Debate on “Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives”.

Mr. President,

Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union and wishes to add the following remarks in its national capacity.

Water is a source of life and in times of war it becomes one of the most vulnerable and strategic assets. The protection of water in armed conflict is a humanitarian imperative, a legal obligation, and a strategic necessity. And yet, in conflict zones around the world, water sources are being destroyed, diverted, or deliberately denied to civilian populations, with devastating consequences.

The targeting of water infrastructure or the obstruction of access to safe drinking water disproportionately affects the most vulnerable — children, women, the elderly, and displaced communities. It spreads disease, exacerbates food insecurity, and prolongs humanitarian crises.

The destruction of the Kakhovka Dam in June 2023 is a stark and devastating example. It triggered massive flooding, forced tens of thousands to flee, contaminated water supplies, and disrupted agriculture across southern Ukraine. The long-term impact on livelihoods, ecosystems, and public health is only beginning to be understood. What is already clear is this: targeting or weaponizing water infrastructure is unacceptable.

Italy strongly condemns such actions and calls for full compliance with international humanitarian law. All parties to conflict must allow and facilitate rapid, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access to restore water services.

We support humanitarian partners working to restore water access in crisis contexts, including through its cooperation with UNICEF, ICRC and other UN agencies.

The impacts of climate change — prolonged droughts, desertification, and reduced water availability— are aggravating tensions in already fragile settings. We underscore the need for climate-sensitive peacebuilding strategies and for greater international coordination to protect water resources in conflict-affected and climate-vulnerable regions.

As a committed donor in water and sanitation programs, Italy continues to champion integrated approaches to civilian protection, where access to water, food, and health services are seen as interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

Mr. President,

protecting water in armed conflict is not only about safeguarding infrastructure — it is about preserving human dignity, preventing displacement, and upholding the principles of humanity in the darkest of circumstances.

Italy urges the Security Council to remain united and vigilant in defending the right to water as a fundamental element of civilian protection and conflict resolution.

I thank you.

47. Morocco

Arria-formula Meeting on “Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under Attack: Protecting Water in Armed Conflict - Protecting Civilian Lives”.

Excellences

Distinguished Colleagues,

My delegation welcomes the inclusion of the protection of water resources in armed conflicts on the agenda of this week dedicated to the protection of civilians. This initiative is a significant step in raising awareness about a reality that risks becoming normalized.

Discussions like this, including the Arria-formula ministerial meeting of 22 March 2023, help maintain focus on this issue and encourage the development of constructive approaches to preventing damage to water infrastructure in times of war.

Since the establishment of the modern multilateral order, the international community has gradually recognized the vital nature of water and the need to shield it from the devastations of war. **This recognition has given rise to an increasingly robust normative framework.**

In this regard, International humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, sets out fundamental principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution to protect vital infrastructure. Security Council Resolutions 2417 (2018) and 2573 (2021) reinforce that water must never be a target during armed conflict. Additionally, the General Assembly’s recognition of the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation (resolution 64/292) emphasizes the obligation of Member States to ensure civilians’ access to water, even in emergencies.

Tragically, we continue to witness a significant gap between normative progress and practical application on the ground. This gap remains a cause for serious concern.

The situation in the Gaza Strip stands as a painful illustration. By the end of 2024, nearly 70 per cent of all structures had been damaged or destroyed, and over 90 per cent of the population - approximately 1.9 million people - had become

internally displaced. This dire humanitarian crisis places countless lives in immediate danger, with access to water, sanitation, and humanitarian assistance critically undermined.

Against this backdrop, my delegation wishes to propose the following recommendations:

- **First, strengthen respect for international humanitarian law, which remains the cornerstone for ensuring civilian protection in times of war.** The principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution must be fully integrated into the rules of engagement of Member States to armed conflicts.
- **Second, adopt a dual and comprehensive approach that addresses both the short-term urgency of humanitarian access and the long-term imperative of recovery and reconstruction.** Ensuring the continuity of essential services — especially access to water — during conflict, while planning for post-conflict reconstruction, is essential to reduce fatalities.
- **Third, enhance Security Council monitoring and early warning mechanisms on this issue.** It is crucial that the question of water be consistently integrated into the Council's agenda, drawing notably from the Secretary-General's reports, including the **annual report on the protection of civilians**, which provides valuable evidence on attacks against water infrastructure and their humanitarian consequences.

Excellences

Distinguished delegates,

Water is a lifeline, not only a resource. It is therefore imperative that water once again become a factor of cooperation rather than a "weapon of war". We strongly believe that respecting the rule law, leveraging cooperation and calling for accountability are the tools to spare water from the consequences of war.

48. International Union for Conservation of Nature

United Nations Security Council Arrria Formula Meeting

Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under Attack

Protecting Water in Armed Conflict – Protecting Civilian Lives

Date: Friday, 23 May 2025, 3.00 – 6.00 pm

Place: CR-1, UN Headquarters

Statement by the Permanent Observer of IUCN to the UN, Dr Sofie Jaffe

Thank you chair,

(Worldwide there are 310 transboundary river basins draining 45% of the Earth's surface and crossing the territories of 150 countries. Approximately, two thirds of these basins do not have any cooperative management framework. The lack of agreements and institutions on sharing transboundary water resources poses a significant threat to peace and security in particular in regions severely affected by climate change. Escalating pressures on freshwater ecosystems have the potential to exacerbate tensions on the access and use of water resources within and between countries.)

IUCN would like to thank the organizer's of today's important meeting and I am also glad to announce we are about to join the Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflict.

As we have heard today from many speakers water, a natural resource, is increasingly being used as a weapon of war. This is why sustainable water management cannot wait until the conflict is over – simply putting in place stop gap measures to provide water on a short term basis might actually lead to escalating conflict when water resources are used in an unequal and unsustainable manner. Water security considerations need to be integrated into broader humanitarian and development policies. Environmental impact assessments should be done as soon as possible, even before the cessation of active hostilities to assess damage to water resources and identify long-term solutions.

In protracted crisis, the main challenge is often that there is a total lack of long term investment in water and sanitation systems that has at times persisted for decades. Instead of simply enhancing short term water supply we need to promote sustainable water management practices to ensure long-term resilience. This includes the development of integrated water resource management plans, community-based water management initiatives, freshwater ecosystem restoration, actions to improve and maintain the integrity of water quality for society, and the use of technology for efficient water usage and monitoring.

To do this e need to build the capacity of the UN system, including peacekeeping operations and humanitarian actors on water resource management and integrate the humanitarian coordination system on water with longer term development planning systems, working closely with national authorities. Failing to restore and protect water resources erode the conditions needed to build a lasting peace and we look forward to future discussions on how the international community can take meaningful action on this issue.

Thank you.

49. Right of Reply by Pakistan

Final Delivered

RoR delivered by Pakistan at the Arria Formula Meeting on Protecting Water in Armed Conflict

23 May 2025

Venue: Security Council Chamber
1500-1800 hrs

Mr. Chair,

I am constrained to take the floor to respond to the baseless and spurious allegations levelled by India. Regrettably, India has chosen to use today's meeting to peddle its self-serving and perfidious narrative. We categorically reject India's accusations and unsubstantiated claims. It is in fact, India that is using its state sponsored proxies to foment terrorism in Pakistan.

Mr. Chair,

The litany of vitriolic remarks from the Indian leadership, after the April 22nd incident, only reflects the incessant desire of revenge long harboured by the Indian leadership towards my country and the 250 million people of Pakistan which led to the illegal and unilateral decision by India to hold the IWT in abeyance. Indian delegation's statement regarding the IWT was nothing but obfuscation of facts and deliberate misinterpretation of the treaty.

Mr. Chair,

As stated earlier, we firmly and unequivocally reject all attempts at weaponizing water and to use it for narrow political gains. No number of baseless arguments can justify India's decision to hold the IWT in abeyance which is a direct violation of the IWT, international law and the customary international law principles of equitable use and no harm principle.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.