

ASRSG Remarks (5 minutes)

Event: Global Workshop on Droughts in Transboundary Basins

Host: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

Time: 10:00 – 11:00 AM, Monday 26 February 2024

Location: Palais des Nations, Geneva

Dear Excellencies and colleagues,

It is a pleasure to be with you and to welcome you to this workshop.

Before I begin my remarks, I would like to thank the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, and my colleagues at WMO and UNCCD, for putting this workshop together.

I would also like to thank and commend the Netherlands and Switzerland for their continued leadership on the water agenda. UNDRR has been privileged to work more closely with the Netherlands through the 'Water at the Heart of Climate Action' project that we launched last year, and we are grateful to Switzerland for its hosting of our next Global Platform in Geneva next year.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We live on a small planet and risks are increasingly expanding as the UN Secretary General's Global Risk Report will highlight this year. And of all the hazards, none are as complex as droughts. The risks that drive them and the tools to manage them cross multiple fields and sectors. And this complexity is magnified when we are looking across borders.

It is because of this complexity that we dedicated our 2021 Special Global Assessment Report to droughts, which have deep, widespread, and often underestimated impacts on societies, ecosystems, and economies. Droughts are often followed by floods and vice versa, a cruel paradox that

is intensified during El Nino cycles, and is being intensified by climate change. As a result, each year, millions of people are affected and driven to hunger and poverty.

But we do have tools to understand these risks and act on them before lives are lost, even in a changing climate.

Evidence from every continent shows that reducing the vulnerability and exposure of people, ecosystems and assets can simultaneously build resilience to multiple hazards, including floods and drought.

And cooperation on shared waters can help to improve transboundary risk management and preparedness. This includes cooperation through the development of shared information systems or data sharing across sectors.

To bring these solutions to scale, we need to work together. That is why UNDRR is proud to co-lead the Early Warnings for All initiative with WMO, and why we joined the UNCCD-led International Drought Resilience Alliance at COP27.

It is also why we have worked with UNECE on the development of a Words into Action implementation guide for “addressing water-related disasters and transboundary cooperation.” This workshop is an extension of that collaboration and a recognition that effective disaster risk reduction requires a multi-hazard approach and transboundary cooperation.

These elements are embedded in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the global blueprint for reducing disaster risks and losses. If we are to achieve the goals of Sendai and the Paris Agreement by 2030, we must accelerate efforts to support the most climate-vulnerable countries.

This requires strengthening not only national systems, but also transboundary approaches. Transboundary cooperation is essential in the management of large-scale mega-droughts and floods, which we will hear more about today.

The outcomes of today's workshop can help us further refine our collaborations and provide insights that will inform the upcoming High-level Meeting on National Drought Policy, which will be held in Barcelona end of September 2024.

In closing, I would like to thank again the organizers and sponsors of this workshop, and I extend an invitation to the water community to liaise with UNDRR and to break the silos that separate them from their colleagues in the DRR and climate change communities.

Working together, we can promote transboundary action that can reduce disaster risk and build resilience to drought, and by doing so we can accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development goals and create a more resilient future for all.

Thank you.