



G20 AGRICULTURE AND WATER MINISTERS MEETING

12 September 2020

Statement by Minister Lindiwe Sisulu

H.E. Minister of Environment, Water and Agriculture of Saudi Arabia – our host;

Honourable Ministers and Heads of Delegations;

UN-Water and Related Agencies;

Distinguished Heads of International Organizations;

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Excellencies, allow me to convey South Africa's sincere appreciation and congratulations to the Royal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its People, for the leadership and successful coordination of the first **"Dialogue on Water"**, under the umbrella of G20. This, Mr Chair, is the culmination of the outcomes achieved through the contribution of all Member States; the Bilateral / Multilateral organizations that participated in this noble cause. It is imperative for me to recognize the progressive and constructive spirit of engagements, in the past ten (10) months under the difficult circumstances presented by the Covid19 pandemic.

South Africa's view is that the G20 Dialogue on Water is long overdue, and that it came at a critical time of the unprecedented pandemic that puts water at the center of all interventions. This current situation reawakened in us the notion, **"Water is Life and is Central to all human development"**.

South Africa as the Chair of the African Union - welcomes all efforts that will contribute to the socio economic upliftment of mankind, peace and stability that continues to be challenged by water related disasters and diseases.

Your Excellency, what is even more striking in the draft Declaration, is the recognition of the work and efforts done at other platforms like the High Level Panel on Water, (HLPW) and the International Decade for Action, Water for Sustainable Development 2018 to 2028, including the upcoming UN Water conferences mentioned in the Declaration. Chairperson and fellow Excellencies, collaboration at all international levels seems to be the only promising outcome to resolve the challenges that the globe is facing today, in particular water, exacerbated by Climate Change.

Many will agree with me that Climate Change manifests itself in variables in water, mostly resulting in too much (such as floods) or too little (such as drought). These two phenomenon can be disastrous to countries, and impact mostly on the most vulnerable of our citizens, the poor, women and children – **emphasising the role of women and the youth.**

It is our sincerest submission that “Water is Everybody’s Business” and that we cannot continue to ignore or postpone engagements that should elevate the water dialogues and encourage us to raise the bar in our submissions, decisions and implementation before it is too late.

It is therefore heartening in line with the final Declaration that we all consider water a vital concern at all levels as agreed, that water challenges affect human life, people's livelihoods, global supply chains, food security, nutrition and ecosystems. It is further crucial and urgent that we work towards attracting and increasing water-related investment; innovation and water security, if we are to achieve the objectives of this forum.

Water is that without which life cannot exist. I endorse the statement of the EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, on water and its vital importance in our sustainability as the human species.

I am greatly appreciative of the interventions by the representatives today. South Africa supports the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration and invite all Member States to do so in the interest of our people.

Excellency, South Africa remains encouraged by your unwavering commitment to bring to a resolve, and find a compromise language of the **communiqué** that can still be adopted on consensus. We must find it in our hearts as leaders to ensure that the decisions of this platform will benefit the future generations and that we continue to work towards the **“future we want”**.

Lastly Excellency, we look forward to the continued leadership of the incoming G20 Presidency, Italy and pledge South Africa's support for the benefit of all mankind in 2021.

I Thank You.