

DRAFT ESCAP Statement at the [SIDE EVENT](#)

**Opening a Decade on Water for Sustainable Development (2018-2028):
Commemoration of the World Water Day 2018 and the Regional Launch of the
World Water Development Report 2018 on Nature-based Solutions for Water
and the *SDG6 Synthesis Report***

Excellencies,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are here today to commemorate the World Water Day 2018 and to jointly open a new Decade on Water for Sustainable Development 2018-2028. At this occasion, we are launching two major global publications on water and I am pleased to welcome you all here.

Water is essential for all of us in so many ways. It is vital for our lives, but water is also vital for creating jobs and supporting economic, social, and human development.

Asia and the Pacific has only 36 percent of the world's water resources, and its per capita water availability is the lowest in the world. Yet, more than 80 per cent of the wastewater generated in the region's developing countries is not treated, and wastewater remains an under tapped resource. Due to the population growth, urbanization, and increased industrialization, water competition among sectors has become more severe in the region. This has been threatening agricultural production, food security and affects water quality. These conditions, compounded by the impacts of climate change, will hamper the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 if left unaddressed.

This year, World Water Day's theme is *Nature for Water*, is therefore timely. The World Water Development Report, launched on World Water Day on 22 March and of which copies are available today, highlights good examples of how nature-based solutions, for example, the sponge city concept in China, mangroves for the future in countries of South East Asia (which are dealing with excess of water in cities and flood) and many other can support effective, integrated and sustainable water management to overcome the water-related challenges of the 21st century.

Today, we are also celebrating the opening of the “***International Decade (2018–2028) for Action – Water for Sustainable Development***”, adopted unanimously at the United Nations General Assembly in December 2016. The new Decade stems from the deep concern from UN Member States over the lack of access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene and over water related disasters, scarcity and pollution being exacerbated by urbanization, population growth, desertification, drought and climate change.

It aims at putting a greater focus on water during the next ten years, emphasizing that water is critical for sustainable development and the eradication of poverty and hunger. The new Decade focuses on the sustainable development and integrated management of water resources for the achievement of social, economic and environmental objectives, as well as on furthering cooperation and partnership at all levels in order to help to achieve internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Decade will guide the work of ESCAP on integrated policy planning for water, including on the food-water-energy nexus, on urban water management, and on regional coordination on water, including through its role in the UN-Water efforts but also other water-related platforms.

To achieve the 2030 vision for Sustainable Development and SDGs, we need to monitor progress around all water-related SDGs, in particular SDG 6 on water and sanitation. The new regional SDG6 profile, prepared for the APFSD, reveals data gaps for many if not most of the targets. In this regard, in order to adequately inform policy making on water, strengthened monitoring system and standards are essential. In this sense, the soon to be released ***SDG6 Synthesis Report 2018 on Water and Sanitation*** produced under the auspices of UN-Water and the first ever joint UN initiative on monitoring of an SDG will prove extremely useful. Advance briefings are available in several languages today.

Finally, let me thank UNESCO for their collaboration, and invite them to deliver remarks.

I thank you for your attention.