

## **Opening Remarks**

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**Forum on Water-Food-Energy Nexus Framework for Just Transition  
and Building Climate Resilience**

**6 December 2023, Malaysia Pavilion, Dubai Expo City**

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**Distinguished guests, moderators, speakers, exhibitors, ladies, and gentlemen.**

1. It gives me great pleasure to join all of you today in this Forum. I am delighted to see that water is gradually being granted the justifiable spotlight in the climate change agenda, building from the Water Pavilion held in Glasgow during COP26, followed by the United Nations 2023 Water Forum held in March and eventually here at COP28. Let's hope that water will be featured more prominently in the COP main discussion, rather than at the peripheral side events. This is because water plays an important indicator of the health of the climate and ecosystem. UN Water Conference 2023 recognises that the climate crisis is also a water crisis.
2. We can't deny the importance of water in the climate realm. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report states that climate change has reduced food security and affected water security, hindering efforts to meet SDGs. It is estimated that roughly half of the world's population

currently experiences severe water scarcity due to a combination of climatic and non-climatic factors.

3. The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) in its first report on the State of Global Water Resources published in November 2022, reported that “large areas of the globe recorded drier than normal conditions in 2021” and people with inadequate access to water for a month in a year is estimated to reach 5 billion by 2050.
4. Global initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the United Nations 2023 Water Conference recognize the critical role of water in supporting human and sustainable development. Goal 6: Water and Sanitation of the SDG and the designation of 2018 – 2028 as the UN Decade for Action on Water and Sanitation are testaments of the urgency for collective global actions to address water issues through strategic measures and interventions. The global initiative for water security needs to acknowledge the connection between resilience and investment, particularly addressing the existing development and infrastructure gaps in the global south.
5. I would like to highlight that, in our effort to advance sustainable development, Malaysia has introduced the Water Sector Transformation Agenda 2040 (WST 2040). Among others, WST 2040 focuses on strengthening water governance, financial sustainability as well as promoting the implementation of a circular economy throughout the value chain of water management. We envision the water sector will be an economic enabler and a dynamic growth engine to ensure water security for all.

Ladies and gentlemen,

6. The world currently faces a set of global challenges that put water security, food security, and the transition to low carbon at the forefront. As water becomes scarce and more stretched, its ability to support progress in several SDGs goals, particularly on poverty, hunger, sustainability, and the environment, is becoming more challenging. Thus, pressure on the water-food-energy equilibrium will also threaten the achievement of most of the SDGs as they are intricately linked, especially with SDG 1: No poverty; SDG 2: Zero hunger, and SDG 3: Good health and well-being.
7. As for today's forum, we know that agriculture is the largest consumer of the world's freshwater resources, and water is used to produce most forms of energy. Demand for water, food, and energy is increasing corresponding to global growth. We could see that pressure on the nexus is being driven by rising global population, rapid urbanization, and economic growth as well as changes in diets and food consumption patterns.
8. The water-food-energy nexus (WFEN) is a concept that puts strong emphasis on managing cross-sectoral and multi-level interactions. Expanding the WFEN to support the just transition and climate resilience would address the interconnected challenges of water, food, and energy in the context of climate change. Such a framework would emphasize equity, sustainability, and resilience in transitioning to a more sustainable and climate-resilient future.

9. This is why the idea of looking at water and climate change in the nexus manner will enable us to have a bigger picture in managing these resources. In the future, it is foreseeable that integrated solutions are required, and we no longer can work in silos to address challenges.
  
10. This forum is aimed to increase awareness about WFEN and the climate agenda, as well as to:
  - a. provide a platform for meaningful dialogue, knowledge exchange, and collaboration among stakeholders, including governments, international organizations, NGOs, scientists, and the private sector.
  
  - b. showcase innovative solutions, best practices, and policy recommendations aimed at addressing the challenges of climate change on food, agriculture, and water; and
  
  - c. enhance adaptation and mitigation measures in the changing climate by exploring strategies in agriculture and water management practices while also mitigating greenhouse gas emissions from these sectors.
  
11. Besides the plenary session and panel discussions, we also bring together our water industry players from Malaysia to showcase their best practices and innovations in WFEN. I am happy to share that with us today:

- a. Indah Water Konsortium, the national sewerage company will demonstrate its capabilities in providing a sustainable and efficient sewerage system;
- b. the Malaysia National Water Services Commission (SPAN) will be sharing how the Malaysian water sector transition to net zero; and lastly
- c. the National Water Research Institute of Malaysia (NAHRIM) on Innovations in Decentralized and Conjunctive System for Building Climate Resilience for Water Supply Distribution in Urban Areas.

Distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen,

12. To sum up, a nexus approach is crucial to guarantee that all aspects of water, food, and energy are not only given adequate attention but also support decision-making in the formulation of policies and the execution of linked projects and programs.
13. I believe that awareness and commitment to the water-food-energy nexus need to be strengthened. Thus, we can use this platform to enable practitioners and interested parties from both the public and private sectors to meet and share insights on emerging issues and challenges, trends, as well as potential business prospects and partnerships.
14. I am hopeful that together, we can overcome the formidable challenges of climate change towards a sustainable, prosperous,

and resilient future. A just transition for adaptation is crucial to ensuring both human well-being and the country's security, as resource scarcity and other stresses caused by climate change or maladaptation can exacerbate conflict.

15. It is recommended that policymakers strengthen multilateral cooperation for globally just resilience; develop agreed principles to move from ambition to action; craft incentives to invest in just transition for adaptation; and advance research to support decision-making.
16. In summary, mal-adaptation in the water, food, and energy nexus can exacerbate conflict by creating competition for resources, reinforcing inequalities, and undermining the overall resilience of communities. Therefore, it is crucial to consider the interconnected nature of these sectors and carefully plan adaptation measures to minimize potential conflicts and promote sustainable, equitable outcomes.
17. Before I end, I would like to congratulate the organising committee for the excellent arrangement of today's forum. May we have a fruitful session.

Thank you.

6 December 2023