

# SDG 6 interventions

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## Session 1: Intervention by Natasha Dokovska on Water

Ladies and Gentlemen, colleagues and friends, my name is Natasha Dokovska, I'm coming from Republic of Macedonia as a human rights activist, but I am here today to speak as a representative of civil society, as part of the UNECE Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism on behalf of Women's Major Group.

All of us know that access to clean, safe and secure water resources is an essential prerequisite for communities to prosper. But did you know that every 1 in 3 use water that is unsafe, that there is no public toilets in many cities, or that 90% of female students in rural areas in Macedonia do not attend school 4-5 day every month because of lack of menstrual hygiene management (MHM), that almost 80% of children in urban area of Western Balkan avoid using school toilets due to inadequate hygiene and infrastructure, or that 844 million people still do not have access to basic water supply services, 263 million people spend more than 30 minutes walking to bring water from an improved source (a limited drinking water service) or that 159 million people still use drinking water directly from surface water, 58% of them living in Sub-Saharan Africa.

As a reminder, we are now in the legacy of the unfulfilled Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which did not achieve its goals on sanitation: 62 million people still do not have basic sanitation and the progress towards the water goal has slowed down, we still have 62 million people who do not have a plumbing connection at home.

SDG 6 dedicated to water and sanitation is very ambitious and for many countries proves to be a really big challenge. Their achievement by 2030 will require coordinated efforts by all stakeholders, especially including the involvement of CSOs.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we haven't got an alternative planet, we haven't any other choice, and we must act together for our children, for our healthy future. I'm calling on all of you to apply human rights based approaches to access safe drinking water and sanitation. Universal, safe and reliable access to drinking water is a key objective of SDG 6 and of the human right to drinking water.

We must not forget that from a lack of love we can live, but without water we cannot survive!!!

## Session 2: Intervention by Abdulaziz Ramadan on Water

Thank you very much for giving me the space, my name is Abdulaziz Ramadan from DOZ e. V. based in Germany, speaking on behalf of the Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism. I will be talking about the gaps found in conflict regions in relation to global water security and management.

As a Diaspora and Migrant CSO Representative, my work is directly linked to IDPs and refugees, those who are on an ongoing move fleeing from either natural disaster caused by water lack and/or those fleeing from man-made conflicts.

Ladies and Gentlemen, water can ignite conflicts and wars and at the same time it can also be a very powerful tool to build peace, partnerships, and prosperity among nations and for local communities and reduce gender inequality.

My NGO works with partners in Germany, Turkey and in the Middle Eastern region. Examples of forced migration linked to lack of water can be found in Iraq, Syria, and Turkey:

Water mismanagement was and still is a reason for forced migration in many local communities for example when hydro-dams are built without consent of the local communities, or when dams in conflict areas get bombed. For example in Afrin city in Syria the shelling near the Afrin dam caused damage to its infrastructure and might put longer term peace and sustainable development at risk.

Mostly, the local communities which suffer from water infrastructure projects have no means to deliver their voice to Member States or UN agencies. In Iraq for example, we can see whole communities on the banks of the Tigris river who lack water, and this is linked to transboundary issue of water sharing and management of transboundary rivers. The UNECE Water Convention has good practices of transboundary river cooperation and conflict resolution, for example from the Central Asian region.

I also want to address that such 'water refugees' are in need of clean water access at refugee camps, especially for hygiene and sanitation. In for example Azatari camp in Jordan, which is the biggest, hundred thousands of Syrian refugees only receive some drinking water, but there is no infrastructure for hygiene and sanitation, there are no containers or showers. This puts them at threat of potential diseases that could also spread among local communities. Women and girls in refugee camps, are disproportionately affected by lack of water as they are left without menstrual hygiene management facilities and are left with unsanitary solutions as a result. We also know that many women are left behind in refugee camps while men continue the migration route.

We as CSOs often have quicker access to the needs on water security in conflict areas due to our local contacts. We would need to share this data with UN agencies and decision makers. And ensure that the data is gender disaggregated. We need CSOs and local communities to have co-decision making powers on such important issues as water sharing, dam building, etc.

Finally, let me stress the point that in addition to the linkage between SDG 6 and other SDGs mentioned in draft UNECE concept note, we found out that SDG 6 has very strong linkages on all levels with SDG 16 especially in terms anti-corruption and justice in distributing water among local communities and among states on regional level and transboundary issues which leads to a sustainable peace if we act all together on time. It is also highly linked with SDG 5 and SDG 10 in terms of structural barriers which dominates whom has access to water and who are disproportionately affected by water scarcity and forced migration.

Through our advocacy work on SDG 6 at local and regional level , we want to ensure that water can be an effective global tool for peace.