

President urges int'l community to join hands to meet water challenges

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DUSHANBE: President Mamnoon Hussain Wednesday highlighting the importance of water in human life called upon the international community to join hands in striving to end poverty, provision of quality healthcare and sustainable development across the globe.

"I invite all nations of the world to put all racial, ethnic, geographic and political reservations aside and to work hand in hand for the collective good of humanity," he said while addressing the inaugural session of high level international conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development" 2018-28 being held in Tajikistan capital from June 20 to 21.

Besides President Emomali Rahmon of Tajikistan, the opening session was also addressed by President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow of Turkmenistan, Chief Executive of Afghanistan Abdullah Abdullah and other heads of delegations.

President Mamnoon said from food and energy security to human and environmental health, water was certainly at the core of sustainable development, nationally, regionally and globally.

"Water resources and the range of services they provide, underpin poverty eradication, economic growth and environmental sustainability," he said, adding effective and efficient management of water resources, therefore, was key for inclusive and sustainable growth.

"It is critical for agriculture, energy and industrial sectors, which are the drivers of growth and economy," the President added.

He said water was central to improvements in social well-being and inclusive growth, affecting billions of people. "It is this recognition that led to the adoption of International Decade for Action on Water by the General Assembly which promotes greater focus on the sustainable development and integrated management of water resources," he added.

The President said that the World Economic Forum identified water crises as the third most impactful global risk in the 2016 and 2017 Global Risks Reports.

The recent hurricanes in the Caribbean Islands, the United States, Arabian Sea and

South Asia, demonstrate how impactful these disasters could be on the lives and livelihoods of people, across the world, he added.

The President said it was concerning that over 21% of the people around the world were still lacking access to clean drinking water and over one-third of the world's population still did not have access to adequate sanitation facilities.

“Water related challenges are spread across the globe and do not recognize geographic borders. Increased risks of flooding and droughts due to climatic and other impacts, extreme weather events and water-related disasters have aggravated the situation – posing existential questions,” he added.

The President said comprehensive, concrete efforts based on clear plans need to be undertaken to address the situation. This includes provision of corresponding financial resources and international cooperation, failing which the situation would become even more critical, undermine the sustainable development gains achieved overtime; retard economic growth and push people back to poverty, he added.

President Mamnoon said like Tajikistan and various other parts of the world Pakistan was faced with water stresses. “Melting glaciers and climatic and environmental changes have further complicated the situation. We also face peculiar challenges being a lower riparian state,” he added.

The President, however, added that Pakistan was determined to address this challenge and had made steady progress in improving access to safe drinking water during the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) period.

“Our path to success is embedded in Pakistan's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and water related issues, which is proudly demonstrated by the fact that Pakistan was the first country in the world whose national legislature passed a unanimous resolution adopting the SDGs agenda as its own national development framework,” he added.

The President said Pakistan's Vision 2025, which was our long-term development blueprint, therefore included the objective of inclusive growth through water security, value addition, research, modernization and best practices of water management.

He said “sustainable management of water resources was also critical for us given its bearing on our energy security, economic growth, agriculture productivity and disaster risk reduction and its management abilities.”

In efforts to address these challenges, Pakistan approved its first National Water Policy in April 2018, he said, adding the policy aimed at contributing towards sustainable development and progress through focus on water related goals and targets.

The President said that Pakistan had also committed major new investments through

public and private sector collaboration. “Our immediate focus is on water sustainability in cities and human settlements,” he added.

The President said Pakistan was also making efforts towards fostering a culture of conservation, productivity and efficiency and enhanced storage. In addition, leveraging technology, enhancing water treatment, capacity building including improving knowledge and education are part of an integrated approach to water resource management, he added.

“We are also in the process of evolving plans and strategies to strengthen institutional capacities and frameworks to address the multifaceted challenges, including through enhanced regional and international cooperation,” he added.

The President said Pakistan co-sponsored the resolution on International Decade for Action on Water in line with our national priorities and to contribute toward the international efforts on water issues including the achievement of SDG-6 and its associated targets.

He said the challenge now was to ensure its meaningful implementation and ensuring the availability of corresponding resources. “We therefore underscore the imperative of accelerating the pace and scale of financing for sustainable development, particularly in the area of water,” he added.

The President said this would also require institutional reorientation and integration of water resource management at all levels to address the balance between water supply and demand.

“We also recognize the need for an integrated, coordinated and balanced approach with strengthened global partnership to ensure effective implementation of the renewed water related goals, targets and commitments,” he added.—APP