

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

**OPENING REMARKS TO THE WATER FORECAST SESSION
WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM**

7:45 AM Thursday, 29 January 2009

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a pleasure to see you and pick up the conversation we began here in Davos one year ago.

Lately, I have taken to saying that the past year was one of multiple crises. We have the economic crisis, the food crisis, the energy crisis. To these we can add climate change.

All of these crises are still very much with us. They illustrate our world's vulnerability to the shock of diminishing resources.

And as you all know only too well, water is very much near the top of the list.

Your work is therefore essential and I commend you for it.

Over the past year you have come together—academics, business people, government leaders—and put this issue on the global agenda.

People are beginning to realize how connected it is to so many challenges — development, peace and security, economic growth.

The global public has become increasingly aware how climate change and water scarcity threaten the populations of heavily settled parts of the world.

They understand how it breeds conflict.

They know how man-made climate change and growing consumption of water are putting unprecedented stress on this dwindling resource.

The good news is that we also know how technology can play an important role in mitigating water stress.

Many technologies - new and ancient - can improve water, for example supplying more water from sea-water, harvesting rainfall or deploying new and simple methods of irrigation that save water.

Farmers can diversify crops and plant drought-resistant seeds.

All this we know. The problem is that we have no coordinated global management authority in the UN system or the world at large.

There is no overall responsibility, accountability or vision for how to address the related problems of climate change, agricultural stress and water technology.

This is where you come in.

Some of you are members of the Global Compact's CEO Water Mandate, which I introduced here last year and has already made substantial progress. I hope many more of you will join.

Your work to create a water security Global Agenda Council is essential. So is your effort to develop the economic and geopolitical forecast you are discussing today.

For the first time, you are bringing together all the different perspectives and expertise required to define the full dimension of the problem and propose solutions.

In doing so, you are creating the framework of a future partnership — bringing together businesses, governments, universities and NGOs. The problem is broad and systemic. Our work to deal with it must be so as well.

I look forward to seeing your work completed. I will help in any way I can.

Finally, my advice?

Why not make water security one of THE key topics for climate change adaptation in 2009.

Thank you.