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Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU to commemorate the World Water Day, 22 March 2018

Access to safe drinking water is a fundamental right but is still a challenge in many parts of the world. On World Water Day, the European Union reaffirms that all States are expected to fulfil their obligations regarding access to safe drinking water, which must be available, accessible, safe, acceptable, and affordable for all without discrimination, and recalls that the right to safe drinking water is a human right essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights.

The EU also stresses the importance of the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, and calls on all states to collaborate with the current rapporteur.

Across the world, human rights defenders protecting and promoting the rights to safe drinking water and sanitation are often subjected to prosecution, threats and violence. Today, the European Union pay special tribute to those brave individuals who stand up every day for fundamental rights and the protection of the environment.

Climate change is taking a toll on the drier areas of the planet. Already, one of Africa's largest lakes, Lake Chad, has decreased by 90 per cent as a result of climate change, over use of water and extended drought. The reduction has destroyed livelihoods and led to the loss of invaluable biodiversity. The UN Security Council has also recognized the adverse effects of climate change and ecological changes among other factors on the stability of the Lake Chad region.

As the 2017 Report of the Global High Level Panel on Water and Peace has acknowledged, water is not only a driver of social and economic development but also of peace and security. The availability of water is one of the key factors that can lead to conflicts and mass displacements. As cooperation increases resilience and stability by preventing conflicts and consolidating peace, the EU will continue to promote global accession to the UNECE Water Convention, and share with its partners its long experience in the sustainable management of shared water resources. The EU also reiterates its commitment to the Paris Agreement and the Marrakech Action Proclamation which reaffirmed the world's determination to fight climate change and to help address the impacts of climate change on the environment, including on water.

The EU will continue to support sustainable water management through its cooperation with key partner countries in policy dialogues, development cooperation, multi-stakeholder partnerships and through a strategic approach to regional development. Promoting and protecting access to fundamental resources means promoting and protecting the rights and the security not only of the present, but also of the future generations.

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