

UN SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE ON WATER, PEACE AND SECURITY

Strategic Foresight Group was invited to brief at the historic United Nations Security Council meeting 7818 on 22 November 2016 in New York, when for the first time the UNSC convened an open debate on “water, peace and security”. Strategic Foresight Group has worked closely with the Government of Senegal, Member of the UNSC for 2016-2017 and Chair for November 2016, to develop international understanding on the linkages between water and peace.

SFG President Sundeep Waslekar was one of the four briefers along with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, Chairman Danilo Turk of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace and ICRC Vice President Christine Beerli.

Mr Mankeur Ndiaye, Foreign Minister of Senegal, chaired the open debate which lasted for the entire day with the participation of 69 Member States of the United Nations.

Sundeep Waslekar urged the Security Council to proclaim water as a “strategic asset of humanity”. He proposed a follow-up UNSC Resolution to the Resolution 2286 to protect water installations and personnel. He also urged the UNSC to negotiate occasional ceasefires in conflict zones to restore and repair water systems. He advocated Blue Fund to incentivise cooperation in building large water-related infrastructure.

Some of the Member States of the UN Security Council welcomed his suggestion of the occasional ceasefires to repair and restore water systems in conflict zones.

Most Member States welcomed the formation of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon said that the management of water resources should be used to foster cooperation. He urged the Security Council: “Let us commit to investing in water security as a means to ensure long-term international peace and security.” Access to water could exacerbate communal tensions, as in Afghanistan and Peru, and armed conflict resulted in the destruction of water systems, as in Syria and Gaza, he said, pointing out that Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) targeted control of dams as a strategic tactic. On the other hand, shared water resources often generated cooperation, with more than 200 water treaties having been negotiated successfully in the latter twentieth century, Mr Ban pointed out.

Danilo Turk and Christine Beerli offered various suggestions to protect water resources and installations in conflict zones.

Presiding over the meeting was Mr Mankeur Ndiaye, Senegal’s Minister for Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad, whose country holds the Security Council Presidency for November. Speaking in his national capacity, he noted that while competition for water seemed inevitable, coordinated and peaceful management of the resource was possible. Water supplies were often targets of war, he said, while warning that preventive diplomacy, while critical, must be done carefully lest the attention paid to the issue actually heightened tensions.

Read more:

[Briefing by Sundeep Waslekar \(text\)](#)

[Briefing by Sundeep Waslekar \(UN TV video extract\)](#)

[Report on the proceedings including all briefings and interventions \(Reliefweb\)](#)

[Concept note for the Security Council Open Debate on Water, Peace and Security](#)

[Open Debate on Water, Peace and Security - Official record](#)