

Bangladesh Calls for Equitable Water Sharing and Transboundary Cooperation at UN Water Convention – Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan Emphasizes “Rivers Are Our Lifeblood”

Adviser to Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and Ministry of Water Resources Syeda Rizwana Hasan has called for equitable and cooperative management of shared water resources while addressing the 1st Session of the 6th Joint Meeting of the Working Groups on Integrated Water Resources Management and Monitoring & Assessment of the UN Water Convention, held on Monday in Geneva, Switzerland.

Representing Bangladesh as its newly acceded member to the UN Water Convention, Rizwana Hasan highlighted the country's deep-rooted connection with rivers and underscored that “for Bangladesh, rivers are not just rivers – they are our lifeblood.”

Bangladesh, she noted, is the world's largest river delta—formed by the Ganges-Padma, Brahmaputra-Jamuna, and Surma-Meghna basins—with over 90 percent of its surface water originating from beyond its borders. As a lower riparian country, Bangladesh strongly advocates for the principles of equitable and reasonable utilization, participation, and no harm in managing transboundary rivers.

She informed the session that Bangladesh has made significant progress through bilateral treaties and the establishment of

the Joint Rivers Commission, but emphasized that achieving basinwide regional cooperation remains a key policy goal. The Adviser also referred to Bangladesh's landmark Supreme Court judgment recognizing all rivers as "living entities" with legal personhood, a global example of environmental jurisprudence.

Discussing domestic challenges, Rizwana Hasan pointed out that Bangladesh faces resource and institutional constraints in implementing its comprehensive river protection laws. She said the country is focusing on strengthening institutional capacity, improving data and monitoring systems, and combating pollution, salinity intrusion, and reduced river flows.

The Adviser also mentioned that Bangladesh is conducting nationwide groundwater assessments, identifying two water-stressed zones, and preparing rainwater harvesting schemes for salinity-affected coastal regions to ensure potable water supply.

She reiterated that transboundary cooperation is "indispensable" for Bangladesh's survival and expressed hope that joining the UN Water Convention will enable stronger partnerships for regional water security.

"Bangladesh's accession as the first South Asian country to the UN Water Convention will facilitate constructive engagement towards sustainable water futures for the South Asian region," she stated.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan reaffirmed Bangladesh's commitment to sustainable and inclusive water governance, climate resilience, and international cooperation, calling for collective action to uphold the principles of equity, sustainability, and justice in global water management.

Advisor to the Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges, Ministry of Railways, and Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan also present

in the occasion.

Bangladesh's accession to the UN convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes is being celebrated in Geneva in the 20th meeting of parties to the Convention. Bangladesh is the first South Asian country to accede this Convention. It hopes the Convention will help Bangladesh promote "water security" for its people and that its accession will encourage constructive engagement towards sustainable water futures for the South Asian Region.