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Strengthening of the United Nations system

Letter dated 5 July 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Singapore to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

It is my pleasure to write to you in Singapore's capacity as convenor of the Global Governance Group, a grouping of 30 small- and medium-sized countries. The Group was established in 2009 to promote greater engagement between the United Nations and the Group of 20, with the broader aim of improving global governance. It also seeks to strengthen inclusivity in the Group of 20 outcomes and facilitate greater coordination between the Group of 20 and non-Group of 20 members towards promoting a collective response to our common challenges.

Besides convening an annual ministerial meeting with the Group of 20 troika members on the margins of the high-level week of the General Assembly, the Global Governance Group prepares non-papers on issues salient to the international community as part of its contribution to the Group of 20 process. I am pleased to share with you this year's Global Governance Group non-paper (see annex), which was submitted to the Group of 20 presidency in preparation for the summit in Rio de Janeiro on 18 and 19 November 2024. We have focused on the pressing issue of access to drinking water amid the challenges posed by climate change, and the invaluable role that multilateral cooperation and strengthened partnerships play in addressing these challenges. As this topic is very much aligned with current United Nations priorities,

I kindly request that the present letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 122.

I look forward to our continued collaboration in New York, including by promoting stronger engagement between the Global Governance Group, the Group of 20 and the United Nations, to address the global challenges of our time.

(Signed) Burhan **Gafoor**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 5 July 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Singapore to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Sustaining access to drinking water amid climate change: coming together to address the water challenge

Non-paper by the Global Governance Group (3G)

Introduction

1. Water and sanitation interlink the three dimensions of sustainable development – social, economic and environmental. Water is essential to life and nurtures prosperity by meeting basic human needs. Equitable access to water and sanitation supports public health, addresses poverty, reduces inequality, improves economic progress, underpins energy and food security, and enables environmental integrity. However, more than two billion people still lack access to clean and safe drinking water. This is exacerbated by unprecedented and increasingly extreme weather events such as droughts and floods due to climate change.

2. **The water crisis is both global and local.** Countries across the world are interconnected through the global water cycle. Given this, international cooperation and coordination is critical to deliver on our global water goals, amidst the increasing intensity of climate change impacts. Local action is needed to follow-through on these global goals.

3. The Global Governance Group (3G) commends the G20's commitment to sustain access to drinking water amid climate change, through the work of the G20 Development Working Group with its focus on Reducing Inequality, Access to Water and Sanitation Services and Trilateral Cooperation. Current efforts and investments in these priority areas need to be scaled up to overcome resource constraints, leverage technologies and maintain water infrastructure.

Leveraging innovation and technology to overcome resource constraints

4. Given that water is integral to all sectors, the 3G commends the G20 for recognising the critical role of protecting, conserving, restoring, and financing water systems and water-related ecosystems to deliver on climate mitigation and adaptation, while ensuring social and environmental safeguards. The 3G emphasises, in particular, that **sustainable solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation should prioritise the protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems**. They should also take into account the role of water and water-related ecosystems in mitigation efforts.

5. **The 3G stresses the importance of leveraging technology** as an enabler to increase water efficiency, supplement water conservation efforts and improve the management of water resources. Technological solutions such as sensors to detect and pre-empt pipe leaks can reduce distribution losses, and thereby increase the availability of clean, drinking water. We should encourage the use of innovative digital systems to obtain up-to-date data and information on water use to more accurately map water demand, gaps in management, and challenges in access to water, to enable countries and regions to develop and implement context-appropriate solutions to these challenges. Focused investments in such technologies and capacity-building will be required at all levels.

Strengthening partnerships and targeted investments to develop, implement and sustain localised solutions

6. **The 3G calls on the G20 to facilitate and solidify partnerships between countries as well as between the public and private sectors.** All sources of investments, including public, private, and multilateral investments, must be mobilised to ensure sustained access to drinking water and support developing countries, particularly the most vulnerable. Scaling up finance and investments will be paramount to catalyse the water and sanitation sectors, including to accelerate just transitions, close the infrastructure financing gap, leverage technology, and develop a digital economy for the delivery of safe drinking water services.

7. Currently, only three percent of global climate finance is allocated to water. Private sector investments in water have also remained largely marginal over the past decade. The 3G reiterates the important role of the G20 to support global financial flows to encourage more public-private partnerships co-investing at scale in technology, skills and infrastructure to support sustainable development in the water value chain. To this end, we welcome the G20's continued commitment to finance drinking water projects through the work of the G20 Sustainable Finance Working Group.

8. Sharing knowledge, experience, and best practices, and supporting collaboration and innovation between countries and with the private sector to develop sustainable and localised solutions, will facilitate better resource pooling, gap analysis, and anticipation of future challenges. The 3G calls for the G20 Sustainable Finance Working Group's continued efforts to foster international technical cooperation to better address the scarcity and management of and access to drinking water in rural areas.

Valuing precious water

9. Pricing water right is critical for efficient use of water, and for equity and inclusion. **Water should be priced to reflect its economic value and scarcity.** The revenues generated from water tariffs can be re-invested to expand water systems, as well as maintain and sustain water infrastructure to improve access to and reliability of drinking water. Right pricing of water, with targeted subsidies for the vulnerable, is an equitable approach which can ensure allocative efficiency and sustainable financing of the water system.

Ensuring a robust global multilateral cooperation

10. **The 3G commends the efforts of UN-Water in coordinating a UN system-wide strategy for water and sanitation for global action towards achieving SDG 6 (Access to Clean Water and Sanitation for All).** Strong global multilateral cooperation and coordination can strengthen public-private partnerships, scale up financing, leverage innovative technologies and approaches for water preservation and reuse, and build capability and expertise. We welcome the convening of the UN 2026 Water Conference as an opportunity to leverage these efforts, building on the results of the UN 2023 Water Conference and its Water Action Agenda.

11. **The 3G welcomes and looks forward to the operationalisation of a structured trilateral cooperation initiative by the G20 Brazilian Presidency** to boost sustainable development, strengthen capabilities and disseminate good practices among G20 countries and interested developing countries. We note the initiative's potential to bring together cooperation partners: a beneficiary who seeks support to address a development challenge; a pivotal partner who provides resources

and/or expertise; and a facilitating partner who connects both parties through financial and/or technical support.

12. The 28th United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of Parties Declaration on climate, relief, recovery, and peace calls for bolder collective action to build climate resilience required in highly vulnerable countries and communities, and stresses for enhanced support through financial resources, capacities, partnerships, and information. The 3G commends the G20 Presidency's call for action and international collaboration to fight hunger, poverty, and inequality while promoting sustainable development policies. The 3G looks forward to the policy recommendations to place inequality at the forefront, address distributional challenges, and create fiscal space to support public investment in the priority area of sustaining drinking water amid climate change.
