

**Meeting of the Parties to the UNECE/WHO-EURO Protocol on Water and Health to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes 4<sup>th</sup> session, Geneva, 14-16 November, 2016**

- Being the Party of the UNECE Protocol on Water and Health, Lithuania would like to stress the benefits and added value for the whole Protocol Community. The Protocol offers greater cooperation opportunities that are relevant for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular the Goal 6 *Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation*.
- At the same time, the Agenda for Sustainable Development creates an unique opportunity to address issues that the Protocol focuses on as well, such as water security and scarcity. The Protocol provides the framework for cooperation on coordinated systems for surveillance, early warning systems, contingency plans, and responses to outbreaks and water-related incidents. These measures are extremely important for sustainable water management.
- What is more, some activities under the Protocol refer to the implementation of the EU Directives on Drinking Water, Urban Waste Water. It also contributes to preparation of river basin management plans.
- Our country manages its water resources quite well. Lithuania is among EU leaders in terms of water purity and waste water treatment. It almost totally meets EU requirements for drinking water. However, **water security** is of special relevance to Lithuania. We keep emphasizing that one of the major challenges for water quality, natural resources and river basins come from irresponsible development of industrial projects. Taking into consideration the water-energy nexus, I would like to stress the importance of sustainable planning, building and operating of water and energy infrastructure while preserving and improving water resources.
- Lithuania has been rising the issues regarding effective water management and protection of water resources since 2009, when plans of neighboring countries' nuclear power plants became officially known. Sufficient water resources are needed at Kaliningrad and Belarus plants not only to cool down reactors, but also to contain nuclear fires and reduce the leakage of nuclear contaminants into the atmosphere in the case of an accident. The water that Belarus plant will be drawing to cool down its reactors will be from Lithuanian river Neris. Meanwhile, Russia is planning to divert part of the sizeable Nemunas River to fill the cooling basin of Kaliningrad NPP. Worth mentioning that 72 proc. of the total area of the Nemunas River Basin is situated in Lithuania. The pollutants transported through the river eventually fall into the Baltic Sea, so thermal, hydrological, radiological and chemical impact on the river is particularly important in terms of environmental protection.

- Rivers have no borders and irresponsible use of water resources results in painful consequences for all. Lithuania always encourages its neighboring countries to establish, implement and further strengthen cooperative legal and institutional frameworks. While doing so, we also underscore the need to improve water monitoring and sharing of relevant data in the context of information – especially the information that enables reducing risks from irresponsible use of transboundary basin water.
- In this regard, the Protocol on Water and Health shall be considered as a **living international instrument to respond to modern challenges and bringing countries together as partners.**