

*High level session of the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health
Geneva, 14 November 2016*

Special session: Moving forward on the water and sanitation agenda in the pan-European region: the role of the Protocol on Water and Health in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Compilation of statements from the floor

Statements by France, Norway, Spain, Serbia, Greece, Romania, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Germany, Finland, Portugal, Belarus, Croatia, Slovenia and the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition.

Statement of France

Elisabeth Laurin, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of France

Monsieur le Conseiller Fédéral, Mesdames et Messieurs les Ministres, Mesdames et Messieurs les Ambassadeurs, Monsieur le Secrétaire Exécutif de la CEE ONU, Madame la Directrice de l'OMS, Mesdames et Messieurs les délégués,

Je voudrais remercier la CEE-NU et le Bureau Europe de l'OMS pour avoir choisi de faire le lien entre le Protocole et les enjeux de l'Agenda 2030. Les interventions des panélistes ont montré toute l'importance de ce sujet dans les efforts de la communauté internationale en faveur d'un monde plus durable.

Je voudrais plus particulièrement insister sur le fait que le Protocole « Eau et Santé » a été un précurseur de la vision portée aujourd'hui par l'agenda 2030 sur les enjeux relatifs à l'eau qu'il s'agisse de l'accès à l'eau et à l'assainissement pour tous ainsi que la gestion et la protection de la ressource en eau.

En effet, ce Protocole est le premier accord international associant gestion de l'eau et questions sanitaires.

Depuis 1999, le Protocole encourage les Etats à prendre en compte dans leurs stratégies nationales l'ensemble des problématiques aujourd'hui couvertes par les cibles de l'Objectif de Développement Durable 6 sur l'eau : accès aux services pour tous, réflexion sur ses différents usages, préservation de la ressource dans le cadre d'une gestion intégrée.

Le Protocole est un véritable outil de mise en œuvre de l'Agenda 2030. Il met par ailleurs en évidence que la réalisation de plusieurs ODD est indissociable de la protection de la ressource en eau:

- l'ODD 3 portant sur la santé car l'accès à une eau saine réduit les maladies et favorise l'hygiène,
- l'ODD 13 sur le climat. A l'heure de la COP 22, rappelons que 60% des catastrophes naturelles sont liées à l'eau. Une gestion intégrée des ressources en eau telle que portée par le Protocole contribuera à la réalisation de l'ODD sur le climat.

La protection de la ressource en eau aura aussi un impact sur les ODD portant sur l'agriculture, les écosystèmes ou les océans.

Cela démontre que la mise en œuvre de l'agenda 2030 ne pourra pas être réalisée si nous gardons une approche en silo. Elle devra se faire dans un contexte de coopération et de partenariat multi-acteurs.

Au titre de son aide extérieure, la France participe à la diffusion de recommandations du Protocole :

- A travers sa politique de coopération ; en 2015, les financements accordés par l'Agence Française de Développement se sont élevés à 836 millions d'euros pour le secteur de l'eau
- A travers la politique de coopération décentralisée avec la Loi Oudin-Santini qui autorise les collectivités, syndicats et agences de l'eau à consacrer à la solidarité internationale jusqu'à 1% des ressources affectées à leurs budgets "eau et assainissement". En 2015, ce mécanisme a permis de financer des projets à hauteur de 27,1 millions d'€.

La France promeut également le Protocole auprès des deux Conventions internationales relatives l'eau : la Convention de New York et la Convention d'Helsinki.

Un des principaux défis est d'accroître la visibilité du Protocole dont les outils opérationnels de mise œuvre mériteraient d'être davantage connus et diffusés, y compris auprès des états Tiers et de la communauté des bailleurs. Je pense à un outil tel que l'Outil d'évaluation concernant l'équité en matière d'accès, testé avec intérêt en 2012 à Paris ; il permet aux gouvernements et autres parties prenantes d'autoévaluer et de mesurer leurs besoins en termes d'accès aux services d'eau et d'assainissement pour tous et leur progrès.

Cette Réunion des Parties est une occasion de répondre à ce défi mais la qualité des travaux du Protocole mériterait sans aucun doute une reconnaissance plus globale en ayant notamment recours aux réseaux diplomatiques et aux différentes plateformes multi-acteurs de ce secteur

Je terminerai mon intervention en posant une question au Panel : comment améliorer la visibilité du Protocole au niveau international et valoriser ses outils afin de renforcer les capacités des pays, notamment ceux en développement, sur la thématique de l'eau ?

Je vous remercie.

Statement of Norway

Fredrik Wang Gierløff, State Secretary, Ministry of Health and Care Services

Chair, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Access to clean drinking water and appropriate sanitation are basic human needs which concerns all people. It is recognized as a human right by the United Nations General Assembly and is a key element in the 2030 Agenda.

Globally, many achievements have been made, however, safe drinking water and sanitation still represent tremendous challenges in terms of burden of disease, stress to the health care systems as well as in terms poverty and inequality in access to water and sanitation services.

In our perspective, the flexibility of the protocol and its targets make it a close to perfect tool for countries to follow up on the relevant sustainable development goals (SDG's). And the protocol has

relevance to a number of targets, not only nr 6.1 to 6.6. but also: target 1.4 Access to basic services for the poor, target 2.2 End malnutrition target 3.3 End water-borne diseases and target 3.8 Universal health coverage, just to mention a few.

Since national targets under the protocol are not set once and for all, but are rather meant to be tailored to each country's needs and challenges it also makes it highly relevant in pursuing the relevant SDGs.

In this perspective the Protocol on Water and Health gives us an opportunity. It offers a framework to analyze our national situation and identify our challenges, and helps focus the attention of decision makers to actions that are needed. In this context, we are looking forward to the next ministerial conference on Environment and Health next year to be held in Ostrava in the Czech Republic. We hope that the conference will invigorate the work on water and health and can unite the European region around a new regional commitment in this area. For the new Ostrava declaration to be effective it needs a limited scope together with a lean, supporting governance mechanism.

For Norway there are still challenges, our water and wastewater pipes are too old and causing leaking problems. Renewal of pipes is in general far too slow. Some of our smaller public water supply systems are not up to modern hygienic standards and about 10 % of the population get their water supply from smaller private systems, with very little known about the drinking water quality.

The Norwegian government recognizes the importance of the targets under the protocol as vehicles for achieving the 2030 Agenda. The targets and the accompanying action plan will be actively used in achieving the goals. To keep focus on the need for repair and renewal of pipes will be important for us both in a protocol context and in a 2030 Agenda context.

Norway has taken active part in the work of the Protocol on Water and Health because we believe it is a useful tool in addressing national challenges and for international cooperation. Norway set targets in all suggested target areas of article 6 under the protocol in 2014. Our action plan to follow up on targets was set one year later and has been working for one year now. The main achievement so far is probably that we have been able to put problems related to safe water on the agenda. To recognize the need to take action is the first step toward improvement

Norway will continue to actively support the work of the Protocol also in the following 3 years, trusting that this will contribute to the achieving the international goals.

Thank you!

Statement by Spain

Josephina Maestu Unturbe, Water Directorate, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment

We would like to congratulate the Chair and the Vice Chairs for having been elected.

During the sessions it has been highlighted the importance that the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation has for the work of the Protocol of Water and Health and specially in relation to equity issues.

Spain has been one of the main sponsors and promoters for the Resolutions of water and sanitation as a Human Right

It has been pointed out in the panel that the question of equitable access does affect all countries. Defaults in paying bills – however low they may be- affect all services for those becoming

unemployed with the economic crisis. In Spain companies are implementing special formulas to avoid disconnecting for non-payment. Lack of access affects homeless, and immigrant communities who are especially vulnerable.

The Resolution also implies responsibilities for public authorities, including for financing. Here we may need to distinguish between funding for collective systems and the tariffs paid by households. Indeed HH do pay (as the key note speakers has pointed out) but we need to distinguish this (Cost Recovery) from financing for collective systems and for monitoring systems in the context of the Resolution in this regard. If there are no public funding these services will not be provided adequately.

In relation to improved regulation of urban water systems this is not only a question for small-scale systems in underserved communities but also for decentralised countries. It is important to insure harmonised implementation and mutual learning. The protocol emphasis on collaboration among health and water authorities is helpful in this regard.

In relation to extreme events and Climate Change, Monitoring and Planning is fundamental to preserve health standards.

Statement of Serbia

Ferenc Vicko, State Secretary, Ministry of Health

Your Excellencies, respective delegates, ladies and gentlemen

Please, allow me to use this opportunity and express my great honor to be a part of this Meeting of the Parties, as the Chief of the Serbian delegation, at this very important occasion, when the Presidency of the Bureau of the Protocol on Water and Health has been entrusted to the Republic of Serbia. This role is both a great obligation and responsibility, and we will do our best to steer further progress in efficient and effective implementation across the region.

On behalf of the Serbian Government, I wish to express my sincere esteem and appreciation to Switzerland and to congratulate for successful chairing the Protocol on water and health and impressive achievements in implementation Protocol's program of work for the past three years.

During our mandate, we will strive to promote an open and sincere dialogue about the challenges that we are facing, with a view to agreeing on common framework which could support our future work. Serbia will continue the work in all of the priority themes under the Protocol.

Before I proceed further with this statement I would like to look back at the substantial progress that Serbia has achieved, since the ratification of the Protocol in 2013. Many main obligations have been successfully fulfilled and implemented. We made rapid progress after the ratification, setting targets and target dates as it is stipulated by article 6 of the Protocol. Tailored to our national priorities and capacities, Serbian Protocol's targets are fully aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 6 "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all".

Further more Serbia has already started with targets implementation, especially devoted to the areas of small-scale water supply systems and water, sanitation and hygiene in schools. Situation analysis of the small-scale water supply systems, including drinking water quality and sanitary conditions has been successfully implemented in Serbia, using the WHO methodology for rapid assessment. The results of this study has been already presented at the national level and will contribute, amongst others, to the measures for the improvement of the water supply in rural areas

in Serbia. This survey also supported Serbia's leadership in the area of small-scale water supplies under the Protocol on Water and Health at international level.

I would like to use this opportunity to express our gratitude to UNECE and WHO for very kind expert and financial support in the implementation of this project.

The 2030 Agenda in implementing SDGs, will require more efforts, efficient approaches and stronger cross-sectoral partnerships in reaching its objectives. Through implementation of other programs and initiatives in relation with PWH, we face challenges to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals pertinent to water, sanitation and health, specifically Goal 1 on ending poverty, Goal 2 on improving nutrition, Goal 4 on equitable quality education, Goal 11 on safe, resilient and sustainable cities and Goal 13 on combating climate change and its impacts.

There are still many challenges that require further attention: remaining inequities in access to water and sanitation services, including rural-urban disparities, small scale water supplies in institutions such as schools and hospitals. Considering climate change effects, there is a need to increase the resilience of water supply and sanitation systems to extreme weather events, strengthen safe and efficient management approaches of water and sanitation services, including specific attention to wastewater reuse. Generally, intersectoral cooperation between the water, health and other relevant sectors needs to be further enhanced.

Thus, the 2030 agenda for sustainable development presents a unique opportunity for multistakeholder partnerships for sustainable development to advance cross-sectoral approaches and enhance their effectiveness and impact. To successfully seize this opportunity, a number of actions should be taken to strengthen accountability, transparency, coherence, monitoring, reporting, as well as knowledge sharing through cross-sectoral multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Cross-sectoral, integrated, or nexus approach and multi-stakeholder partnerships under the SDGs could initiate breaking down barriers and promote cooperation among all relevant stakeholders. New partnerships that are now being designed to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs should look closely at how targets under one goal may affect targets under other goals or how individual targets could serve multiple goals. Existing partnership initiatives, at the review stage, could also be encouraged to incorporate other targets from other goals so as to enable greater integration and synergies across as many goals as possible.

The Protocol can help the SDGs become a reality, urging Parties to approach water, sanitation and health in a holistic manner, as a pillar of sustainable development. Through improving their water, health and environment, countries also support and reinforce the benefits to many other areas of development.

Protocol activities, objectives and principles can support the implementation of the SDG's, focusing on intersectoral cooperation, coherence of policies and attention to equity issues, consistent with the 2030 Agenda.

The Protocol can be a powerful tool to promote and operationalize the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in national and regional contexts.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Serbia remains strongly dedicated to the implementation of the protocol on water and health and its main objectives – the reduction of water-related diseases and the sustainable use of water resources. For these important reasons, we will continue to work on improving governance for water and health by supporting the implementation of the Protocol's programme of work for the next triennium in all its priority areas.

Looking forward to our better future work in reaching common targets.

Statement of Greece

Ioannis Baskozos, Secretary General of Public Health, Ministry of Health

It is a great pleasure and honour to be here with you today, in Geneva. Water shapes this city, and would like to thank the Government of Switzerland, UNECE and WHO Europe for their invitation to participate in this important Session of the Protocol that underlines the importance of intersectoral cooperation.

The vision of transforming our world is ambitious, challenging and pressing but, at the same time, it's more feasible than ever. It is clear that water affects every aspect of our life. In this regard, the relationship between sustainable development, health and water is dynamic and reciprocal. SDGs Targets 3 & 6 are constantly interacting as Safe drinking water and hygienic sanitation are prerequisites for attaining a healthy life under the scope of public health.

Nevertheless, public health in a globalized world is made up of many different strands and should not be either uniform or monolithic. As sustainable development, health and water are linked, our public health policies should also be interconnected in the same manner. In the European Region, the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches, the core principles of Health2020, break the silos and promote interlinkages and cooperation by bringing all stakeholders together, and by putting people at the centre. At this point we clearly recognise that the most important opportunity and challenge SDGs offer is the improvement of coordination and coherence of intersectoral policies. In this regard, M-S of the WHO European Region recognised the need for intersectoral cooperation and, during the 66th RC in September have decided to build a roadmap to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

As both a member of the SCRC WHO Region and General Secretary of Public Health in Greece, fully support that the Protocol is an important instrument towards implementing SDGs and Health 2020. Especially, pillar 4 of the Health 2020: Creating supportive environments and resilient communities at the regional level takes into account a holistic view of sustainable social, economic and environmental considerations. People's opportunities for a healthy life are clearly enhanced by advancing an inclusive water and sanitation agenda and there's no better way to achieve more, than by working together.

Once again, cross-country collaboration and guidance provided by WHO would be crucial parameters leading to a short, successful and sustainable process.

Thank you.

Statement of Romania

Gheorghe Constantin, Director, Romanian Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We acknowledge that the Protocol on Water and Health is a very important tool for improving the water, sanitation and public health both at the national, regional and international level

Implementation of this Protocol, through its Program of work on 2017-2019, is moving ahead and is extended with the new area of work on water-related diseases surveillance and response systems

and the establishment, improvement or maintenance of surveillance and early warning systems, in accordance with article 8 of the Protocol.

On the other hand tackling the climate change is a more prominent issue to be consider in the new activities. It is widely recognized that the global is leading to changes in rainfall patterns, sea level rise and increase frequency of extreme hydro-meteorological events which affect significantly the water availability and quality and human life.

For this reason we believe that the Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change under the Protocol on Water and Health in connection with Guidance on Water Supply and Sanitation in Extreme Weather Events, and Water and Climate Change Adaptation in Transboundary Basins, provide the needed assistance at the national and transboundary level.

In Romania, development on water and sanitation infrastructure is one of the most important tasks and we are aware that it plays a crucial role for improving quality of life of all citizens. Provision of public services of water supply and sanitation in Romania is done in a non-discriminatory manner.

We consider that the implementation of the provisions of the Protocol will contribute significantly on achieving relevant SDGs - particularly Goal 6 on water and sanitation and Goal 3 on good health and well-being, but will generate positive effects on other goals and targets.

The newly developed activities on water adaptation to climate change and their impact on water supply and sanitation are very important for us in outlining the national policies in order to ensure sustainability of the water and sanitation services and consequently to protect the human health in the extreme natural conditions. Providing safe water and sanitation and ensuring a good health, will have a decisive contribution to the achievement of other SDGs.

We appreciate the framework provided by the Protocol for exchange experience on how other countries are using their activities in order to create synergy with other instruments for the implementation of the relevant SDGs.

One year after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development we have to focus on effective implementation of its 17 SDGs and 169 associated targets. On setting SDGs at national level, we have to map for each Goal and target, relevant regional and national policies and actions, as well as Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).

One of the most important MEAs for pan-European region related with many goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda is the Protocol on Water and Health.

On advancing the global sustainable development Agenda to regional and national implementation we should build on existing efficient tools having a trans-sectoral nature, effective enablers of cooperation between countries as well as national and sub-national actions. More than 15 years, the Protocol on Water and Health has proven its effectiveness as an enabler for sustainable development, for improving the water, sanitation and public health.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents the new global framework and all MEAs should work on a synergic approach.

Finally we reiterate the commitment of Romania to further cooperate within the Protocol on Water and Health in order to ensure its successful implementation and contribute to the sustainable development and well-being of our people.

Thank you for your attention!

Statement of the Netherlands

Jelka Appelman, Senior Policy Advisor, Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment

In the Netherlands the 2030 Agenda is one of the drivers to evaluate the national situation and policy with regard to water, sanitation and hygiene with the responsible organizations in relation to the goals of the Protocol on Water and Health. Furthermore, it is a driver to strengthen cooperation on national and international level. Challenges in the Netherlands with regard to water and sanitation are to maintain, and when necessary improve, the current level of (and access to) safely managed sanitation and drinking water. Issues are the availability of water sources of good quality, the sustainability of resource management, climate adaptation and circular economy.

The main aim of the Protocol on Water and Health is to protect public health from water-related diseases in the pan-European Region. With its objectives, access to drinking water for everyone and, provision of sanitation for everyone, the Protocol Water and Health is expected to support achieving the SDGs on water, sanitation and hygiene by providing an intergovernmental platform at the regional level for the exchange of experience and providing a practical, legal framework on the setting of national targets and offering guidance and capacity on the setting, monitoring and achievement of targets. The structure of international cooperation, as well as the guidance materials and tools that have been developed under the Protocol will support countries in their achievement of the water, sanitation and hygiene-related SDGs. In addition, the three year programmes of work of the Protocol is foreseeing projects and other activities at the (inter)national level that will further support the SDG achievement.

With regard to efficient support of the Protocol on Water and Health to achievement of relevant water related SDGs it is important to align the national targets under the Protocol to the relevant SDGs. This is also indicated as an activity in the future work programme. Secondly it is important to align activities on SDG achievement on national and international level to allow for making efficient use of resources. In this way the Protocol can be a very valuable instrument in supporting SDG achievement in the Pan-European region.

Water Safety Planning and Safe Sanitation Planning are powerful approaches to achieve safely managed drinking water and sanitation, and give the opportunity to take into account climate change and other global developments. The Netherlands is pleased to take the co-lead for work area 5 (Safe and efficiently management of water supply and sanitation systems) under the Protocol on Water and Health in cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina and IWA. This work is expected to support achievement of SDG 6.1 – 6.3 (Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all) and SDG 3.3 (combat waterborne disease) in the Pan-European region as well as contribute to achievement of SDG 11 (cities and human settlements resilient and sustainable) and 13 (combat climate change and its impacts).

Statement of Luxembourg

Camille Gira, Secretary of State, Department of Environment, Ministry of Sustainable Development and Infrastructure of Luxembourg

Chères collègues,

Tout d'abord, je tiens à féliciter le Président et les deux Vice-Présidents pour leur élection. Je suis convaincu que votre engagement sera à la hauteur des défis et que vous continuerez à mener à bien l'excellent travail réalisé jusqu'à présent.

Je tiens également à remercier tous les intervenants qui ont pris la parole il y a quelques instants et qui ont soulevés une série de points importants. Ce riche échange confirme à nouveau l'importance de faire partie du Protocole sur l'eau et la Santé, relatif à la Convention sur la protection et l'utilisation des cours d'eau transfrontières et des lacs internationaux.

Pour un pays comme le Luxembourg, qui partage la majorité de ses ressources aquatiques avec les pays avoisinants, la coopération régionale et internationale est une priorité absolue, et nous soutenons bien évidemment toutes les démarches allant dans ce sens.

Bien qu'au Luxembourg nous ayons déjà atteint un bon nombre d'objectifs fixés par le Protocole, nous constatons que nous sommes toujours confrontés à de nouveaux défis, que ce soit dans l'assainissement des eaux usées, dans la protection des ressources en eau ou encore dans l'exploitation des réseaux de distribution d'eau potable. Ces défis deviennent d'autant plus grands, du fait de la progression de la croissance démographique au Luxembourg. A cela s'ajoute que le Luxembourg a également pris ses responsabilités dans la crise migratoire que rencontre actuellement l'Europe. Dans ce contexte il est également de notre devoir d'assurer un approvisionnement en eau potable et une évacuation des eaux usées en toute sécurité aux réfugiés que nous accueillons.

Cette année, d'autres évènements nous ont confrontés avec la nécessité de constamment investir et entretenir nos infrastructures d'eau. Nous avons en effet connu un épisode de pluies importantes qui ont causé des crues subites, engendrant d'importants dégâts. Ces phénomènes météorologiques extrêmes, se répèteront sans nul doute plus souvent à l'avenir du fait des conséquences du changement climatique. Avec ce même changement climatique augmente aussi le risque d'efflorescences de cyanobactéries prolongés, telles que celles qu'on a vécu cette année dans un lac de barrage servant à la production d'une grande partie de l'eau potable et qui constitue également un lieu de récréation important. En effet la question de l'adaptation climatique est dans notre région profondément liée à des mesures dans le domaine de la gestion de l'eau. Dans ce contexte, j'estime très judicieux que le programme de travail pour la période 2017-2019 fasse un lien très étroit avec les objectifs de développement durable du Programme de développement durable à l'horizon 2030, objectifs qui nous rappellent que l'eau est une ressource vitale et que nos efforts de la protéger et de la mettre à disposition de tout le monde ne doivent cesser

Avant de finir, je tenais donc à féliciter toute l'équipe du Groupe de travail de l'eau et de la santé pour le projet de programme de travail réalisé.

Je vous remercie pour votre attention.

Statement of Germany

Arne Panesar, Programme Director, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an important commitment, which sets the direction for new economic, social and environmental development priorities across the world. The agenda offers a broad concept and different approaches to achieve the ambitious agenda to comprehensive development compared to the previous MDGs.

The holistic view of the SDGs with its higher complexity level, also in terms of indicators and targets, is a formal recognition of the interconnectedness characterizing the various global challenges and it offers many new opportunities and entry points for synergies and joint cross-sectoral action.

GIZ believes that the program of work on water, sanitation and hygiene in schools (WinS) is a perfect example to successfully implement intersectoral synergies between sectors and that schools can be an entry point for long-term cooperation.

At global level prioritizing WinS for universal access has gained political momentum, which should be reflected and operationalized in the pan-European region as well. Prioritizing WinS in policies and targets, as well in implementation plans, means translating into action not one but several interconnected SDGs, in particular: SDG3 for good health and wellbeing; SDG4 for good learning, SDG5 for gender equality and SDG6 for universal access to safe water and adequate sanitation. This makes WinS an exemplary priority area for concerted action under the Protocol on Water and Health.

GIZ congratulates the Parties to the Protocol, for their longstanding commitment and we assure commitment and technical assistance.

We encourage all to initiate and accelerate the translation of the SDGs commitments into national policies and programming, including strong monitoring and evaluation processes.

Statement of Finland

Raili Venäläinen, Ministerial Adviser, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland

Your Excellency/Ms Chairman,

We would like to thank you for organizing this meeting. We see the Protocol on Water and Health as a very important and concrete tool to promote our aspirations in water related health and security issues. Our national targets of the Protocol are now under revision and they will be firmly tied to the framework of Agenda 2030.

In Finland, the preparation of the National Action Program for Agenda 2030 is being coordinated by the Prime minister's office and will be ready by the end of this year. This working method enables a horizontal approach and a possibility to find interlinkages between all relevant sectors.

Based on this national assessment, our starting level in SDG 6 is excellent, but still, we have a lot to do.

Finland's development cooperation has four priority areas for the period 2016-2020, which all are related to water, sanitation and health policies. Priority areas are:

1. Rights of women and girls,
2. Food security, access to water and energy, and the sustainable use of natural resources,
3. Democratic and well-functioning societies,
4. Improve livelihoods.

Since 2009, Finland has had a dedicated Programme for Water Sector Support to the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Thanks to the financing through this Programme, Finland is one of the most important contributors to the Protocol. At the moment, the Programme focuses on Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and promotes a rights-based approach to water by supporting the capacities of both authorities and citizens.

I welcome you all to our side event on Wednesday at one o'clock in the Emirates Room to hear more about our work in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, as well as about protocol implementation in Moldova.

At the national level, Finland has focused on the country's implementation of Water Safety Plans (WSP) and on the development of national sanitation safety plans (SSP). A web application has been tailored to provide an easy-to-use interface for both water and sanitation safety plans.

Finally, Finland would like to emphasize the importance of the Protocol on Water and Health as a concrete and forward-looking regional legal instrument for safeguarding the human rights-based approach to water and sanitation.

Statement of Portugal

Ana Albuquerque, Member of the Board of Directors, the Water and Waste Services Regulation Authority (ERSAR)

Madam Chair, Distinct Heads of Delegation, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its 17th Sustainable Development Goals is one of the most relevant processes in the coming years.

This Agenda represents a huge challenge for all countries around the world, but it gives us a unique opportunity to improve the way we work with the ultimate aspirational goal of leaving no one behind.

Agenda 2030 was developed in a spirit of inclusiveness and collaborative partnership that we must be able to translate to our common work.

This process is universal and will leave no one behind, and that is the main evolution for the coming years, to focus on those who, despite being a minority, still do not have access to safe water or sanitation, or a proper environment to live in.

Portugal is fully committed with the implementation of this Agenda. We have already in place a governance model at national level, led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in close cooperation with sectorial Ministries and civil society and we have already announced our willingness to present to the High-Level Political Forum in 2017 our national voluntary review.

Accordingly this will also be one of the main processes in the upcoming years for the water sector.

The definition of achievable goals for public policies has been for the last 20 years one of the key drivers of success in the implementation of Portuguese public policies in the water sector, so the alignment of the national goals with the SDG process is paramount in our priorities.

Of course, the indicators used to monitor the SDGs are not entirely adapted to our reality and we are now in the process of defining which indicators we will use in the monitoring process.

The water sector in Portugal has greatly evolved in the last 20 years due to a sound and stable public policy that fostered proper governance arrangements, with clear responsibilities of public and private stakeholders, mobilized the required financial resources and defined the main priorities of intervention.

Legal and regulatory instruments were put in place to ensure an adequate implementation of this policy and there was a huge capacitation effort that was able to bridge the gaps of the technical staff working in the sector.

This collective effort in this period of 20 years has allowed Portugal to progress from an underdeveloped and infrastructure lacking country to one of the top performers in the EU in terms

of drinking water quality standards (from 50% to 99% of water complying with EU standards), in terms of households served by public water systems (from 82% to 96%) and public sanitation systems (from 60% to 83%), in terms of environmental sustainability improvement (from 58% to 100% of good quality coastal bathing waters), in terms of waterborne diseases evolution (from hundreds of cases per year to nearly zero) and in terms of information available about water services (nearly 1 million data available each year).

Although, Portugal has a lot to do to improve nationally the adequate implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health, we will keep making efforts to be at the forefront of the Protocol in several projects, not only piloting new methodologies for monitoring the equitable access to water and sanitation, but also in sharing its knowledge in matters, such as drinking water quality control or social inclusiveness in the water sector. This proactive position has also greatly contributed to the evolution of the national indicators and we encourage other countries to be more involved and in leading the existing and incoming work under the Protocol.

As part of the regulator of these services in Portugal, I am proud that we have also been an active part in the Protocol and we are happy to be able to contribute further with our expertise and in sharing our processes and methodologies with other Parties of the Protocol.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to refer that UNECE and Portugal are working very closely on water and sanitation Public-Private Partnerships in order to set up of an International Specialist Center of Excellence on PPPs in Water and Sanitation under the auspices of UNECE, which we believe can be very relevant in this context.

Many thanks

Statement of Belarus

Siarhei Sychyk, Director, Republican scientific–practical centre of Hygiene, Ministry of Public Health

Уважаемый Председатель! Уважаемые коллеги!

Выражая глубокую благодарность за возможность участия в Совещании столь высокого уровня отмечаем, что наша страна ратифицировала Протокол по проблемам воды и здоровья в 2009 году. Не могу не отметить, что Республика Беларусь-это страна с высоким потенциалом в области обеспечения населения качественной питьевой водой и хорошими статистическими данными по заболеваемости связанной с водными ресурсами. Ряд целевых показателей по Протоколу реализуются в рамках государственных программ утвержденных Правительством Республики Беларусь.

Вместе с тем, мы поддерживаем усилия участников Протокола по гармонизации статистических показателей при осуществлении отчетности по Протоколу, усиления межсекторального и межстранового взаимодействия – особенно субрегионального! Мы с глубокой ответственностью осознаем, что проблемы экологии носят трансграничный характер.

Примером такого взаимодействия сегодня может быть – это многолетнее активное участие ряда государственных и общественных институтов Республики Беларусь и стран Балтии по обеспечению устойчивого развития Балтийского региона, в том числе и через призму строительства первой Белорусской АЭС.

Хочу отметить, что в сентябре текущего года в Республике Беларусь была проведена двухнедельная IRRS миссия МАГАТЭ по оценке готовности реагирования инфраструктуры страны на нештатные ситуации и оценке работы национальных регуляторов – Министерства по чрезвычайным ситуациям, Министерства экологии и природных ресурсов, Министерства здравоохранения Республики Беларусь в области обеспечения радиационной безопасности

окружающей среды и населения. 20 международных экспертов МАГАТЭ отметили что в Республике Беларусь на национальном уровне приняты все самые современные стандарты МАГАТЭ по радиационной безопасности и наша страна обладает всеми необходимыми институтами, силами и средствами.

Республика Беларусь, как страна взявшая основное бремя по ликвидации последствий аварии на Чернобыльской атомной электростанции, имеет огромный опыт работы по обеспечению радиационной безопасности, в том числе по эффективному вовлечению общества в эти процессы на принципах гласности, информированности и достоверности.

Глубоко осознавая ответственность Республики Беларусь перед мировым сообществом нашим Правительством совместно с Литвой утверждена межправительственная комиссия Беларусь-Литва членом которой я являюсь. И на этой площадке идет постоянный открытый диалог всех заинтересованных институтов и общества по данному вопросу.

Уважаемый господин Председатель! Мы полагаем, что данная информация может быть оценена как позитивный пример трансграничного взаимодействия двух наших стран в обеспечении защиты окружающей среды и населения, которым мы готовы поделиться.

Спасибо за внимание!

Statement of Croatia

Magdalena Ujevic Bosnjak, Head of the Water Chemistry Unit, Institute of Public Health

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to welcome you on behalf of Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Environment and Energy, as the competent ministries in the Republic of Croatia for the implementation of Protocol on Water and Health.

Republic of Croatia is a full member of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes from ratification in 1996, and is a full member of the Protocol on Water and Health from ratification in 2006.

Republic of Croatia is aware that water is the basic element and condition for sustaining life and that provision of water in sufficient quantity and quality for fulfilment of basic human needs is a prerequisite for ensuring and improving human health and enabling sustainable development in general. Republic of Croatia recognizes the importance of integrated water management and applies it in order to protect human health and aquatic ecosystems. Taking into account the principle of sustainable development and integrated water management, Republic of Croatia, in accordance with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive, adopted in the middle of the year a Water Resources Management Plan 2016-2021 whose integral part is the Flood Risk Management Plan. Implementation of integrated water management will come to the fore in the next period when realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals is expected as well from the Republic of Croatia.

Republic of Croatia has a long tradition in water management and the protection of human health. The pioneer of preventive medicine, our Dr. Andrija Štampar, participated in drafting of the Constitution of the World Health Organization and was the President of the First World Health Assembly held here in Geneva in 1948. This year in the Republic of Croatia, we are celebrating 140 years of organized water management.

In the previous period, huge efforts were made in the Republic of Croatia to ensure delivery of safe drinking water from public water supply system to all residents. The rate of supply from public water supply systems is now around 85%. Unfortunately, we do not have such good results in the public sewage system coverage which is around 46%, but major efforts are directed in this area. The construction of a water utility infrastructure is ongoing across Croatia, including wastewater treatment devices, for which the resources from European funds are widely used.

A small number of waterborne outbreaks occurring in Croatia is the result of attention paid to drinking water safety in the public water supply systems and the good work of all relevant services. Unfortunately, small water supply systems present a big challenge because they are the most susceptible to contamination. When waterborne diseases occur in Croatia, they are related to those small systems. In many cases, when local and regional authorities had done everything to ensure public water supply to the residents in certain areas, the residents do not want to connect mainly due to financial reasons. In the following period, focus should be put on the public health education of the population, but also on other measures at the disposal of national, regional and local public administration bodies that need to be implemented in such cases where the connection to public water supply systems needs to be made more acceptable to the local population.

In the Republic of Croatia, the monitoring of water for human consumption is conducted in accordance with the European Drinking Water Directive, as well as many other monitoring systems arising from the Water Framework Directive and other relevant water directives.

Republic of Croatia prescribed and implemented the monitoring of water quality at the sources in 2004, although this is not required by the EU Drinking Water Directive, because Croatia understood the importance of proactive actions regarding water supply sources in the protection of human health. This came out recently by Commission Directive amending Annex II. and III. to Council Directive on the Quality of Water Intended for Human Consumption where it is defined that the implementation of a risk assessment must take into account the results of water bodies monitoring. In the future, it will be necessary to make efforts in order to put the vast amount of data contained in databases of several relevant Croatian institutions at the service of integrated water management in terms of achieving preventive actions in protection of human health and water resources, in particular those used in public water supply, as well as for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Thank you for your attention!

Statement of Slovenia

Kralj Breda, Senior Adviser, Ministry of Health

On behalf of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Slovenia I would like to announce that Slovenia is in a process of amending the Constitution which will ensure universal access to drinking water.

We believe that Slovenia can as one of the most water rich countries actively participate in changing global politics regarding natural resources - specifically drinking water supply. Through the amendment of the Constitution that refers to the water supply by non-profit service we would like to give to the Europe and the world very clear signal that in Slovenia water supply should be available to everyone.

In addition, the Government of Slovenia has recognized the Protocol as important activity of the Action plan for implementation of the Strategy for Children and Youth Environmental Health for 2012 to 2020.

Slovenia aims to contribute actively to the work of Protocol water and Health as good practice of providing the access to drinking water to everybody as fundamental human right.

Statement of the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition

Jovana Dodos, Vice-President, European and Health Youth Coalition

I would start by extending congratulations to the new elected Chair and thanking the panelists for a great and inspiring discussion. As we could see today, the world's attention is turning to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Among other ambitious objectives, this Agenda aspires to reach universal and equitable access to safe WASH services and to create education facilities that provide safe learning environments for all.

On one hand, SDG 6 explicitly extends beyond the household level, implying that safe WASH services must be available in all settings and places where people spend their time, including educational facilities such as schools and kinder gartens. On the other hand, SDG 4 and Target 4.a. call for safe learning environments for all. It goes without saying that this cannot be achieved without ensuring adequate access to safe drinking water, basic sanitation and hand washing facilities in educational settings.

Therefore, I am using opportunity to highlight once again that SDG targets on WASH, education and health are highly associated and interdependent. We, as the Youth Coalition, strongly encourage a joint multi-sectoral action, collaboration and engagement, which will be fundamental for meeting these targets. The early stages of the SDGs implementation seems to be the right time to demonstrate practically how education, health and WASH actions can be combined and integrated to tackle the on-going challenges related to WASH in schools in the pan- European region and guarantee good health, well-being, education, gender equality and dignity of school children and young people.

We believe that the Protocol on Water and Health is the optimal platform for partnership and cooperation across all concerned government sectors, nongovernmental actors and civil society and very relevant, powerful tool for translating the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda into actions for achieving the SDG 6 and related targets on education and health.

Thank you.