

Fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health

High-level session: “The Protocol on Water and Health:  
catalysing sustainable development in the pan-European region”

Panel 1: Responding to global changes and threats

### **Mr. Kenan Hrapović, Minister of Health, Montenegro**

Montenegro is a small country that faces many challenges for water and sanitation, particularly from extreme weather events. In the summer, we can face issues with water scarcity, exacerbated by high demand during the tourist season. This month my country has been hit by torrential rains that have caused floods and landslides. Both these extremes can impact water safety, water security, as well as compromising the integrity of our sanitation systems. And these challenges are going to get worse in the face of climate change.

As a matter of strategic national priority, we need to manage these challenges effectively, and to ensure and maintain a climate-resilient water and sanitation infrastructure that will be able to protect the health of our people and future generations. Towards this goal, I am proud to say that Montenegro is the newest member of this family, our parliament having ratified the Protocol on Water and Health in summer this year. In preparing for ratification, we promoted a strong multisectoral approach, and we have already undertaken specific steps towards setting our national targets.

The Iceland Statement on safe and climate-resilient water and sanitation of the fifth high-level meeting of the WHO small countries initiative resonated with our national priorities, and provided the initial stimulus to embark on this path to ratification. Through implementation of the Protocol, we not only aim to strengthen the climate-resilience of our water supply and sanitation services and promote sustainable water management, but also to promote universal and equitable access to water, sanitation and hygiene in all settings.

We are very grateful to the WHO for the support they have provided in this process and we also invite other small countries to join us in ratifying the Protocol.