

## ITEM 4

### Water and green economy

#### European Eco-Forum statement

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Water is one of the most valuable global finite resources, essential to life and health. **Water and water ecosystems are critical assets constitute the foundations of any economy.** Sustainable use of water is the first what associated with the greening economy. In global context European region is water-rich region, but still there are number of countries in Southern and Eastern Europe, Central Asia where water scarcity affects people and environment. Beside the natural water scarcity, the man-made depletion and pollution of water resources, degradation of water ecosystems, extreme weather phenomena (floods, droughts and others) - the economic water scarcity caused by mismanagement could limit access to water even if it is available locally to meet human needs.

To transfer towards green economy, the balance between water resource available and human and nature water demands is needed. To achieve this balance, we need to measure, control and calculate for reducing continuously our pressure. Unfortunately the **existed official statistics and data are often not suitable for measuring and assessing the effectiveness of policy mix.** Transparency, reliability, actuality of information on surface and underground water resources' quantity and quality, water resource and ecosystems status characteristics, **water efficiency use indicators for every economic sectors** should be the basis for development of the adequate policy instruments and planning of effective performance based on **integrated management.**

Western European countries have substantial experience and best practices on implementation of the Water convention, Water Framework Directive and the IWRM and River Basin Management. In the EECCA countries IWRM as well as development of transboundary cooperation is still a challenge. Lack of political will, skills and capacities to implement the IWRM is resulted in decreasing access to safe water for people and nature, food and economy; increasing acute competition and conflicts for water between different consumers and riparian countries and poses a serious barrier for sustainable development in the region. Significant role on promotion of IWRM and participatory approach in water governance in the CEE and EECCA regions is plaid by GWP and NGOs. Supported by European Commission and with organizational and experts support of UN ECE and OECD, **National policy dialogues (NPD) on IWRM and water sector reforming** present a good example of shaping political will and building knowledge for IWRM development at the national level. NPDs should become a common platform for developing the national water conservation policies.

Since 2008 the Protocol on Water and Health was included into agenda of National Policy Dialogues (NPDs) in EECCA countries. The Protocol stipulates that water availability is a prerequisite both for improved health and for sustainable development. Investments in safe drinking water and sanitation are a path to economic growth. For each \$1 invested in water, the World Health Organization estimates returns of \$3-34, depending on the region and technology. This example makes us aware that **health is an economic category** as well. And human health directly depends on water.

The Protocol stipulates that public and private sectors “should contribute to the protection of the water environment and the conservation of water resources”. However, fast water sector reforms in EECCA countries are mainly focussed on improvement of water utilities financial status and resulted in tariffs increasing, creating new barriers for provision of access to safe water for

people in EECCA countries. Such problems often associated with private sector involvement. We remind Governments that water resources are common value and property, which can be shared as finite resources and must not be sold to private sector. Privatization in water supply and sanitation sector is not a suitable economical solution of the development problems for EECCA countries.

Work on Water for Green Economy has to be based on new knowledge and capacities of main actors and **participation of public and individual consumers**. This entails the focus of actions on **education for sustainable water use** and **water footprint**, as well as introduction of **labelling for “water friendly” products**. There is clear need to **use expertise and potential of NGOs** for empowering consumers with knowledge to act for water conservation and protection of water ecosystems via water-friendly choice.

We urge EECCA governments to move forward IWRM, to harmonize of the national water legislation with EU Water Directives, to ratify and implement Protocol on Water and health and to make practical steps to **shift for wise water governance for sustainable development** of EECCA countries. We also encourage for more active use of **Compliance mechanism under the Protocol** for the sake of its effective implementation.

**We support Astana Water Action approach as very concrete, measurable and participatory one. European Eco-Forum actively contributed into preparation of this document through broad consultations and we are committed to cooperation on actions implementation at all levels, including transboundary context.**