

**Opening remarks to the Fourth Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention
By Mr. Roger Aertgeerts, on behalf of Dr. Danzon, Regional Director of the
WHO Regional Office for Europe
Bonn, 20 November 2006**

I would like to express the warm greetings of Dr Danzon, the Regional Director of the WHO Regional Office for Europe who could unfortunately not be present with us today.

Cooperation between WHO and the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention is mainly in the context of the Protocol on Water and Health, and we therefore warmly welcome the news that Germany has successfully concluded the parliamentary procedures leading to the ratification of the Protocol.

Previous speakers have noted that leading personalities are at home working on the areas of common interest. This is also the case for health specialists, and it is therefore appropriate that we recognize the efforts of Dr Mihály Kadar and Dr Thomas Kistemann who have successfully guided the deliberations of the Working Group on Water and Health and the Meeting of the Signatories in the lead up to the first Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health.

Rather than merely congratulate ourselves on the successes obtained under the Water Convention in the ten years since its ratification, I invite you to look to the future. Three areas come to mind:

1. We live in an increasingly complex chemical environment. Some heritage chemicals, such as nitrates, continue to negatively impact shared resources, while other chemicals are receiving attention (Atrazine, pesticides...)
2. We also note that as our understanding of emerging pathogens grows, the importance of and the challenges to water treatment become more obvious.
3. The impact of global climate change will create new challenges in terms of both water scarcity and flooding.

Work in these areas will be of increasing importance as assuring the basic human right to safe water in the European region.

The challenging work plan before you is a step towards addressing these concerns, and I do wish you on behalf of WHO every success in your deliberations.