

"Dear chair, distinguished delegates, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), I would like to congratulate the Parties of the Protocol on Water and Health on their progress and achievements to date. UNDP welcomes this unique legislative framework and is happy to see that it's now being put into action.

As you may be aware, the latest UNDP Human Development Report (HDR, launched Nov 2006) has focused on Water and the Global Water Crisis. Above all, this is a crisis of the poor: While 85% of the richest 20% of the world's population have access to safe water, only 25% of the poorest 20% do. The perverse reality is that in many cases, apart from being deprived from access, the poorest people often also pay the highest prices for water.

One of the main recommendations therefore was to "Make water a Human Right - and to mean it". I see this Protocol and its intended impact in the signatory states as one very concrete initiative in line with this recommendation: Everyone should have safe access to drinkable and affordable water; in fact to a daily portion of at least 20 Litre per person. A second recommendation of the HDR 2006 urged countries to develop national action plans, and for the international community to support states that are in need to implementing those, as to achieve sustainable access for all to water and sanitation.

I would like to offer UNDP's knowledge and presence at the country- and regional level to support governments in their endeavour to implement the Protocol on Water and Health. We are ready and willing to put our capacity behind the development and implementation of activities and projects in the framework of this Protocol. UNDP will be happy to support all parties and partners to move this initiative forward.

Thank you!"