

**Opening Statement of the Finnish Delegation at the Fourth Meeting of the
Parties to the Water Convention.
Bonn, 20-22 November 2006**

**Major achievements in Finland in 10 years since the entry into force of the
Convention**

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

For the first I would like to thank the Water Convention secretariat and the German Ministry of the Environment for organizing this meeting at this venue.

Let me start by mentioning that the Transboundary Waters Convention has contributed into the management of the transboundary watercourses with our neighbouring countries and it has provided very usual framework to develop different activities, such as monitoring as assessment.

However I want to highlight that the first agreement between Finland and Russia on transboundary waters was signed over 40 years ago, in 1964 with the Soviet Union at that time, with Sweden in 1971 and with Norway in 1980.

The cooperation is established on our transboundary waters, based on bilateral Agreements with our three neighbours.

One of the most significant results of the Finnish-Russian Commission, working since 1964, is the Saimaa and Vuoksi Discharge Rule.

Experiences of such proactive measures have been encouraging, working on an optional level. It has been possible to initiate changes in flow rates promptly and flexibly to reduce energy losses and damage downstream. The needs of the endangered Saimaa ringed seal are also taken into account whenever discharges from Lake Saimaa are planned, to ensure that changes will not lead to destruction of the seals's dens on the lake ice. Significant achievements of the Commission's water protection work include the declining trends in water pollution in the River Vuoksi.

The Finnish-Norwegian transboundary Water Commission, working since 1980, has elaborated Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) based on the multiple uses of the catchment areas of each of the three rivers. As part of the Paatsjoki catchment area is located in Russia, the Russian authorities have also participated in the planning process.

The first IWRM plan for Tenojoki was published as early as in 1990. The plan was updated in emphasizing the local ownership.

At this stage I mention only that Finnish –Swedish Transboundary Waters Convention is under review. The current nature of the Commission as a licensing authority is not suitable as such for the Water Framework directive's purpose for regional transboundary co-operation.

Monitoring of transboundary waters has been an important tool in managing transboundary waters in all areas. Monitoring along the Finnish-Russian border began already in 1966, with all major transboundary rivers monitored during the initial stages. Since 1971 both countries have regularly surveyed pollution loads in transboundary rivers.

The Protocol on Water and Health has been implemented in the national legislation in 2004.

Major achievements also from the point of view of the Convention have been the adoption of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) in 2000. It emphasizes planning at the river basin level, and innovative approaches such as the participatory approach and the ecosystem approach have been introduced. An important challenge in the future is the establishment of rules on how to manage the risks of floods in international waters as well as the adoption of the Marine Strategy Directive. The national legislation to implement the WFD has mainly been passed and the work aiming at elaborating RBMS's and Programme of Actions is under preparation.

Because forests are one of the most important ecosystems which regulate water flows and water infiltration, we welcome the interest which the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) has taken in this issue in mentioning the Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) in the resolutions of its 5th Conference, that will take place in 2007.