



Pan-European Coalition of Environmental Citizens Organisations

**STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN NGOs
working on water related problems in CEE and EECCA countries,
to be presented
at the 1st Meeting of the Parties to the**

PROTOCOL ON WATER AND HEALTH to

**THE 1992 CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION AND USE OF TRANSBOUNDARY
WATERCOURSES AND INTERNATIONAL LAKES**

Implementing the right of environmental citizens organisations to take part in the implementation of Protocol on Water and Health to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (hereinafter, "Protocol") and in confirmation of our commitment to be involved in the process at all stages, the European NGOs working on water problems would like to state the following:

- We call upon all governments Parties and Signatories of the Protocol to take immediate actions towards its implementation. The protocol has to become an efficient instrument to guarantee the implementation of the Right to Water defined in the General Comment N°15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which entitles every human being to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic use. We call the governments to address immediately and with the highest priority the needs of these 41 million people in Europe who have no access to safe drinking water, and to these 85 million people who have no improved sanitation; thus giving a better chance to the 13,000 children (age 0-14) in Europe who die of water related diseases each year.
- Taking into account the critical economic conditions in the EECCA countries and the limited resources for water monitoring, and the fact that one of the main problems for Protocol implementation in the region is the lack of realistic and updated statistics for the targets referred to in article 6, para 2, we call upon the Governments of the EECCA countries to take appropriate practical measures to improve the national monitoring systems. The latter are responsible to develop the data needed for the decision-making on improvement of the citizen access to safe water. Urgent measures are needed for establishing monitoring systems of the water related health problems in the rural areas of the EECCA countries. Nitrates, pesticides, oil, fluorine and other water contaminants are not presented in the official statistics of our countries. Adequate indicators, quick tests and mobile test units should be developed and used for monitoring water quality in rural areas, where conventional monitoring systems are not available and/or affordable.
- We call upon the Governments to put the priority on rural water supply and sanitation in the context of the Protocol on Water and Health by development the adequate legislation, regulations, policies, work plans and associated budget allocations to improve access to safe water and proper sanitation in rural areas of CEE and EECCA.

- Taking into account that the European Directive 271/91/EEC on Urban Wastewater Treatment gives no obligation to the Member States to build up and operate biological stage of waste water treatment in agglomerations with less inhabitants than 2000, Parties and Signatories of the Protocol should pay special attention to the problems of sanitation for these settlements. We call upon the Governments to take appropriate measures to research, develop and disseminate the information on low-cost environmentally sound sanitation options; to investigate in research and development sustainable (ecological) sanitation technologies, based on minimization of waste water production, separate waste water collection, treatment and reuse; recycling of nutrients.
- The Country Reports on water and health and progress achieved on the implementation of the Protocol have to be open and available for the public. The Government should take into account that NGOs, working on water issues, are the main stakeholders group, that have
 - accumulated important and valuable capacity of practical knowledge about the local situations, including data and results of independent research of local water and health problems (e.g. express nitrates monitoring of wells in rural areas, fluorine contamination of water, etc.);
 - gained experience in the implementation of good practices for water resource management, including water sources protection;
 - developed expertise on implementation of low cost, environmentally sustainable, and efficient technologies (rehabilitation of shallow wells, introduction of eco-sanitation technologies, including dry urine-diverting toilets and planted-soil filters for decentralized waste water treatment, etc.), and
 - strengthened capacity to mobilize public participation in the process of development and implementation of water action plans at all levels.
- Though, national governments are primarily responsible for enabling implementation of the Protocol through adequate legislation, regulations, policies, work plans and associated budget allocations, the actual implementation and achievement of the Protocol targets happens at local level. That is why, we call that local authorities should be informed and involved into the Protocol implementation at early stage.
- Parties and Signatories to the Protocol shall consider development of guidelines for governments (national and local authorities) on public awareness and information to the provisions of Article 9 and Article 10 of the Protocol to reduce practical constraints for citizens wishing to use the Protocol:
 - the guidelines should be adopted at the Second Meeting of Parties;
 - the guidelines should be based on, but not limited to, the provisions of Article 9 and Article 10 paragraph 1 of the UN/ECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (the Aarhus Convention) (MP.WAT/AC.3/2001/WP.3 – CP.TEIA/AC.1/2001/WP.3)s.