

**Mr. Meelis Münt, Secretary General, Ministry of the Environment, Estonia**

Mister Deputy Executive Secretary, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply honoured to address the Global Workshop on Source-to-Sea management. Let me start by thanking all the organisers of this events for their efforts in bringing forward vitally important questions in protecting and preserving our shared water resources on land and at sea. On behalf of the Republic of Estonia I hereby confirm our full support to the objectives of this Global Workshop.

The world is going through difficult times, threatening and hampering the successful global cooperation. It is very important that we continue working together, search for new and effective ways to improve our cooperation and by doing that continuously ensure the clean and healthy waters for the future of mankind.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Estonia is a small maritime nation in North-Eastern Europe, located on the shores of the Baltic Sea. Everything we do on land affects the status of our sea. We share the largest transboundary water body and the 5<sup>th</sup> biggest freshwater lake in Europe with our neighbours. Keeping waters clean is a complex task that we simply cannot do without our neighbours.

Being a Member State of the European Union, we apply sophisticated and challenging environmental standards. Having done so, still a lot remains to be done, especially in terms of understanding how land based activities affect the sea. In Estonia we have gone through a full scale renovation of our wastewater collection and renovation systems, we have opened rivers to allow for the fish migration, we have also eliminated most pressing agricultural pollution hot spots but the improvements in the status of our rivers, lakes and coastal waters remain slow.

When it comes to shared waters, we have to keep in mind, that different states have different practices in protecting waters, in applying standards and norms as well as in identifying and interpreting the desired goals. We don't follow always the same rules, but we can share common understanding.

One of the potential tools to use when developing common understanding is the source-to-sea approach. It is not only a technical tool but it could also provide for the improved cooperation and communication, target setting and transparent environmental management on land and at sea. However, there are many aspects that still need to be discussed in order to identify best practices in using it for instance:

- What are the best aspects to consider for organisational and institutional setting;
- How to address point and diffuse pollution;
- How to identifying pollution hot spots and taking care of them;
- How to share responsibilities;
- Or how to address new environmental concerns.

There are many effective cooperation arrangements already in place all over the world to address the concerns over shared waters. In the Baltic Sea region we have the Baltic Sea Marine Environment Protection Commission for that purpose operational since 1974. Similarly, the Water Convention provides for joint water commissions in relation to transboundary lakes and water bodies. In order to see the big picture, we need to bring different actors together and apply new management tools that connect us both for the common goal.

We are facing global challenges. The mankind needs more food, the number of people on our planet increases. Producing more means polluting more but it does not have to be that way. The source-to-sea approach would be a one compact and clear solution how to decouple increasing production and pollution, by looking at pollution sources, pathways and impacts and sharing responsibilities on consequences.

Joint and transboundary water commission serve their purpose well, but the very substance of their work must be broadened and expanded in sense that all relevant aspects of pollution combatting would be considered throughout all the pathways of pollution flows.

To conclude, we all depend on the ocean for food, livelihoods or our wellbeing. But we often seem to forget that we should consider its needs as well. We must keep together and continue our collective action to ensure the sustainable use and protection of our shared water resources on land and at sea.

Thank you, and I wish you all a successful workshop.