

**Sixth session of the Meeting of the
Parties to the Protocol on water and health**

HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

**“The Protocol on Water and Health: strengthening the resilience of WASH and health
services in times of climate change and pandemic”**

High-level Panel 1:

Setting pandemic-resilient WASH policies: lessons from COVID-19

Statement of Mr. Bjorkholt, Norway

First/main question: “What were the main lessons learned by Norway from the pandemic in terms of water, sanitation and hygiene, and what were the key innovations in the pandemic response and recovery?”

Thank you for giving me the chance to elaborate on this, Mrs France. Firstly I want to thank the secretariate and everyone that has contributed to arrange such an important and well-prepared meeting of the parties to the Protocol.

Norway has been active in the work under the Protocol since it’s very beginning. We have found the Protocol’s tools very useful in developing and following up national targets for water and health. This work has assisted us in creating a better basis for handling different challenges and hereunder also the pandemic.

In Norway, a well-regulated drinking water sector serves the population and institutions with high-quality drinking water. Based on this, we were able to manage the pandemic in terms of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) policies, for example with hand-washing campaigns at public and household level. In health-care facilities, we fulfilled criteria for WASH, such as access to water, handwashing facilities and soap, sanitation and waste management before the pandemic, and that was an important pillar of managing the pandemic in terms of infection control.

The pandemic was also a strong reminder of the importance of hygiene, an aspect that the public constantly needs to be reminded of in a “modern society” where safety is often considered to be taken care of by others. It is not so. The main factor is your own hygienic measures. The pandemic gave us an opportunity to remind the population of the importance of hygiene. It was an interesting fact to notice that the prevalence of other communicable diseases fell quite significantly during the pandemic. This can probably be attributed to improved hand hygiene and other measures We are hoping that this lesson will not be forgotten when things more or less go back to normal.

Yet another lesson learned during the pandemic was the need to find new ways to increase scientific knowledge and improve surveillance and preparedness. The Norwegian Institute of Public Health led work on investigating the feasibility and effectiveness of environmental surveillance as an early warning system.

In the unstable and threatening international situation we are experiencing now in Europe it is more important than ever to keep in mind the necessity of access to clean water and adequate sanitation. Lack of basic WASH increases the burden upon the civil population immensely in times of war and turmoil. It is my view that the Protocol also in such times provides a solid foundation for country activities to secure the health and well-being of the citizens.

Finally I would like to draw the attention to the fact that collaboration across countries under the Protocol can serve as an inspiration also to other networks. Hence we have suggested the theme «wastewater surveillance» for the next meeting of the Nordic/Baltic network on water and health in December in Oslo. And thank you once more for letting me share these short experiences with you.

b) Second, possible follow up question – What were the key innovations in the COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery with a view on WASH and how did the Protocol framework help you with the response on WASH during COVID-19?

I would say that there is a constant development of new and more innovative ways to surveil the occurrence of diseases. In Norway the wastewater surveillance for Covid-19 was for instance a new approach for us to take. And the pandemic, as I mentioned earlier, was also a strong reminder of the importance of hygiene measures. That is one aspect that the public constantly need to be reminded of in a “modern society” where safety by a large scale is considered to be taken care of by others, like manufacturers of different products etc. It is not so. The main factor is your own hygienic measures. And the protocol on water and health might serve as a constant reminder for political leaders to keep focus on this.“

Statement of Mr. Rusu, Romania

The frequency and intensity of dangerous meteorological phenomena - extreme temperatures, torrential rains generating floods, hail, storms - are increasing in Romania as well.

The impact of these climate changes on WASH services and behaviors as well as on water resources has significant consequences not only for public health but also the environment.

These vulnerabilities to climate change lead to both a qualitative and quantitative deterioration of water resources, which ultimately affect water supplies for the wider population. Domestic water demand and supply will therefore face a similar effect; for example, domestic water treatment can be affected in the event of floods, due to either the infiltration of rainwater into the sewage systems, but also to the direct flooding of the treatment plants. It is common knowledge that Romania is one of the most exposed European countries to large-scale floods, with approximately 13% of the country's surface representing flood zones.

Climate change is not the only challenge – the COVID-19 pandemic is also a factor, that has affected the entire world. During the pandemic period in Romania, water operators have expanded the monitoring of parameters, performing a greater number of analyses. As a result, the number of drinking water supply areas is also increasing. Also, during the pandemic period, a recommendation was made for the application of measures to ensure fair access everyone around drinking water, to be microbiologically and chemically compliant with current quality requirements. Also, in 2020, the population connected to the public water supply system represented 72.4% of Romania's resident population, a higher per centage than in 2019. The population's connection to the sewage systems was 56%, with a slight increase compared to 2019. Regarding the population connected to the sewage systems provided with treatment plants, this was 54.7% of the total resident population of the country.

In Romania, the COVID-19 pandemic stimulated the creation of several electronic information systems to better manage overstretched health resources, and these may further provide ways to strengthen health systems in the future.

In March 2020, Romania opted for centralized management of the COVID-19 pandemic. The central administration therefore oversaw the pandemic and local authorities had the power to implement local measures.

In addition to the plans and programs currently underway in Romania, the Water and Health Protocol is the legal instrument that, in the last twenty years, has supported activities in the field of water, sanitation, hygiene and health, ensuring access to safe and fair drinking water and to sewage services, to improving the quality of drinking water.

Thus, in conclusion, I would like to emphasize that Romania supports the presentation of the results of this session at the 2023 United Nations Water Conference (New York, March 22-24, 2023) and the Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Budapest, July 2023), all the

more so since the Romanian delegation was present at the International Water Decade Conference (June 6-9, 2022, Dushanbe, Tajikistan).

Thank you!

Statement of Mr. Savdakassov, Kazakhstan

Уважаемые участники, дамы и господа!

Позвольте мне приветствовать Вас на Шестой сессии Совещания Сторон Протокола по проблемам воды и здоровья!

Вода и санитария имеют решающее значение для жизни, здоровья и благополучия любого общества. Предоставление надлежащих услуг водоснабжения, санитарии и гигиены может помочь странам в противостоянии глобальным вызовам и угрозам, в том числе таким как пандемия COVID-19.

Пандемия внесла соответствующие коррективы в развитие всех стран, в том числе Казахстана. В марте 2020 года распространение коронавирусной инфекции стало беспрецедентным вызовом, которое повлияло на все аспекты жизни.

Несмотря на сложившиеся условия наша республика продвигала свою программу развития, одновременно находя инновационные решения для управления эпидемиологической ситуацией. Так, в целях недопущения дальнейшего распространения коронавирусной инфекции была разработана специальная матрица оценки эпидемиологической ситуации в регионах, построены инфекционные больницы, разработана отечественная вакцина «QazVac». Принятие данных мер в купе с мерами по вакцинации населения, масочного режима, позволило стабилизировать эпидемиологическую ситуацию и снять ограничительные меры.

Инновационным решением в борьбе с коронавирусом стало применение цифровых технологий. В частности, была разработана единая база лабораторных исследований по диагностике коронавирусной инфекции и внедрено мобильное приложение «Ashyq». Эти технологии позволили минимизировать распространение инфекции в стране и создали возможность для продолжения деятельности бизнеса в период карантина.

В целях дальнейшего совершенствования мер раннего выявления, оперативного реагирования на возникающие биологические угрозы и их профилактики в мае текущего года Президентом Казахстана был подписан Закон «О биологической безопасности Республики Казахстан», который позволяет усилить основу для своевременного реагирования на возможные биологические угрозы.

В ходе пандемии в республике постоянно совершенствовались подходы к недопущению распространения коронавирусной инфекции с учетом международного опыта, в том числе практике гигиене рук, для реализации которой требуется доступ к воде и санитарии, особенно в государственных учреждениях как учебные заведения, школы и медицинские учреждения.

Несмотря на то, что во время пандемии специальные меры для борьбы с коронавирусной инфекцией, связанные с услугами водоснабжения и санитарии, в республике не принимались, вопросы обеспечения населения водоснабжением и водоотведением оставались и остаются в приоритете.

В 2015 году наша страна приняла на себя обязательства по реализации Повестки дня в области устойчивого развития до 2030 года, которые служат политической основой для развития, в том числе в части обеспечения услугами водоснабжения и санитарии в стране. Казахстан как полноправный член международного сообщества уделяет особое внимание реализации прав своих граждан на безопасную питьевую воду и надлежащую санитарию.

На протяжении многих лет Правительство Казахстана прикладывает огромные усилия для решения проблем водоснабжения и водоотведения в населенных пунктах, благодаря которым восстанавливается водная инфраструктура, модернизируется система водоснабжения и водоотведения и улучшается качество подаваемой населению воды.

Пандемия COVID-19 помогла нашей стране пересмотреть многие аспекты деятельности и приоритеты. В перспективе, представляется очень важным заложить прочную основу для борьбы с возникающими угрозами и продолжить работу по достижению целей устойчивого развития по воде и санитарии. В этом отношении Протокол по проблемам воды и здоровья следует рассматривать как уникальный инструмент для реагирования на современные вызовы.

Казахстан намерен присоединиться к Протоколу в ближайшее время. Мы уверены в том, что Протокол окажет содействие в развитии системы управления водными ресурсами, улучшении качества водоснабжения и санитарии и сокращении рисков для здоровья населения страны.

Пользуясь случаем, я хотел бы выразить благодарность Европейской экономической комиссии Организации Объединенных Наций и Всемирной Организации Здравоохранения за поддержку, которую они оказали нам в рассмотрении вопроса присоединения к Протоколу.

Спасибо за внимание!

Statement of Mrs. Nicolaescu, Republic of Moldova

Water, sanitation and hygiene – central component of the crisis response

COVID-19 pandemic

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) are core determinants of health and well-being. The COVID-19 has clearly highlighted the fundamental role of WASH interventions as a first line of defence in preventing and controlling the spread of infectious diseases. In Moldova, WASH has been a central component of the COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan, with core interventions established across the settings, including healthcare facilities, schools, workplaces, and public spaces. As well, it was among the most prioritized interventions by donors and partners within the framework of external assistance, as part of the recovery and response programs.

Implementation of intensive hand hygiene against COVID-19 has significantly contributed to the reduction of water-borne diseases. In Moldova, the incidence for the most common water-related diseases registered a ten-fold reduction in the post-pandemic years.

Refugee crisis

Safely managed WASH services are an essential part of protecting human health in humanitarian context, including the current refugee crisis triggered by the war in Ukraine. Moldova has faced the highest per capita rate of refugees, comparing to other refugee hosting countries. Since the Russian invasion in February, more than 680 000 refugees crossed from Ukraine into Moldova. Around 95 000 refugees are currently remaining in Moldova, about half of them being minors. More than 65.000 of refugees were accommodated in 130 temporary placement centers. Currently, 81 accommodation centers are still functioning for refugees from Ukraine, where they have free access to essential services, including WASH and medical services, as per Regulation adopted by the Government.

Ensuring adequate access to WASH services – a major component of the response plan with the aim to strengthen health prevention, well-being and dignity of refugees accessing accommodation centers.

Imminent risks to water security

Today, the water security in the entire region, including Moldova is under significant danger. The risks to human health and the environment from the impacts of the war in Ukraine are far-reaching and goes beyond Ukraine's borders.

Dniestr Basin is the main source of drinking water for the Moldovan population, with more 2 million people leaving within its area. Earlier this month, an attack on the Hydropower station in Dnestrovsk took place, which is just 10 km from the border with Moldova. While in this case the hydropower station dam has not been affected, but the appalling strikes on water infrastructure may

have devastating impact on water quality and bring tragic consequences for the entire European Region.

From immediate needs to long-term development

The National Development Strategy, European Moldova 2030 creates the basis for sustainable and inclusive country development. In line with targets under SDGs 3 and 6, it provides strategic framework for investment in essential WASH services, as a key policy response for a healthy recovery from the pandemic and increased resilience against future crises. National WASH agenda is underpinned by the National Program on the implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health 2016-2025 and National Water Supply and Sanitation Strategy 2014-2030.

Strengthening the legal framework and create an enabling environment to improve water quality, integrated water resources management and water supply and sanitation are among international commitments assumed by our country according to the Association Agreement with the EU and of those deriving from the status of a candidate country for joining the EU.

The Government reaffirmed commitment to ensure that everyone in Moldova has access to safe drinking water, sanitation service, and good hygiene. It will imply a comprehensive long-term approach to addressing persisting challenges in the water and sanitation sector. As Party to the Protocol on Water and Health, Moldova will apply this unique legal instrument to advance national WASH agenda, invest in a more inclusive and resilient WASH programs, and ensure delivery of well-designed durable WASH interventions.

Talking points of Mr. Cumming_keynote speaker

1. Introduction

- Brief remarks on the Protocol
 - Diversity of countries – work to be done in every country
 - Strengths of the Water & Health Protocol
 - Priorities in light of current status and pandemic
- Broader lessons from pandemic that have relevance to this group
 - Environmental health
 - Infectious disease
 - Science in politics and public policy

2. Lessons for WASH

- Hygiene
 - Large boost in profile/demand – especially pre-vaccines
 - Challenge of changing/sustaining behaviour, co-benefits
 - Tailoring approaches to settings – HWWS vs other products
 - Role of water supply as a determinant of HWWS
- Water
 - Different settings
 - Rights/access during lockdown
 - State interventions to ensure uninterrupted service
- Sanitation
 - Rights/access during lockdown
 - Wastewater surveillance for early detection
 - Relevance to non-sewered populations
 - Need to nourish platforms created, standardise methods
- Inequalities
 - Socio-economic disparities in COVID-19 as they relate to WASH
 - Occupational hazards
 - Vulnerable groups, need for special measures, egs:

- Homelessness, migrants

3. Going forward/implications

1. No regrets, no delays on vision of universal access to safely managed services
2. The window of leverage is closing to harness the insights/impetus from the pandemic
3. Essential services underpinning health security in a time of increasing uncertainty

Closing...

- Governments that were less well-prepared deployed stricter and longer lockdowns, and in turn suffered greater socio-economic impacts
- Highlight positive points from 2030 agenda and programme of work 2023-25

High-level Panel 2: Adapting WASH and health sector and policies to climate change

Statement of Mr. Zlatanovic, Serbia

Excellences, Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

I am honored today, as the Ambassador at the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the UN Geneva Office, to be a part of this sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health.

First, I would like to express my appreciation to the UNECE, WHO and the organizers of this meeting, for their extraordinary efforts and work, in leading and strengthening the Protocol on regional and international level.

I am proud that Serbia had an opportunity to serve as a Chair to the Protocol Bureau in previous years, considering very good and effective work done on the implementation of the Protocol's targets through different international and national activities. As the host of the Fifth Meeting of Parties, we have shown our highest political level of commitment to the process, having the prime minister for the first time, at the opening of the Meeting of Parties, along with Minister of Environmental protection and many other high levels representing different ministries and institutions.

We are considering progress in attaining the water, sanitation and health related goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and fostered strategic discussion on implementation gaps. We are also discussing political and technical dimensions of key issues for the Pan-European region, safe management of water and sanitation services in the light of COVID 19 crisis, climate change and other challenges that are affecting equitable access to water and sanitation.

We always need to keep in mind that Protocol and the Agenda 2030 are mutually reinforcing. The Protocol is a legally binding tool that goes beyond the SDGs and will continue after 2030. The PWH at national, regional and global levels, clearly facilitates the achievement of universal and equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation for all, promoting human health and wellbeing.

To put the human right to safe water and sanitation into practice and leave no one behind, we need to continue working in all dimensions all around the Pan European Region and between ourselves, we need to struggle to develop more strategic approach and additional financial resources.

This meeting will be a key milestone for the implementation of the Protocol and an opportunity to discuss strategic directions of the pan-European water, sanitation, and health agenda. We are looking forward that new programme of work for the period 2023-2025, will be the main instrument to support the Protocol's implementation, will respond to countries' priorities and needs.

This panel and a high-level session on strengthening the resilience of WASH and health services in times of climate change and pandemics is a great opportunity to take stock of countries responses to ensure access to water, sanitation and hygiene in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is aiming to foster an open dialogue on how to tackle the challenges posed by climate change in the Pan-European region to ensure climate-resilient WASH and health services.

We need to consider provisions of the Protocol that are highly relevant to adaptation to climate change and to establish coordinated systems for surveillance and early warning systems, to respond to outbreaks and incidents of water-related disease, especially those caused by extreme weather events (According to Article 8).

The institutions working with water and sanitation need to have the capacity to address the integration of climate change adaptation, mitigation, and risk reduction in the sectors and the ability to look at how water and sanitation connects to other sectoral plans.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am glad to announce that Serbia fully supports the Protocol on Water and Health and its Targets, highlighting that it must be used as an efficient tool for good intersectoral, regional and international cooperation. We need to continue working with different actors in strengthening climate resilience and better water management.

Appreciating the efforts made by UNECE member States and other stakeholders towards achieving the Protocol's Priority Goals, we still need to further develop synergies between countries, different actors in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and other relevant intergovernmental processes through activities addressed by member States, in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and climate action targets.

The Republic of Serbia remains committed to this process and we assure you that we will align our regional and national policies, implementation of Water Directives, Paris Agreement, the Ostrava Declaration on Environment and Health, and other international agreements, for advancing Protocols implementation.

Talking points of Mr. Borbely, Romania

"How can the impacts of climate change on water, sanitation and health services in Romania be effectively addressed with a view to achieving Sustainable Development Goals 6 and 13?" - national experience

- Climate change, a “slow-burning pandemic” with long-term effects, often regarded in terms of carbon emissions, **in felt by people through water changes**. Rising temperatures mean increasingly severe floods, droughts and unpredictable weather patterns across the world, damaging water supplies and sanitation services. **These challenges require effective coordinated actions to prevent long-term devastating effects.**
- Following its engagement in implementing the 2030 Agenda, Romanian Government set up in 2017, the Department for Sustainable Development (DSD), the public authority responsible for coordinating, at national level, the **National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2030 (NSDS)**. The strategy, citizen centered, transposes all 17 SDGs at the national level focusing, among others, on raising awareness of the imminent threat of climate change both at the political level and among citizens.
- Having previously been the only long-term strategy, (NSDS) has been complemented by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP), which brings in additional resources in water sector and acts as an enabler for change.
- For a coordinated implementation of the NSDS, DSD led the preparation of Romania’s National Action Plan (NAP), providing Romania’s government with an operational framework for the implementation of the NSDS.
- Recently (September 2022) and subsidiary to **NSDS**, the Romanian *Government* approved **The National Strategy on Circular Economy**, that foresees water assessment throughout the strategy.
- Universal access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, a human right enshrined in the 2030 Global Goals, can only be reached if countries commit to better cross-institutional cooperation, recognizing that water, sanitation and hygiene are essential elements in climate change adaptation.
- To tackle the interconnected challenges, Romania, has introduced, the occupation of „sustainable development expert”. The first Romania 150 experts, of the sustainable development hubs, have just completed their training and two thousand more 2000 will follow by 2026

- Romania's new set of National Sustainable Development Indicators (NSDIs) provides an opportunity for improving data interoperability across ministries, for streamlining data collection in support of sustainable development, and for tracking policies' contribution to SDG implementation.
- Linking the **Protocol on water and health** with other regional process, Romania, through DSD leadership, took part, for the first time in the "**Global Process for the Analysis and Evaluation of Sanitation and Drinking Water 2021-2022 (GLAAS)**", as part of its efforts in monitoring SDG 6 on Clean Water and Sanitation.
- In 2021, Romania completed the third round of the UNECE's **Environmental Performance Review (EPR)** that assessed 54 SDG targets. For the 6.2 target, the EPR states that the proportion of the population using safely managed sanitation services in all areas increased from 62 % in 2010 to 83 % in 2020, an increase of 33.3 % in 10 years, enabling the country to reach 100 % by 2030 by keeping up this rate of progress.
- As part of its engagement to 2030 Agenda, in 2023 Romania will present its second VNR that will state the progress recorded since its 2018 first VNR, in implementing SDG6.
- In Dushanbe, this year, at the second edition of the "International Water Decade Conference", the active discussions allowed the consolidation of intergovernmental actions in the field of water. Romania's active involvement in the UN Water Conference in 2023, is proven by its willingness to co-chair the interactive dialogue no. 5 of the Conference - Water Action Decade: *Accelerating the implementation of the objectives of the Decade.*
- The impact of climate change has no national borders. Joined efforts in protecting the environment, assuring that we leave future generations a greener and a safer planet, fighting climate change with nature-based solutions are among actions that Romania considers when addressing the challenges of climate change

Talking Points of Mr. Loebel, EurEau

Too little water:

Long-term declining precipitation and prolonged droughts leading to competition between water uses or even water supply problems, higher pollutants concentrations and investment needs to secure supply.

Too much water:

More heavy rain storms leading to stormwater overflows and infrastructure damage.

Raising temperatures:

Increased evaporation and sea level rise leading to lower water availability, salt water intrusion and flooded infrastructure.

Measures:

Jointly with governments:

- ~ Future climate scenarios and their repercussions
- ~ Long-term strategies: uses, demographics, priority to water supply, pollution reduction
- ~ Governance: responsibilities, financing through the 3Ts and polluter-pays

Water services:

- ~ Involvement in development of long-term national/regional/local strategies
- ~ Translate strategy into climate resilience plans at operator level
 - o Supply security: new sources, inter-connectors
 - o Demand management: demand reduction, manage peak demand, leakage reduction
 - o Work with municipalities to build 'sponge cities'
 - o Provide 'new water' for reuse and aquifer recharge.

In short: Long-term Strategy – Cooperation – Governance and financing

Talking points of Mr. Hamdo Tinjak, Bosnia and Herzegovina

How is your country integrating adaptation to climate change impacts into water and sanitation policy and strategic planning ?

- BiH is significantly exposed to the threats of climate change, in particular the frequency and magnitude of floods from its major rivers which have tripled in frequency in the last decade;
- BiH is in the early stage of preparation for action in the field of climate change, but there is an awareness that good adaptation to climate change can greatly reduce their impact;
- Climate change impacts increase the need for risk management to be effectively integrated into development strategies; to ensure strategic planning of the approximation process BiH adopted a countrywide sector strategy for Environment and Climate Actions;
- The impacts of climate change on water and sanitation services, including water supply, sewerage and wastewater treatment, make harder to achieve universal and equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation and compromise their environmental and health benefits.
- Through the Strategy for climate adaptation, a number of measures in the field of water resource management are foreseen: strengthening the capacity of institutions responsible for water management in BiH, implementation of measures from Water Management Plans and Flood Risk Reduction Plans, by river basins and entities, Reduce water losses in water supply systems to the optimal level, by increasing the efficiency of water supply companies etc; Most of these measures are incorporated in BiH targets in accordance with the Protocol, and they are also part of measures within River Basin Management Plans as well as Water Strategies at level of entities.

How will Bosnia and Herzegovina use the Protocol's framework to further adapt to climate change?

- BiH set the the targets, target dates and indicators in accordance with Article 6, paragraph (2) of the Protocol. The targets are harmonised, and they correspond to relevant laws and strategic documents adopted in BiH;
- The Protocol is a useful tool for planning adaptation to climate change, requiring the establishment of an intersectoral coordination mechanism, broad participation, and an analysis of gaps, development of scenarios and prioritization of measures based on development choices. Further more, activities under the Protocol's programme of work promote the implementation of national targets and can provide a regional platform to

facilitate exchange of experience and good practices on bridging water, sanitation and health goals with climate goals and commitments.

- We suggest Parties to the Protocol consider climate change focused targets in the next reporting cycle.

Talking Points of Mr. Van Gislst, EIB

- Recent example in an EU founding MS where climate change was still not considered for the refurbishment of a recently flooded WWTP;
- Importance of mainstreaming it in our design approaches (including education system) and perhaps even regulatory systems;
- We ensure there is a Climate Risk Vulnerability Assessment on projects;
- Promoter capacity and ability to cope is a core ingredient.

Talking Points of Ms. Odjaklieska, North Macedonia

- Water security is vital to North Macedonian economic development, environmental sustainability and social inclusion
- Water Monitoring appears a priority in management decisions
- Water losses in the urban and rural distribution networks are high
- The rural-urban disparity in accessing to safe drinking water and sanitation continues
- Treatment of the urban wastewaters is improved and continues
- Water resources in Republic of North Macedonia are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change in terms of both water quantity and water quality
- North Macedonia has taken many actions to ensure safe and climate resilient management of water supply and sanitary services.

Talking Points of Ms. Olijslager-Jaarsma, the Netherlands

- Describing the **urgency** of the current water-related crises: “our climate crisis is primarily a water crisis. We feel its impacts through worsening floods, rising sea levels, shrinking glaciers, wildfires and droughts. Also heavily impacting human health and well-being, achievement of gender equality, school attendance, the resilience of communities and so on”.

- Informing about the **UN 2023 Water Conference**: “UN 2023 Water Conference which the Netherlands is proud to be the Co-Host together with the Republic of Tajikistan. As the global community, have a once in a generation opportunity – with the UN 2023 Water Conference for the first time in nearly 46 years taking place in March of next year”.
- Inviting to join the **Water Action Agenda**: “To truly create a watershed moment for the world, we [Co-Hosts] are reaching out to you - Member States and other stakeholders - to come up with voluntary commitments for the Water Action Agenda in support of SDG 6 - one of the main outcomes of the Conference. We also need, for example, more women in leadership positions at every level in WASH. Research has shown that when women are more in the lead, more attention is being paid to the inclusion of all excluded groups, be it elderly, handicapped or indigenous peoples.