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Role of water in future SDGs

MNE–SI speaking points for 3rd meeting of OWG SDGs
(focus on water)

- Water and sanitation is the topic of utmost importance for sustainable development. We welcome the estimations of the World Bank that MDG goal on access to water and sanitation has been achieved last year, nevertheless this is not the reason for satisfaction. Actions have to be increased both to ensure access to safe drinking water and sanitation, and to fully realise human right to safe drinking water and sanitation globally.
- When dealing with water we have to bear in mind its multidimensional nature. Water issues are strongly connected with all other aspects of sustainability. Last year in Rio we re-affirmed the importance of water for sustainable development, recognizing, that "water is at the core of sustainable development as it is closely linked to a number of key global challenges".
- When developing SDGs, the following positive contributions of water to sustainable development should be considered:
 - Firstly, **water is an important environmental factor**. It is not only a precondition for biodiversity, water ecosystems themselves are rich in biodiversity. Wetlands and other ecosystems provide for important ecosystem services: they provide water for variety of uses, prevent land degradation, provide for water cleaning and treatment, etc. For this reason continuation of conservation efforts is needed.
 - Secondly, **water is important economic resource** – 70% of freshwater is used in agriculture and additional 20% in industry. At this point the importance of water-energy nexus is to be properly addressed: water on one hand is important renewable energy resource, on the other hand there are numerous unsustainable patterns of its use in energy and other sectors. Need for sustainable use of freshwater resources in economic activities is necessary for lowering water stress and maintaining water quality.
 - Thirdly, **water has tremendous influence on human health and wellbeing** – as already proven through MDG on safe drinking water and sanitation, access to water and sanitation positively affects human health, improves quality of life, contributes to higher participation in education process, etc. With further promotion of safe and clean drinking water we will contribute to eradication of poverty.
 - Fourthly, **water is an important element of international cooperation**. Research shows that shared water resources are in most cases managed through cooperation. Cooperation in managing shared water resources contributes positively not only to access to water but also strengthens trust and friendly relations among states and communities. Slovenia and Montenegro have positive experience with cooperation within Sava river basin, based on

Framework Agreement, which is an important example of regional mechanism for cooperation in water management.

- However, we should not focus only on benefits of water but also consider options on how to appropriately address root-causes of water stress with preventive approach. Some of these issues include over-use and unsustainable use of water resources, climate change, pollution and poor management of available resources. Projections show, business as usual in water use and management will lead to increased water stress in many parts of the world and especially in those countries, that are already most vulnerable.
- As we have pointed out at previous OWG sessions – we will have to leave behind a “silo approach” and think more boldly and in more integrative way to form a comprehensive SDG on water or to incorporate water in other relevant SDGs. In the end it will be important that effective inclusion of water in SDGs will capture specific water related inter-linkages among all three dimensions of sustainable development.