



ESTONIA

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Statement by

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Turning Political Commitment into Action

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Distinguished Chairperson, Excellencies, Delegates,

Estonia fully supports the views expressed by the EU presidency. Estonia being a small country by its territory and population, but rich in water resources, has always kept water as a valuable asset on the top of political agenda.

As a new member of the EU, we carefully follow new initiatives in the EU, and among others also the integrated approach for developing and managing water resources.

Estonia considers very important implementation of the various initiatives in order to move towards **good governance**.

Cross-sectoral integration is a key for promoting sustainable development. In Estonia, we aim to achieve it in all phases starting from elaborating strategies up to implementation and monitoring. Let me give you some examples: we have established national coordination mechanisms for water sector through introducing integrated water resource management. Also the process of elaboration of the National Environmental Strategy aims to involve all key stakeholders in order to produce better cross-sectoral integration and raise public awareness.

Integration is crucial in energy and agricultural sectors as these are the most intensive water consumers. We would need significant technological innovation in order to move towards more sustainable use of water.

We would like to emphasise multi-stakeholder and open approach in all phases of decision-making. Such values as transparency, balanced stakeholder involvement, sharing responsibilities with local communities and local interests, are carefully followed during our planning process.

For **successful implementation** of water related internationally agreed goals and targets, Estonia has chosen river-basin management plans which in large extent cover integrated water resource management principles. We have made considerable progress in preparing national river-basin management plans. As a specific aspect of preparing river-basin management plans, transboundary cooperation with neighbouring countries in respect of water and sanitation is of utmost importance. Transboundary basin management issues are crucial for reaching our common targets. Elaborating transboundary river basin management plan has proved to be a challenge, as it needs to unite different aspects of agriculture, fisheries, industry, energy, tourism and value ecosystem approach. Estonia has also started development cooperation as a donor country by disseminating our know-how and experience in the field of transboundary water management issues.

Mr Chairperson,

Estonia shares a concern about scarcity of **financial resources** already expressed earlier by several countries, as water and sanitation investments are expensive. However, even in the conditions of a relatively modest GDP, remarkable results could be achieved. Estonia has made considerable efforts to guarantee domestic funding and value water by fair pricing.

Our practice for providing funding relies on environmental charges applied also to water resource use and pollution. A special investment program is in place for water sector. Moreover, the law constitutes a steady increase of charges and Estonian government is going to introduce environmental tax reform. This reform is expected to motivate sustainable consumption of natural resources (including water) through economic instruments.

Besides central government funding, local government co-financing is important to guarantee local level commitment and real actions.

To conclude, Estonia believes that strong political commitment, effective implementation schemes and readiness to guarantee domestic contributions are paving the way for achieving Millennium Development Goals.

Thank You!