



Permanent Mission of the Republic of Croatia to the United Nations

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Statement by

Mrs Višnja Jelic-Mück
State Secretary for Environment
Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Reconstruction of the
Republic of Croatia

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Commission on Sustainable Development

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Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The recently issued positive Opinion - *Avis* of the European Commission on Croatia's application for membership in the European Union strongly influences the processes leading towards sustainable development. While recognising the results obtained so far, the document demands to intensify the implementation of a comprehensive reform programme. Significant efforts including substantial investment and strengthening of administrative capacity will be needed for the enforcement of environmental legislation. The most demanding areas are waste management, wastewater treatment and water supply along with upgrading of administrative capacities on the local and national levels.

- The development of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development is envisaged through the process of summarizing and upgrading sectoral policies and thematic programmes that were passed in the last few years. The recent establishment of an Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency Fund is a significant contribution to the creation of an enabling domestic environment. The number of local agendas 21 and similar local programmes is increasing. Organizations in both the business and civil sectors are becoming mature partners of the government to jointly face the environmental challenges.

In spite of a continual progress in the areas of water, sanitation and human settlements, there are signs indicating a need to reinforce the approach.

- There is a growing disproportion between 76% of inhabitants connected to the public water supply system compared with 40% connected to the public sewage system. The rate of wastewater treatment is low. High environmental sensitivity of the total surface of Croatia, including more than 50% of carstic soil is slowing down the realization of new projects. All the projects in the coastal area are to be brought in line with the protection of the coastal sea waters.
- Programmes and plans are developed for bigger and medium sized towns. More than 5,000 settlements with less than 500 inhabitants that are predominant in the settlement structure need practical solutions of wastewater treatment.
- The progress is slow in the area of productive public-private partnership. A few good examples in smaller communities are at the same time encouraging and insufficient. The stakeholders' involvement is yet to be further developed. The government has a decisive role in creating an encouraging environment for such cooperation.
- Weak financing absorption capacity at the local level is a limiting factor for reception of funding thus preventing the improvement of the local sanitary standard. Local communities are slowly taking over new responsibilities and initiatives.
- The dynamic changes in spatial structure caused by privatisation threaten public interest, especially in the coastal area. The traditional planning approaches fail in finding solutions to these new demands for

space and infrastructure. A short tourist season, limited only to the summer months, aggravates the problem.

- In spite of traditionally well-developed international co-operation in the field of water management, the real effects are humble.

Croatia has been supported through international funding in the area of capacity building. We need this assistance to continue and to focus on the local communities.

Based on the fact that all major Croatian rivers are trans-boundary water courses, we are highly motivated to collaborate in upgrading the patterns of co-operation with neighboring states to the level of effective joint governance.

Mr. Chairman, we strongly believe in the catalyst role of this session and are waiting for its condensed outcome to outline our way forward, taking its final shape in the policy year of the CSD-13.

Thank you.