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CHECK

STATEMENT AT THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

BY

H.E. MR. JAN-ERIK ENESTAM

MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT OF FINLAND

New York, 28 April 2004

Mr Chairman,

Finland associates herself with the statement made by Ireland on behalf of the European Union.

Let me start by stating our understanding, that the main elements of an enabling environment regarding to sustainable water supply, sanitation and human settlements are good governance, appropriate legislation, integrated planning, sufficient capacity and financing.

Good governance means that all decisions on public services are made at the lowest possible level. In relation to water supply and sanitation, customers and end-users have to be involved. In rural areas, user associations and water committees are often central in constructing, operating and maintaining the services. In urban areas the most important effort should be building the confidence between water companies and the consumers through transparent governance and reliable services.

Secondly, I would like to emphasize the importance of Integrated Water Resources Management Plans. They provide a tool for balancing the demands of different water uses as well as maintaining the ecosystems and thus promote economic, social and environmental development. They also provide a forum for participatory approach and thus take into account the needs of local communities.

It is important that the UN bodies and international financing institutions support countries in preparation of these plans. Greater use of scientific and educational tools for capacity building is necessary.

I would like to underline integrated planning and management, especially on land use and transportation, in developing compact cities. We aim at reasonably dense cities where access to transportation, job opportunities and services is improved.

I see a close relationship between water and sanitation services and production and consumption. It is obvious that more efficient use of water and the reduction of pollution will require sustainable consumption and production policies.

Mr Chairman,

Creating an enabling environment needs sufficient financing and capacity building. Finland is ready to cooperate with developing country partners in meeting the internationally agreed time bound targets on water, sanitation and human settlements included in Millennium Development Goals and Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

These targets thus have an important role in a new Finnish Governmental Policy on Development Cooperation. We feel that adequate water and sanitation services are crucial in supporting the development of both rural areas and human settlements. We are committed to meet these goals also through the European Union Water Initiative.

Finally Mr Chairman,

Let me emphasise, as have so many countries before us, the critical importance of including water and sanitation in National Poverty Reduction Strategies. This is the only meaningful path to achieve our common targets and we strongly encourage all countries to adhere to this call in order to support decent life, sustainable food production and overall well-being.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.