

# NGO Statement on equitable access to water and sanitation

## The third Meeting of the Parties

Oslo, November 25, 2013

NGOs, working in water and sanitation sector in the Pan-European region consider the implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health provides a sound framework to translate right to water and sanitation into practice in full context of UN Resolutions which entitle everyone to available, accessible, affordable and safe water and sanitation and urge countries to plan for a progressive realization of these rights. The implementation of the Protocol encourages governments to involve a wide range of stakeholders in the fulfillment of the right to water and sanitation.

Confirming the commitment to advocate and implement the Water Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health at all levels, the NGOs are one of the main stakeholders' group, which has

- accumulated important and valuable practical knowledge about national and local water and sanitation and related health problems;
- gained experience in the implementation of good practices on water management, including equitable access to safe water and sanitation for vulnerable and marginalized groups, including children in schools, hospitals in rural and urban areas; introduction of Water and Sanitation Safety plans, especially for rural communities; water sources protection, transboundary cooperation;
- developed expertise on planning and implementation of low-cost, sustainable and efficient solutions for small water supply and sanitation, introduction of eco-sanitation technologies and decentralized natural wastewater treatment, WASH campaign at national-local levels and
- strengthened capacity to mobilize public participation in water management and water sector reforms at all levels.

The NGOs working on the ground highlight the following problems and challenges in the pan-European region:

- There are still no reliable data on equitable access to safe water and Sanitation at the pan-European region
- Additionally, some of the Parties report about degradation of water supply and sanitation infrastructures and decreased access to improved water and sanitation services.
- Geographical disparities on access to safe water and sanitation services are a common problem in many countries of the region.
- The low quality of water and sanitation services is endangering human health in some countries.
- Outbreaks of intestinal infections, hepatitis A and helminthoses are commonly reported in a number of countries. Cases of methaemoglobinemia (blue-baby syndrome) are persistently reported in certain geographical areas. Cholera burst in Ukraine in 2011.
- Children in rural areas and small towns in EECCA, Western Balkans, new EU member states, etc. have no access to safe water and sanitation in schools and kindergartens and often neither at home.
- There are no statistics on access of the vulnerable and marginalized consumer groups.
- Aggressively promoted principle of "water pays for water", privatization of the sector, commercializing of water and sanitation service and chasing profit by all means poses significant social and health risks for vulnerable and marginalized groups, as well as for the general population. In a number of countries, there is practice of disconnecting households from water supply and sewage systems as the latter are no more able to afford the cost of the service.
- Public participation is not yet identified as a must in the implementation of the water sectors reforms in EECCA countries.

- Right-oriented approach is not recognized as a key and fundamental approach to the reforms of water and sanitation sector in many countries of the Region, and UN Resolutions on the Right to water and sanitation are still more declaration than basis for actions at national and local levels.

We call upon Parties and Non -Parties of the Protocol on Water and Health

- to prioritize access to safe water and sanitation for all in their national programs and earmark adequate human and financial resources to guarantee that the Protocol is utilized as an efficient instrument to guarantee the implementation of the equitable access to Water and Sanitation in full content;
- to incorporate right-oriented targets and measures into the River basin management plans. The Protocol's implementation should be a subject of trans-boundary cooperation of riparian countries also by proclaiming of water and health issues as a priority for river commissions;
- to join efforts on achieving 100% access to safe drinking water and sanitation for children in schools, kindergartens and at home in the pan-European region and to build synergies between the Protocol and the Parma Ministerial Declaration;
- to use the document "No One Left Behind" as well as the score-card for self-assessment and baseline study to monitor a progress in achieving of equitable access and to do a results-oriented action plan building on country-situation analysis and context-specific equity indicators;
- to support NGOs and civil society organizations; regional, national and local initiatives on advocacy of the equitable access to water and sanitation; development and promotion of good practices on water and sanitation management, water resources protection, saving, recycling and reusing;
- to adopt the Guide to Public Participation under the Protocol on Water and Health to improve public participation within the implementation of the Protocol at all levels;
- to revise project facilitation mechanism and set up new mechanisms to support the NGOs, public initiatives and stakeholder cooperation on ensuring equitable right to water and sanitation in the Region.