

**Ms. Päivi Sillanaukee, Director General, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health,
Finland**

Question: Finland recently revised national targets under the Protocol on Water and Health. Could you explain the importance of collaboration and cooperation in this process?

Honorable Chair, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Finland would like to express its sincerest gratitude to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe for organizing this important meeting. Especially, we would like to thank our Serbian colleagues for hosting this event in this impressive venue.
- Since our last meeting, Finland has focused on the revision of our national targets of the Protocol.
- In this revision we have had two special emphasis. One emphasis was to link the national targets to the Sustainable Development Goals. The other emphasis was to highlight and strengthen the application of recognized good practices to the management of water supply and sanitation.
- Cooperation across sectors has been our guiding light both in the revision of the targets and in their implementation. The targets were drafted in broad cross-sectoral process together with expert organizations and interest groups.
- Cross-sectoral approach as a good practice is also included in the targets in several points. Here are some examples:
 - o The planning of the water management measures is done in cooperation with interest groups, with the key principle of open and active cooperation.
 - o Risk assessment, risk management, surveillance and preparedness for exceptional situations shall form a coherent and mutually reinforcing entity.
 - o The water suppliers and authorities shall act in cooperation in order to prevent any disruptions in water supply and any adverse impacts caused by the disruptions.
 - o The continuity management of water supply plants shall be developed in cooperation with all relevant actors.
- The International Water Strategy of Finland was updated last year. It introduced the concept of the Finnish Water Way, which is a holistic approach on water.

- The mission of the Finnish Water Way is to work together as whole society towards responsible and equitable water security. The mission contributes towards the larger vision of achieving a water-secure world by 2030.
- The Finnish Water Way is based on three pillars: Water for Sustainable Development, Water for People, and Water for Peace. Each pillar has specific Objectives and Means that contribute to achieving selected SDG 6 targets. The Strategy is complemented by an Action Plan, which guides its implementation through concrete policies and actions.
- Through the Finnish Water Way, we create innovative tools for water-based solutions together with our partners.
As a concrete case example, Finland has recently developed an innovative web-based risk management software tool for Water Safety Planning and Sanitation Safety Planning. Combining these two into a same platform, we are ready to take the next step in the risk management of the whole water cycle, in other words Water Cycle Safety Planning.
- We will share more information on this tool tomorrow during Side Event nr. 7 arranged by Germany in Serbia Room.
- Finally, Finland would like to emphasize the importance of the Protocol on Water and Health as a concrete and forward-looking regional legal instrument for safeguarding the human rights-based approach to water and sanitation.

Question: Holding the EU Presidency of the Council, Finland led the negotiations for the revision of the Drinking Water Directive. How will the new Directive bring the Protocol and the European legislation closer?

- First of all I would like to thank experts from all the European Union Member States for the tremendous work that they have done in drafting the revisions for the Drinking Water Directive.
- Especially I would like to thank the Romanian Presidency of the EU during the first period of this year. At that time the drafting of the new Directive took long strides forwards.
- Although there still exist disagreement between the trilogue negotiators on some subjects, we are still hoping that the new Directive could be accepted during the Finnish Presidency.
- One of the most important improvements in the new Directive will be adoption of the risk-based approach to the monitoring and management of drinking water.
- The risk-based approach means that Water Safety Planning no more is an option, but an obligation to all water suppliers in the European Union.
- In respect of spreading information and guidance on Water Safety Planning, the Protocol on Water and Health has for years done important work. This brings the Drinking Water legislation closer to the Protocol, and it is in my hopes that in future, they both benefit from it.

- The Drinking Water Directive brings the legislation and the Protocol closer to each other in the area of human rights. With reasoning of the Sustainable Development Goals and the European citizens' initiative "Right to Water" the new directive will have provisions to improve the access of water to the vulnerable and marginalised groups. This work has been done for years by the Protocol, and such addition to the EU legislation means mutual reinforcement of the Protocol.
- The EU member States that participate actively to the work of the Protocol, and Finland as the presidency, have tried their best to emphasize the importance of the Protocol during the negotiations. As a result, the Protocol will be mentioned in the recitals of the Directive. That may sound modest, but the main reason why it is difficult to include the Protocol stricter to the Directive is that only 16 out of the 28 Member States have ratified the protocol.
- Furthermore, one important subject that the new Directive will bring is reinforcement of focus on Legionella bacteria. Legionella is considered as an underdiagnosed disease, but now assessment of the Legionella risk in water distribution systems of buildings and, if considered necessary, monitoring of it becomes compulsory.
- As a summary, the new Drinking Water Directive will bring into legislation improvements that guide us to new risk-based thinking. It will hopefully also bring the Protocol and the European legislation closer together.