

**Fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health**  
**High-level session: “The Protocol on Water and Health: catalysing sustainable development in the pan-European region”**

**Conclusions by**

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- We have heard some excellent illustrations and concrete examples of how the Protocol on Water and Health has stimulated and guided remarkable improvements in water, sanitation and health in the region. Since its adoption 20 years ago, the Protocol and its family has grown and matured into a regional home for policy and technical development. Your countries’ experiences are inspiring and should encourage countries who haven’t done so yet, to ratify the Protocol.
- In our efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 goals, we agree that water, sanitation and health is a core theme. We have heard how the Protocol has proven to be a key mechanism to implement SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation and SDG 3 on health, especially capitalizing on the setting and implementing of tailored national targets and the reporting.
- Partnerships for progress are advancing and operationalizing the water, sanitation and health commitments of the 2030 Agenda, as well as other global and regional related commitments. And of course this won’t be possible without proper SDG and Protocol-orientated financing.
- It has been explained how integrated approaches looking at the whole water cycle, ensuring cooperation between all related sectors, as well as involving citizens and the civil society has driven progress. Indeed, partnership and cooperation was a recurring theme in the discussions. In this regard, it’s encouraging to note that EU legislation and the Protocol are getting even closer. An important recent development is the ongoing process of integrating the human right dimension and the risk-based management approach into the revised EU Drinking Water Directive. Water safety planning is not an option but should be an obligation!
- The Protocol offers a sound and forward-looking framework and multilateral platform, as well as broad experience and valuable practical tools to progress further and contribute to the achievement of the human rights to safe drinking-water and sanitation.
- We heard about major efforts in several countries to make sure that everyone, whether living in a city or in a rural area, whether rich or poor, and from any social or ethnic group, has access to safe and at least adequate water and sanitation services.

- We must also remember that in improving access to water and sanitation in small rural communities and vulnerable populations, we must ensure the safety of services. Water and sanitation safety plans bring together operators and multidisciplinary teams of local stakeholders who all play a role in ensuring safe water and sanitation in the community. The panellists also stressed the importance of strengthening surveillance.
- But we cannot talk about universal access *without* ensuring WASH services for schools and health care facilities. These are settings used by many individuals with particular needs and vulnerabilities. Children *deserve* a healthy learning environment with safe and sustainable WASH services.
- Significant international momentum is accelerating action towards provision of WASH services for all health care facilities. We heard how adequate WASH helps to prevent, control and reduce infectious diseases, and thus combat antimicrobial resistance. This emerging issue, together with the threat of legionella — and other water-related diseases and contaminants — will need increased attention and strengthened cross-sectoral partnership in the coming years.
- Safe reuse of wastewater, although not a new topic, is an emerging theme for many countries experiencing water security challenges threatened by climate change. We have heard examples of droughts and flooding, which are only set to increase in frequency and intensity under a changing climate. This illustrates the imperative for climate-resilient investment in water and sanitation infrastructure, for us and future generations. The Protocol on Water and Health has been shown to provide a strong cross-cutting platform to tackle these challenges.
- Of course there are many more success stories and useful lessons from across the region and proven solutions to tackle the challenges. This is the power of the Protocol on Water and Health to convene all relevant sectors and to promote safe and sustainable water management WASH to protect health and well-being. We hope that these examples encourage you to follow in their footsteps, to learn from each other, so that by next MOP we will be able to showcase even greater leaps forward. Thank you.