

Statement of Austria within Session 3: Strengthen water governance at national and transboundary levels

Dear Madame Chair, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, dear ladies and gentlemen,

Austria is very pleased to contribute to this important regional preparatory meeting for the United Nations 2023 Water Conference. Thanks to its long-standing engagement UNECE is perfect platform to introduce regional perspectives and to reflect on respective efforts to foster the achievement of the water-related, internationally agreed goals and targets for Sustainable Development.

Water governance is one of the most important aspects to align water management from local to transboundary level with principles of integrated resources management. Within European Union's commitment in the Eastern Partnership programme, the **European Union Water Initiative Plus** programme, led by Austria and France in cooperation with UNECE and OECD, has significantly worked together with and supported six countries – **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine** – to adopt and implement a systemic approach to integrated water resources management and EU water policies.

Success stories of this joint project included a **range of national policy packages adopted**, including management plans revised or developed in all countries, **improved transboundary cooperation** through further developed transboundary agreements as well as **strengthened integrated approaches** by engaging civil society, academia and the private sector in water protection and sustainable use.

Continuity of activities in the six Eastern Partnership countries will be ensured through the **EU4Environment programme – Water Resources and Environmental Data** to cooperate and support green transformation in line with the European Green Deal and the 2030 Agenda. The new programme delivers substantial contribution towards the implementation of SDG 6 and other water related Sustainable Development Goals.

To improve the knowledge on resources management on the national level and the preparedness in terms of future challenges, Austria has recently re-assessed the availability of groundwater resources on national level in the light of current water uses and projected impacts of climate change until 2050 within the project called "**Austria's Water Treasure**¹". We would be pleased to share respective approaches and available knowledge with interested partners.

In the framework of UNECE and other partnerships it is a privilege for Austria to actively contribute to the preparation of the United Nations 2023 Water Conference.

Thank you for your attention.

¹ <https://info.bmlrt.gv.at/service/publikationen/wasser/austrias-water-treasure---protecting-and-using-our-groundwater-sustainably.html>