

Statement by Heiti Mäemets, Ambassador of the Republic of Estonia. High-Level Conference on International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018-2028 (20-21 June 2018, Dushanbe, Tajikistan)

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Water is, without a doubt, one of the major challenges of our century. Estonia welcomes the initiative of the **International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development 2018-2028"** proclaimed by the President of the UN General Assembly with the aim to further improve cooperation, partnership and capacity development in response to the ambitious **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**.

Estonia is seriously committed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. We advocate **responsibility**, as a key premise for the implementation of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)** that are vital to drive economic growth, eradicate poverty and preserve the environment all over the world.

We welcome the working-level dialogue on the water-related goals and targets under United Nations sustainable development pillar, with a particular emphasis on the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**.

Sustainable water management is of key importance in fighting poverty, providing good health and well-being. It is a source for clean energy and achieving climate policy objectives. As the earth's temperature continues to rise, it has significant negative impact on our fresh water supplies. There is a need for a more sustainable lifestyle and relieve the escalating pressure on our resources by introducing **circular economy**.

Estonia believes that **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)** has great potential in addressing these challenges and accelerating achievements in all of the 17 Development Goals. Estonia itself has proven that innovative use of ICT contributes to improving economic development, resource efficiency and human development. Therefore, science, technology and innovation (STI) should be used for implementing the SDGs and in particular SDG 6.

Estonia is well on track to meet the targets of SDG 6 by 2030. In case of freshwater, **Integrated Water Resource Management** is a well-established approach and water planning at the basin level is essential. Good ecological and chemical status of all our waters is a common goal set in our Water Law and we have witnessed significant improvement in water quality over the last decade.

In this context, **we see that joint implementation of measures**, managed at river basin level, including in **transboundary waters**, and involving authorities at all levels, water industry, major water users, scientists, civil society, farmers etc is the most appropriate policy solution, ensuring transparency as well as comprehensive data collection and monitoring.

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**20 years of Estonia's successful transboundary water cooperation with Russia** has led to a stable and satisfactory situation on our common waterbody, Lake Peipus, the biggest transboundary lake in Europe. It has provided good opportunities to facilitate cooperation in a more integrated way, along with water protection to take into account the lake's natural resources, fishing possibilities, **but also elaborating ways for tourism and social communications.**

Cooperation under international law, the **Water Convention**, and in the frames of the **Transboundary Water Commission** should lead to mutual benefits not only in environmental aspects at country level, but also in a basin wide perspective.

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Dear participants,

The Estonian Minister of Environment, Mr. **Siim Kiisler**, holds the capacity of the President of the **Fourth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-4)**, which will take place in Nairobi, Kenya in March 2019.

**UNEA-4** will devote its attention to **Innovative Solutions for Environmental Challenges and Sustainable Consumption and Production**. The UNEA-4 theme enables the President to focus on the identification of strategic innovative solutions for environmental challenges that could have far-reaching positive impacts if implemented globally. To assist in determining the most urgent environmental challenges, we will benefit from United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP's) flagship environmental assessment report, the Global Environment Outlook, GEO-6, which will be presented at UNEA-4. Water is certainly one of the key areas of the report and we invite everybody to already work with this report, **since it's been provided for comments until September.**

**In preparation for UNEA-4, the President Kiisler** has stated his main priorities, which are the **3 P-s -- partnerships, policy integration, and people:**

**Partnerships** are needed to take action on a global and local scale. To develop these partnerships, we need an inclusive multi-sectoral approach and to bring together academia, private sector, civil society, inter-governmental organizations and governments.

**Policy integration** is needed to ensure the environmental dimension in implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals and strengthen the visibility of the international environmental policy agenda.

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**Lastly, it is all about the people.** As the aim of the President of UNEA-4 is to develop agreements and partnerships at the UNEA-4, **we invite the participants of this conference to take on developing a water partnership at UNEA-4.** You can address **your initiatives** directly to the UNEA-4 President for advocating and working on these towards March 2019, to build on the resolution adopted during UNEA-3 and keep the global momentum.

To conclude, Estonia is very satisfied that we are discussing the issues of water today in many international institutions. **Water is not only ecological or environmental question, but security and peace depends on water.** There is a need to leverage water responsibly as an instrument of cooperation and sustaining peace not as a disagreement and conflict.

Thank you for attention.