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## UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

*New momentum to make safe water and sanitation a reality for all:  
how to scale-up globally practical tools and know-how gained under  
the Protocol on Water and Health?*

22 March, 14:00–15:15, Conference room 9, UN Headquarters

Organized by: Hungary, Germany, Portugal, Women for Water Partnership, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe

### **Background on the event**

The Protocol on Water and Health is a legally binding agreement serviced by UNECE and the WHO Regional Office for Europe that aims at protecting human health and well-being through sustainable water management and by preventing, controlling and reducing water-related diseases. The event presented practical tools developed under the Protocol available to governments, local authorities and communities that have proven effective in supporting progress towards reaching SDG6 and building safe and climate-resilient water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services fit for the future.

### **Water Action Agenda**

Hungary, Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health, committed to advance accessions to the Protocol (see [here](#)). A commitment was also submitted on “Driving Action on water, sanitation, hygiene and health in the pan-European region through the Protocol on Water and Health” by the UNECE and WHO Regional Office for Europe joint secretariat, with the support of the Bureau of the Protocol, currently composed of Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg, Norway, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Portugal, Serbia, Switzerland (see [here](#)). At the side event, Kazakhstan committed to accede to the Protocol on Water and Health.

### **Key Issues discussed**

- **WASH in healthcare facilities** – “Water, sanitation and hygiene in health-care facilities – A practical tool for situation assessment and improvement planning” was

developed under the Protocol, following the call of WHA resolution 72.7 to conduct comprehensive assessments on WASH in health-care facilities as a first step of the roadmap towards safe services.

- **Water safety planning: risk-based management tools and approaches** – Under the Protocol, the “Field Guide to improving small drinking-water supplies” provides practical, step-by-step guidance for community managed rural water supplies in developing and implementing their own water safety plan. The Field Guide was applied in countries of the WHO European Region, an example of Tajikistan was presented.
- **Equitable access to water and sanitation self-assessment methodology** – The Equitable Access Score-card is a self-assessment tool allowing countries to establish a baseline measure of the equity of access to water and sanitation. The Score-card was applied in 12 countries/regions/cities, including in Armenia in 2016, bringing about concrete impacts such as amendments to the water legislation.
- **Setting national targets on water and sanitation affordability in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** – Portugal integrated target setting under the Protocol with the SDG target setting process, aligning monitoring indicators on access to sanitation and other areas. Portugal also monitors affordability of water and sanitation services through the use of affordability indicators.
- **Benefits of accession to the Protocol** – Kazakhstan and Italy announced their intention to accede to the Protocol on Water and Health. Kazakhstan mentioned key national priorities, including the provision of 100% of the population with water supply by 2025, and Italy talked about the Protocol as a “strategic and essential tool” to strengthen national action on water and health.

### **Key recommendations for action**

- **Accede to the Protocol on Water and Health** (for UNECE countries). Accession can bring many benefits such as improved intersectoral cooperation, improved water governance, and support from the community of Parties, among others.
- **Apply the tools developed under the Protocol.** These resources can be used by any country worldwide to reduce and prevent water related diseases, advance WASH in schools and healthcare facilities, and facilitate risk-based management of water supply and sanitation services, including small systems.
- **Strive to achieve and monitor progress towards the full implementation of the human right to water and sanitation.** The Protocol offers tools to establish baseline and assess progress on a national or subnational level. Affordability of water and sanitation services should also be monitored including through the use of targeted indicators that can help inform the work of service providers, municipalities and regulatory agencies in charge of water and sanitation services.
- **Set targets under the Protocol** on water, sanitation, hygiene and health, ideally aligning them with SDG target setting and streamlining monitoring indicators. Revise targets if needed. This applies to Parties, but also some non-Parties from the UNECE region that have set targets under the Protocol.