

**Statement of the United States
Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting of the
United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development**

*Statement by Diane Tate, Advisor, Water and Sanitation
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Thank you, Madame Chair. As we talk about linkages, I'd like to underscore one point that has come up several times in our discussions, but bears repeating – that is the importance of participatory decision-making in building robust and sustainable democratic institutions. Devolving decision-making power to the lowest appropriate level gives communities and municipalities control over issues that affect them directly. Related to this, the participation of women is vital to ensure equity and sustainability in service delivery, whether at the village level or inside a national or regional institution.

Take the case of a community user group which debates the kind of water or sanitation service that community wants, interfaces with a service provider, and collects fees for the service provided, with financial information open to the whole community. Through this kind of organization, people are directly involved in the fulfillment of their own basic needs. This is about more than water and sanitation – it is about governance that is inclusive, accountable, and transparent. Similarly, integrated water resource management, or IWRM, advances fundamental principles of good governance by bringing people with different perspectives to the same table to manage a shared resource. IWRM can create a foundation for participatory decision-making that reaches well beyond water, and helps to build democratic institutions.

We all need water, and all need to work to ensure basic water and sanitation needs are met. At the same time, we shouldn't forget the role that working on water can play in building sustainable, participatory, and transparent decision-making institutions, at every level of government. Thank you, Madame Chair.