

# ENSURING SAFE AND CLIMATE-RESILIENT WATER AND SANITATION: THE ICELAND STATEMENT

## Fifth high-level meeting of the WHO small countries initiative, Reykjavík, Iceland

We, the Ministers and the delegates of the eight Member States of the European Region of the World Health Organization (WHO) with populations of less than one million inhabitants, met in Reykjavík, Iceland on 26–27 June 2018, to participate in the fifth high-level meeting of the small countries initiative.

We reconfirm our previous commitments to implement the core principles, approaches and values of Health 2020: the WHO European policy framework for health and well-being.

We will work wholeheartedly on achieving the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, promoting safe and climate-resilient water and sanitation. It is our joint responsibility to protect health from environmental risks, including the effects of climate change. This includes being aware of the consequences of our behaviour and actions.

We emphasize that every government and public authority, at all levels, shares the common responsibility for safeguarding the environment through intersectoral collaboration and citizens' participation and promoting and protecting human health from environmental hazards across generations and in all policies.

We recognize that the Ostrava Declaration on Environment and Health (2017) provides a strong mandate towards achieving this obligation. Building on the commitments of the Paris Agreement, we continue to protect health from climate change and hereby reinforce our commitments in the Monaco Statement and its *Call for action on climate change*.

Ensuring universal and equitable access to safe drinking-water and sanitation services for all and in all settings plays a catalytic role in achieving these commitments and remains a priority in our countries. Such services are essential to human health and well-being, and in respecting human rights, they are an important enabler of economic and social development and thus for creating and supporting resilient communities. We recognize the importance in promoting sustainable management of water resources, strengthening adaptive capacity and long-term resilience of water and sanitation services under climate change.

Climate change increasingly affects availability, quality and use of freshwater resources, threatening the provision of safe water and sanitation services. We recognize that the challenges addressed in the WHO special initiative on climate change and health in small island developing States also affect many small countries around the world. We acknowledge that our challenges include increasing water scarcity, putting additional stress on water resources and ecosystems; more frequent and intensive extreme weather events, such as heavy precipitation, floods or droughts, threatening the provision of safe services; and sea-level rise.

Action is possible. Intersectoral action is needed to guarantee success. Drawing on our intrinsic strengths of responsive adaptation, innovation and participation, we commit to:

- build climate-resilient water supply and sanitation services and promote sustainable water management to prevent water-related disease, in national as well as transboundary contexts, by ratifying or acceding to the Protocol on Water and Health by 2022;
- maintain and strengthen safely-managed water and sanitation services, including safe use of wastewater, by adopting WHO-recommended water safety planning (WSP) and sanitation safety planning (SSP) approaches;
- promote universal and equitable access to water, sanitation and hygiene in all settings, including in schools, health care facilities and workplaces, as well as in urban and rural areas;
- protect our people from climate-induced and water-related disasters by strengthening disaster risk reduction, preparedness and response; and
- inspire climate-resilient behaviours of communities and individuals and encourage their participation in local decision-making by developing action plans for public education and communication with citizens.

With this statement, we, the members of the small countries initiative, commit to supporting each other through enhanced intersectoral and multilateral cooperation and coordination. We call on the WHO Regional Office for Europe and other partners to support us in meeting these commitments.

Sustainable and safe water and sanitation services are fundamental to human health and well-being, and it is in our hands to ensure their long-term climate resilience for future generations by working together for better health and well-being for all, leaving no one behind.



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