

UN 2023 Water Conference:

Sustainability in good governance of groundwater resources

Ke 22.3., 12:30 - 13:45, ECOSOC

Remarks by State Secretary Ms. Sumuvuori

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

- Groundwater is the most sensitive and the largest body of freshwater in the European Union. In Finland, groundwater is an extremely important resource for drinking water. Groundwater bodies and managed aquifer recharge provide more than 60 percent of the national water supply. Some 10 percent of the population get their water from their own private wells. We consider the sustainable management and sound governance of groundwater an issue that needs the international attention and prioritization.
- Groundwater is a valuable and vital natural resource, and it should be protected from deterioration and chemical pollution. We should also recognize the role of groundwater supporting the ecosystems dependent the groundwater flow. Groundwater plays also an important role in safeguarding the ecological flow in small streams and supporting the sensitive and in many places endangered habitats in springs.
- The good and sustainable management needs **comprehensive knowledge of the aquifer's hydrogeological conditions**, flow and quality. In Finland the groundwater protection is based to the **prevention principle**. The remediation of the soil and groundwater is extremely expensive. Sometimes it is even impossible to restore to the original status. The emerging pollutants should be identified and protection measures be planned well before the substances are present in the groundwater.
- Groundwater needs to be **managed in an integrated fashion** with surface water resources, land and the environment. Conjunctive use of surface water and groundwater has many advantages, including improved security and resilience.

- As stated in the UN-Water Joint Message and Call for Action, there are around 450 transboundary aquifers globally, calling for international cooperation on their governance. Importantly, **the global freshwater conventions** also apply to groundwaters, supporting cooperation in managing and protecting water resources. The management of transboundary waters in Finland is based on the principles of the UN freshwater conventions, notably the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (1992 Helsinki Convention).
- Water resources management also plays an important role in **adapting to climate change**. This is recognized both in our international water strategy Finnish Water Way and in Finland's Water Resources Management Strategy 2030. The Water Resources Management Strategy takes a holistic approach, including our transboundary waters, with a vision to produce clean water, security and wellbeing for society now and in the future. The perspectives of different water users and predicted impacts of climate are effectively integrated at the river basin level.
- A significant share of the groundwater used in Finland comes from managed aquifer recharge (MAR), a safe and cost-efficient method for production of drinking water, where surface water is infiltrated into the aquifer from a river or from infiltration ponds. In addition to MAR, **groundwater expertise in Finland** includes groundwater monitoring and investigations, protection and governance.
- Supporting innovations is essential for improved groundwater management. In Finland, **science and technological innovations** have certainly contributed to the increased groundwater use. For example, in the city of **Turku**, Finland, 300 000 consumers are served and 65 000 cubic meters a day are supplied from managed aquifer recharge, Finland's largest such facility, with extensive feeder pipelines of over hundred kilometers. The water quality produced by Turku Region Water in Finland has been rated among the best in the world.

- Stewardship of groundwater is a continuous effort and responsibility. However, here in the UN 2023 Water Conference we have a remarkable opportunity to focus on and accelerate action and commitments on groundwater and its sustainable and good governance.
- Finland stands ready to share and to cooperate with you. Thank you for your attention.