

Delegation from the Republic of Poland
Position Paper for the Human Rights Council

The topics before the Human Rights Council (HRC) are Access to Safe Drinking Water as a Fundamental Human Right and Preventing Discrimination and Violence Against Persons with Disabilities. The Republic of Poland recognizes the need for strong international cooperation to monitor and implement access to vital human rights, and it looks forward to discussing these topics at the upcoming conference.

I. Access to Safe Drinking Water as a Fundamental Human Right

According to the United Nations (UN) World Health Organization (WHO), over 1 billion people throughout the world lack access to clean drinking water. WHO and the UN Children's Fund's (UNICEF) Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation has stated that the water that 1.8 billion people drink exhibits fecal contamination. The deprivation of the fundamental right to safe drinking water particularly afflicts the most marginalized members of global society, including women, displaced persons, persons with disabilities, the impoverished, and children. Those without access to safe drinking water often also suffer from economic and social disadvantages, including medical conditions, lack of access to education, and lack of employment. The Republic of Poland is dedicated to aiding Member States and to improving infrastructure for the promotion and protection of the right to safe drinking water.

Access to safe drinking water as a basic human right has been discussed extensively on the international level. While the foundational Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948 does not explicitly discuss water, it established "the right to life, liberty and security of persons" and the right to "a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being" of individuals. In 1977, the Mar del Plata Action Plan from the UN Water Conference held in Argentina first recognized water as a human right. In 2010, the UN General Assembly (GA) acknowledged the human right to water in resolution 64/292, which also discussed the connection between access to safe drinking water and the achievement of all other human rights. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation. Poland supports HRC resolution 15/9, which stressed the importance of Member State support of human rights programs pertaining to access to safe drinking water. Poland also applauds the adoption of HRC resolution 18/1, which called for transparency, diligent analysis, and prioritized action for populations most in need. Poland upholds the continued work of the Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, as well as the UN Inter-Agency Mechanism on all Freshwater Related Issues, Including Sanitation (UN-Water). Regionally, the European Union (EU) has emphasized that effective water management is important for all EU countries. Nationally, Poland is proud of the work within its own borders and throughout the world by its government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Poland is a country considered to have less available in-country water resources than many other European countries; however, 99% of urban citizens and nearly 97% of rural citizens have access to an improved drinking water source. In Poland, a minister has been appointed to consider issues related to water management, and in June 2015, Poland hosted a National Water Forum to discuss access to water in Poland, which encouraged the sharing of ideas through public consultations towards updated Water Management Plans. At the UN Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015, Andrzej Duda, the President of Poland, emphasized the continued need of the international community to address access to water.

Poland stresses the need for Member States to lead and coordinate efforts to help developing countries. As such, Poland recommends the international implementation of measures proposed by the Special Rapporteur. These proposals would require legislative and social changes within individual Member States and should contain legal consequences for discriminatory practices in water distribution and access in regards to a person's ethnicity, nationality, gender, or social status. Other considerations should include support such as food aid, medical assistance, and access to water sources. Furthermore, additional changes should include increased support by NGOs, national governments, and the international community for community infrastructures such as plumbing fixtures and water connections. It is important that voluntary financial support is made available to assist Member States in improving drinking water infrastructure in order to ensure that all have access to it. As such practices are implemented, more communities will obtain a higher standard of living through access to safe drinking water, and the human rights of global citizens can be more fully realized.

II. Preventing Discrimination and Violence against Persons with Disabilities

Approximately 1 billion people have a disability, and 80% of persons with disabilities are from developing countries. Despite the UN's efforts for more than 60 years to improve the lives of persons with disabilities, many still face violence, discrimination, social exclusion, increased poverty, and a myriad of other human rights concerns. One in five women has a disability, and women can experience discrimination due to both their gender and their disability and are often more affected by gender-based violence (GBV) and conflict situations. Adults and children with disabilities are significantly more likely to experience violence. Poland is deeply concerned and hopes that all efforts can be taken to prevent discrimination and violence against persons with disabilities.

There are many important international documents related to the topic of preventing discrimination and violence against persons with disabilities, including the 1975 Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Since 1992, the UN has celebrated the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December of each year. In addition, the SDGs explicitly mention disability 11 times, including in SDGs 4, 8, 10, 11, and 17; Poland agrees with the statement of the Secretariat for the CRPD, UN Enable, that the SDGs hold "a deep promise for persons with disabilities." The HRC has engaged in important efforts to address specific issues related to discrimination against persons with disabilities, including HRC resolution 19/11, which discusses the utilization of aid in ensuring that persons with disabilities are directly benefited, and HRC resolution 19/36, which reaffirms the right of persons with disabilities to participate in political processes. Poland has actively supported individuals with disabilities. Within Poland, a Government Plenipotentiary for Disabled Persons was appointed to supervise the Vocational and Social Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons program. In 1997, Poland adopted a Charter of Rights for Persons with Disabilities. Poland continues to ensure that national legislation drafted since CRPD is in direct accordance with the framework established, including through the protection and promotion of the human rights of persons with disabilities. Poland has also established an Expert Committee on People with Disabilities, which monitors and promotes the exercise of rights of persons with disabilities.

To combat discrimination and violence against persons with disabilities, the Republic of Poland proposes change on local, national, and international levels. Poland recommends the formulation of international policies that will further promote the human rights of persons with disabilities. Through international standards, the global community can better protect the rights of these persons without distinction regarding state of origin or economic status. Poland recommends that educational institutions provide access to learning tools that will enhance the experience of children with disabilities in school and more fully enable children with disabilities to attend school. This will help prevent victimization and discrimination through improved opportunities to gain academic and vocational skills. Furthermore, Poland urges each Member State to adopt a national strategy or action plan that will secure the rights of people with disabilities. Such action plans could include a focus on promoting independent living, supporting families with children who have disabilities, and making support available for persons with disabilities so they can actively participate in the work of their communities. Member States should also include disability in policies and funding and ensure that persons with disabilities, including women, can engage in decision-making on local, national, and regional levels. Through established national visions and objectives, Member States can guide general attitudes towards non-violence and equality. It is important that Member States work together with civil society, such as with NGOs, in addressing the needs of persons with disabilities. Finally, Poland emphasizes that Member States and the international community must actively include persons with disabilities within efforts to meet the SDGs so that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is realized for all members of the global community. The Republic of Poland recognizes the important opportunity to empower persons with disabilities through international efforts, and it believes that increased efforts will further prevent discrimination and violence against persons with disabilities worldwide.