

AUSTRIA



PERMANENT MISSION OF AUSTRIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

**Launch Event International Decade for Action
“Water for Sustainable Development” 2018-2028**

Statement by Austria

delivered by

**Ambassador Jan Kickert
Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations**

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Mr. President,

At the outset, let me assure you that Austria is fully committed to achieving our internationally agreed water related goals and targets.

Naturally, this implies **strong action** on a domestic as well as on the regional and global level.

I. Starting with the **domestic level**: in Austria, we are proud to provide all citizens with access to water and sanitation in excellent quality and appropriate quantity. Waste water is collected and treated according to the highest standards. This is the result of many years of dedicated efforts in establishing integrated water management systems and improving water governance at all levels of public administration. At the same time, we are fortunate to be able to rely on the innovative expertise of the **Austrian water industry** to provide us with state-of-the-art solutions to achieve our goals.

Looking ahead, the Austrian government will focus on three policy areas:

1. maintaining our high national standards,
2. keeping an aging water infrastructure in good shape, and
3. enhancing our efforts to reduce pollution from diffuse sources, pharmaceuticals and micro-plastics.

II. Turning to the **regional level**, we believe the issue of **sharing water** is of critical importance.

A total of 276 of the world's river basins, containing almost 60% of the global freshwater resource, are **shared water bodies**. Almost 3 billion people in 145 countries live in **transboundary basins**.

Austria is no exception, as we are located in the most international river basin worldwide - the **Danube basin**, which is **shared by 19 countries**.

Based on our experiences Austria is deeply convinced that sharing waters is intrinsically linked with sharing responsibilities.

1. This is why Austria has **transboundary water commissions** in place with all our neighboring countries since decades.
2. From its inception, Austria has been a contracting party to the **International Convention for the Protection of the Danube River**. We believe that the joint work within the **Danube basin countries is a model for international cooperation**. We are ready to share these experiences and invite others to draw inspiration from the work of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River and its Secretariat in Vienna.
3. Austria has also joined the **UN ECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Rivers and Lakes**, a Convention which is open for global participation.

III. Regarding Austria's **international development cooperation**, our activities in the water and sanitation sector are carried out in particular in **Albania, Moldova, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Uganda and the Gaza strip.**

Let me highlight three concrete examples:

1. In the framework of the **EU neighborhood policy** Austria is the lead country of a major EU project which prepares **river basin plans** - in line with the methodology of the EU Water Framework Directive - to help **improve the management of water resources** and specifically of transboundary rivers, in the six Eastern Partnership countries Belarus, Ukraine, Moldavia, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan.
2. The successful rural water program of the Austrian Development Agency working with women cooperatives that started small in **Uganda**, is now being rolled out and scaled up significantly with the help of EU funds. After considerable efforts over the years to bring potable drinking water and sanitation to the people in **Southern Uganda**, a new additional focus is now the **water supply for refugees from South Sudan in Northern Uganda.**
3. To target severe water scarcity conditions in partner countries of the Austrian Development Agency, the **“Water Future and Solutions Initiative”** of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) will support the evolution of policy, practice and investments in targeted regions in Africa.

Finally, let me assure you that Austria will continue its engagement on all levels to attain SDG 6, standing ready to share her long tradition in water governance and integrated water management as well as offering the expertise of Austria's professional water industry as a reliable partner for the implementation of tailor-made solutions to challenges worldwide.

As the Secretary General underlined, water is a matter of life and death. And I would add a question of dignity and a human right. Let's join our forces to make it a reality so that everyone can enjoy safe drinking water and sanitation!

Thank you!