



**LIETUVOS RESPUBLIKOS NUOLATINĖ ATSTOVYBĖ
PRIE JUNGTINIŲ TAUTŲ BIURO IR
KITŲ TARPTAUTINIŲ ORGANIZACIJŲ ŽENEVOJE**

**MISSION PERMANENTE DE LA LITUANIE
AUPRÈS DE L'OFFICE DES NATIONS UNIES ET
DES AUTRES ORGANISATIONS INTERNATIONALES À GENÈVE**

No. SN-80-26

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Lithuania to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and with reference to the letter of the Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation Mr. Leo Heller, of the 16th November 2015, has the honour to transmit the answer of the Government of Lithuania to the questionnaire in relation to Human Rights resolutions 24/18 and 16/2 on the right to safe drinking water and sanitation.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Lithuania avails itself of this opportunity to renew the assurances of its highest consideration to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.



Geneva, 8 March 2016

Office of the United Nations
High Commissioner for Human Rights
GENEVA

Reply of Lithuania on gender equality in realizing human rights to water and sanitation

According to the legislation of the Republic of Lithuania on water and sanitation, there is no emphasis on gender in the legislation of Lithuania. All residents of Lithuania, regardless of gender, must be provided with good quality and sufficient quantity of water. The main goal of the legislation of drinking water supply and sanitation is to warrant the right to quality of public water supply and services to the residents of the area.

The National Environmental Strategy seeks that the quality of water supply and sanitation treatment services should be constantly improved and that their accessibility should be enhanced for all users and subscribers under optimal conditions. All consumers would receive publicly supplied drinking water and sanitation treatment services under optimal conditions and prices or would be able individually take care of drinking water and sanitation management services.

Access to water and sanitation is recognised as a fundamental human right and there is a need to strengthen efforts of global community to help realize it for all. Gender equality is especially important in this regard as there are still major differences between the situation of women and girls and the situation of men and boys. There are several changes that need to be implemented to improve the situation.

Efforts need to be strengthened to increase availability of water and sanitation, especially in the areas where situation is the worst. Insufficient access to water is a global problem that can lead to international conflicts, social unrest and increase of illegal migration. Close to 40% of world's population are affected by water shortage or are forced to use impure water, leading to health risks. These challenges can become even bigger in the future as the population of the world is rapidly growing. To address these challenges we need to strengthen international cooperation, involve private sector better and look for innovative solutions.

The new sustainable development agenda is a very important tool to realize both human right to water and sanitation and to ensure gender equality. Gender equality is both a stand-alone goal and a cross-cutting issue of the new agenda, but that is not enough. Goals related to water and sanitation will be very hard to achieve unless gender perspective is integrated into planning and implementation. Such activities should be measured by clear indicators integrated within system of proper accountability. Strong political commitment from all actors and at all levels is crucial in this respect.

There is a need to involve both women and men in the management of water and sanitation. Currently most positions in water management and sanitation are taken up by men. Such situation should be changed as involving both women and men in water and sanitation initiatives can increase their effectiveness. There are some positive changes seen in this regard, as the number of women serving as ministers of water or health is increasing. But this is only a first step, more women are needed in all the levels.

Another important area for action is building capacity in the broadest sense. This means that training should not be only targeted to sanitation and water specialists. As these problems are complex, training should also be targeted to the areas of social development, health and hygiene education. It is also important to change cultural and social norms – women should not be seen as having main responsibility to provide water. We can also improve the training of water and sanitation specialists, help them choose new and better solutions. In this regard it would be useful to spread good practices and success stories. Lithuania stands ready to share its experience and expertise as the country which has a very clean water and efficient sanitation system.

These are only few suggestions on how to improve the situation of realizing human right to water and sanitation. It is very important to collect best practise in this area and in this regard we look forward to receive the reports of the Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation.