



**Check against delivery!**

**STATEMENT BY**  
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**Dr. János ÁDER**  
**President of the Republic**  
**Hungary**  
**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of the highlighted issues of this General Assembly is the issue of the rule of law. This is an important issue. Especially for someone, who has had the opportunity to personally experience the lack of it.

Hungary – my country – belonged to the communist, socialist bloc for long decades.

In 1949, a mere 4 years after the end of World War II, the communist take-over of power had been completed. Multiparty system had been eliminated.

The majority of the leaders of political parties formed after World War II were forced into exile or were imprisoned.

I was born ten years later. I spent my early adult years – and thus my political awakening also – in a dictatorship.

In fact my two older children were still born in that system.

Our generation – just as our parents – had an everyday experience of being deprived of human rights and liberties.

Independence? From what, when soviet troops kept Hungary under occupation.

Free elections? How? When political parties were non-existent and even in 1988 it was a crime against the state to form political organizations.

Constitutional freedoms: the freedom of speech, the freedom of assembly, the right to practice religion freely, the right of assembly – existed only on paper or not even on that.

The end of the 80s – the fall of the Berlin Wall and of the Iron Curtain – brought democratic changes to Hungary.

We could organize free elections again – more than 40 years later - in the spring of 1990. Preparations for the peaceful transition, then the post election years can be deemed a successful era from a rule of law perspective.

However, Hungary did not have a consolidated, new constitution, which – simply through its number in the title - was not reminiscent of the 1949 Constitution.

It was this shortfall that the Hungarian National Assembly rectified in April of 2011, when it adopted the new Fundamental Law of Hungary.

The youngest constitution of Europe incorporates almost all the elements of the European Charter of Human Rights, along with the rule of law institutions of checks and balances established in 1990.

As a new element, constitutional constraints – compliant with the rule of law - have been imposed to curb irresponsible public spending and the reckless increase of state indebtedness.

The new Constitution of Hungary provides constitutional guarantees for the fulfilment of international legal obligations and for compliance with the generally accepted rules of international law.

It is important to highlight, that numerous provisions have been included in the new Fundamental Law, which are to do with the new – so called third generation – basic rights.

Article P of the Constitution stipulates that:

“All natural resources, especially agricultural land, forests and drinking water supplies, biodiversity – in particular native plant and animal species – and cultural assets shall form part of the nation’s common heritage, and the State and every person shall be obliged to protect, sustain and preserve them for future generations.”.

Whereas Article XXI sets forth that:

“Hungary shall recognise and enforce the right of every person to a healthy environment. A person who causes any damage to the environment shall be obliged to restore it or to bear all costs of restoration as defined by law.

No pollutant waste shall be brought into Hungary for the purpose of dumping.”

Environment protection.

Preservation of natural values.

Protection of soil, air and water quality.

How much we have talked about them recently. Due to the shortness of time, permit me to highlight a single issue from the set of problems before us: the issue of water and sanitation. It is even more so, since the next year is dedicated as the International Year of Water Cooperation.

We can truly appreciate the adequate quantity and quality of water if we experience what it means to be deprived of it.

Whatever should be the reason: pollution, over consumption or environmental changes.

During recent years, a great variety of studies have been written about our irresponsible behaviour.

About the short sighted – may I say foolish – attitude, with which we pollute our waters.

Permit me to quote a few statements from these documents:

90% of all communal waste water and 70% of industrial waste water in countries of the developing world is discharged into rivers without any treatment.

The chemical revolution of the post-World War II period also has seriously adverse implications on the environment.

Industry is nowadays using about 12 thousand different types of poisonous chemicals.

This is happening, when a single drop of crude oil can render 25 litres of drinking water non-potable.

The manufacture of a single vehicle requires 148 thousand litres of industrial water.

The toilet culture of close to 2 billion people is still not adequate today.

The consequence: polluted poison lakes, lifeless streams of water which are reminiscent of rivers in their names only. Instead they are stinking industrial canals.

The consequence: there is not enough water around to meet everyday needs of human consumption.

Today, more than one billion people are without potable water.

The consequence: (according to a 2009 UNICEF study) serious diseases spread by polluted waters and the lack sanitation are killing small children with such a pace, that equals to a Boeing 747 packed with small children crashing every four hours.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

We could go on and on, listing dramatic examples and serious consequences of the lack of sanitation.

Instead, let us ask the question: if everything was all right with waste water management, would this mean that everything was also all right with respect to our water management, water treatment and the protection of our water bases? Unfortunately no.

Water management nowadays makes international cooperation indispensable.

Half of Earth's population lives in so-called "shared" or "joint" water catchment areas.

The same river provides the water supplies for two, three or more countries.

Cooperation between countries is a daily obligation, the absence of it may lead to the emergence of supply, social, health or even war tensions.

Close to 1,5 billion people live in river basins, where water usage is larger than the minimum extent of water replenishment, which leads to the exhaustion of water reserves.

At least two-thirds of European cities with a population of 100 thousand or more are using their water sources faster than they can replenish themselves.

The standards are set high in agriculture also, if the sector wishes to produce adequate supplies of food for a further 2,5 billion people by 2050.

Especially if we consider that currently it takes about 140 litres of water to produce one cupful of coffee, or about 15 thousand litres for one kilogram of beef meat.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have known these figures for years. But what is knowledge worth, if we do not put it to use?

Why do we wait for nature to remind us again and again of our grave irresponsibility?

Hungary treats the issue of water and sanitation as one of the most important questions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

During the recent years, we have been active participants of the Friends of Water working group, created under the auspices of the United Nations.

We have ample work waiting for us during the coming years as well.

We are ready and willing to share our knowledge and experience with others.

We are also looking forward to welcoming everyone interested at the conference on water and sanitation, to be organized in Budapest next autumn.