

SLOVENIA REALISES THE RIGHTS TO WATER AND SANITATION FOR MOST, BUT NOT ALL, SAYS UNITED NATIONS INDEPENDENT EXPERT

Ljubljana / Geneva
28 May 2010

At the conclusion of a five-day mission to Slovenia, the United Nations Independent Expert on human rights, water and sanitation, Catarina de Albuquerque, issued the following statement on Friday, 28 May in Ljubljana:

"After an official visit to Slovenia, I acknowledge with appreciation that the Government is realizing the human rights to water and sanitation for the vast majority of the population. The systems and framework in place for ensuring water quality and water availability meet the highest standards. The efforts in the area of sanitation and wastewater treatment demonstrate the Government's vision for continued improvements in this domain. Going forward, the Government will need to ensure the sustainability of current solutions. Furthermore, in this period of economic crisis and growing poverty, the Government needs to pay special attention to the affordability of water and sanitation for those at risk of poverty.

Despite overall satisfaction with the situation of access to safe drinking water and sanitation, I was astonished to see that some parts of the population are still left behind. I visited Roma settlements in the Dolenjska region where people had no access to drinking water or sanitation, and were living a starkly different reality from other Slovenians. Some municipalities in Slovenia have found solutions to ensure access to water and sanitation for Roma communities, while others still fail to do so. These discrepancies are unacceptable, and the central Government must take swift and decisive action against any form of discrimination, including based on ethnicity.

Slovenia has the expertise, experience and resources to ensure that all people in the country fully enjoy their human rights to water and sanitation. I call upon the Slovenian Government to take the necessary measures to correct this situation without delay."

Catarina de Albuquerque is a Portuguese lawyer currently working as a senior legal adviser at the Office for Documentation and Comparative Law (an independent institution under the Portuguese Prosecutor General's Office) in the area of human rights. She holds a DES in international relations with a specialization in international law from the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva. She was appointed as Independent Expert in September 2008 and took up her functions in November 2008.