

DECLARATION ON WATER BY MAYORS AND LOCAL ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

At the Fourth World Water Forum, Mexico, 21 March 2006

Proposed by the UCLG Committee on the Local Management of Water and Sanitation

1. We, Mayors and local elected representatives from around the world, gathered together for the Fourth World Water Forum in Mexico on 16-22 March 2006, mindful of the responsibilities and powers of local authorities in relation to drinking water and sanitation, recall the following principles:¹

- 1.1.** Freshwater is a scarce and endangered resource that is essential to life, development and the environment, and is a common good belonging to the whole of humankind.
- 1.2.** All human beings have the right to water in the quantity and the quality required to meet their essential needs, as well as to sanitation, a key factor in human health and the preservation of ecosystems.
- 1.3.** Each individual's right to and use of water must be exercised with respect for the needs of present and future generations.
- 1.4.** Women play a pivotal role in development, and particularly in the supply, management and conservation of water.

and we note that:

- 1.5.** The quantity and quality of water have declined significantly owing to individual and collective behaviour that interferes with the sustainable management of this natural resource.
- 1.6.** One in four people does not have access to water in sufficient quantity or of adequate quality, and one in two does not have an adequate sanitation system. Water-borne diseases are the greatest cause of infant mortality around the world.
- 1.7.** Increases in urbanisation, unhealthy living environments and desertification, and more frequent droughts, floods and cyclones due to climate change, have an impact on the quantity and quality of water resources.

¹ As mentioned in previous documents: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the International Pact on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1956); the European Charter of the Council of Europe (1968) and its revised version, the European Charter on Water Resources of the Council of Europe (2001); the Final Declaration of the Conference in Mar de Plata (1977); the Rio Declaration on the Environment and Development and Agenda 21 (1992); the United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000); the Ministerial Declaration from the Second World Water Forum, The Hague (2000); the Local Government Water Code (the Lisbon Principles, 2000); the Bonn Ministerial Declaration and Recommendations for Action (International Fresh Water Conference, Bonn 2001); the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly declaring 2003 International Year of Freshwater (2002); the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, the Charter on Essential Services, and the Local Government Declaration to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002); the Local Government Declaration for the Third World Water Forum (Kyoto, 2003); the Istanbul Metropolis' Declaration on Water (September 2003); the Final Declaration of the Congress of United Cities and Local Governments (Paris, May 2004); Local Authority Priority Actions, presented to the 13th session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (New York, April 2005); the Ciudad Valles Declaration by local authorities in Latin America on water management (Mexico, June 2005); the Declaration of European Local and Regional Authorities on Water, adopted by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (Vienna, December 2005).

2. We, Mayors and local elected representatives, recognise that:

- 2.1.** The United Nation's Millennium Development Goals, which propose to reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015, are of direct concern to all local governments.
- 2.2.** Local authorities play a fundamental role in the management of water resources and in the organisation of public water and sanitation services. Their role must be recognised and strengthened. Local authorities must be able to freely choose among various management models.
- 2.3.** The equitable management of water resources requires an integrated approach and shared responsibilities among the different levels of governance, and must be founded on the principle of integrated territorial management based on water basins.
- 2.4.** The use and management of water must be participatory and involve users, planners and decision-makers at all levels, local leaders to ensure close links with citizens, and stakeholders at each level.

3. We, Mayors and local elected representatives, undertake to make every effort to:

- 3.1.** Implement policies to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of reducing by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015.
- 3.2.** Manage water and sanitation services in our own areas, and within the remit of our powers, in such a way as to facilitate universal access to water and sanitation in sufficient quantity, quality and continuity, and at an affordable and equitable price.
- 3.3.** Manage water resources in a planned, sustainable and integrated manner in order to prevent water pollution.
- 3.4.** Implement campaigns to raise awareness, amongst citizens and all users, of local and global issues relating to water management, and promote proactive citizen involvement in defining water policies at the local level in a democratic and inclusive manner.
- 3.5.** Promote co-operation among local authorities and networks of towns and cities, with the support of the world organisation ***United Cities and Local Governments***, as well as national governments, international organisations, NGOs, trade unions, professional associations and the private sector, and put our technical skills and financial resources towards providing access to safe drinking water and sanitation for all and respect for water by everyone.
- 3.6.** Raise, where possible, financial resources including from water charges, to fund decentralised co-operation activities that are equitable, transparent and long lasting, in order to reduce urban poverty and the exclusion of rural areas.
- 3.7.** Improve and foster exchanges related to data collection, skills acquisition, technology, methods and tools for proper water management, and support in particular the efforts made by international bodies to establish a system for measuring the progress made in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

4. We, mayors and local elected representatives, call on national governments, regional and international organisations and the United Nations to:

- 4.1. Recognise the fundamental role played by local authorities in the protection and sustainable management of water, and in the organisation of equitable and transparent public services to manage drinking water and sanitation.
- 4.2. Encourage decentralisation and devolution, and actively implement subsidiarity, to ensure service delivery close to citizens based on close co-operation among all levels of government.
- 4.3. Increase financing for local water and sanitation infrastructure to address the needs of poor populations lacking access to water and sanitation.
- 4.4. Ensure the systematic and real involvement of local authorities in strategic decisions regarding water management and their role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.
- 4.5. Contribute to developing local government capacity to improve effective water supply and sanitation services.
- 4.6. Support international co-operation among local authorities to build their technical, human and financial capacity, in particular in developing countries, and to foster the exchange of experience and best practices.
- 4.7. Ensure the integrated, sustainable and equitable management of cross-border water resources, in partnership with local governments.
- 4.8. Allow local and regional authorities that wish to do so to allocate part of the revenues raised from users of water and sanitation services so as to undertake co-operation projects with partners in developing countries.
- 4.9. Speed up the implementation of commitments made on access to water and sanitation and the fight against poverty, and increase the level of national and international public aid for development in order to achieve the objectives set out in the Johannesburg Plan of Action and the Millennium Development Goals.
- 4.10. Maintain key ecological balances, in particular through the specific commitments made by all States on the implementation of the Convention on Climate Change.