

LOCAL GOVERNMENT DECLARATION ON WATER

On the occasion of 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 on the occasion of 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 principles¹:

- 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 water, and their usage of it, should 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 due to individual and collective behaviour that is detrimental to the sustainable management of this natural resource;
- 1.6. One in four people do not have access to water in sufficient quantity or of an adequate quality, and one in two do 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 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) and the UN General Comment No. 15 (2002); the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (1980), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), 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 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 1972), the Final Declaration of the Conference in Mar de Plata (1977); Global Consultation on Safe Water and Sanitation for the 1990s (New Delhi 10 - 14 September 1990), the International Conference on Water and the Environment (Dublin, 1992), 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 of 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 (MDG's), 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 should be recognised and strengthened. Local authorities should be able to freely choose between various management models;
- 2.3. The equitable management of water resources requires an integrated approach and shared responsibilities between the different levels of governance, and should be founded on the principle of territorial management based on water basins;
- 2.4. The utilisation and management of water should be participative and involve users, planners and decision-makers at all levels, local leaders to ensure the close link with the citizen, and actors 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 to reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015;
- 3.2. Manage water and sanitation services in our 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 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 between 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, professional associations, trade unions 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 cooperation activities that are equitable, transparent, long-lasting, in order to reduce urban poverty and the exclusion of rural areas;
- 3.7. Improve and foster exchanges related to data gathering, skills acquisition, technology, methods and tools for proper water management, and support in particular the efforts made by international bodies to establish a system to measure 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 drinking water and sanitation services;
- 4.2. Encourage decentralisation and devolution, and actively implement subsidiarity, to ensure service delivery close to the citizen based on close cooperation between all levels of government;
- 4.3. Increase financing for local water and sanitation infrastructure to address the needs of poor populations that do not have access to water and sanitation;
- 4.4. Ensure the systematic and real involvement of local authorities in strategic decisions regarding the management of water and their role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals;
- 4.5. Contribute to local government capacity building to improve effective water supply and sanitation services;
- 4.6. Support international co-operation between local authorities to build their technical, human and financial capacity, in particular in developing countries, and to foster the exchange of experience and best practice;
- 4.7. Ensure the integrated, sustainable and equitable management of cross-border water resources, in partnership with local governments;
- 4.8. Allow the local and regional authorities that wish to do so to allocate part of the revenues raised from users of water and sanitation services 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, notably through the specific commitments made by States on the implementation of the Convention on Climate Change.