



• P R E S S R E L E A S E •

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3rd World Water Forum Concludes 100 New Commitments Made

More than 100 new commitments on water were made by participants of the eight-day **3rd World Water Forum**, the most important international water meeting ever, which concluded Sunday.

The Forum was held in the three neighboring Japanese cities of Kyoto, Shiga and Osaka from March 16-23, holding 351 separate sessions on 38 interlocking themes dealing with water, especially on how to bring safe water and sanitation to the entire world.

Some 24,000 participants from 182 countries, more than triple the number of participants expected, attended the sessions. The key issues that they addressed revolved around balancing increasing human requirements for adequate water **supplies** and improved **health** and **sanitation** with **food** production, **transportation**, **energy** and **environmental** needs, while most countries will require more effective **governance**, improved **capacity** and adequate **financing**.

“The 3rd World Water Forum has become a truly ‘action-oriented’ conference,” said Kenzo Hiroki, Vice Secretary General of the 3rd World Water Forum.”

“I have talked with hundreds of participants in sessions and in the corridors,” said William J. Cosgrove, Vice President of the World Water Council, one of the main conveners of the World Water Forums, held every three years in a different host country. “Without exception, they reported that they consider that the Forum exceeded their expectations. It was a unique opportunity to form partnerships, join networks and learn from the experience of others.”

They agreed that the “community level public participation is fundamental to achieving these goals,” and that the “common basic requirement for water is an opportunity for cooperation and **peace**.”

The Organizing Committee issued a preliminary 8-page Forum Statement, in which the Committee agreed that they will be “solemnly committed to facing the global water challenges and to meeting the goals set forth at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in New York (2000)” – cutting in half the proportion of poor people without secure access to water and sanitation by 2015.

“This statement is only preliminary,” said Mr. Cosgrove, Vice President of the World Water Council. “It has been posted on the Forum’s website (<http://www.world.water-forum3.com>). If any group feels its statement has not been included, or have changes to suggest, they may send comments to the Secretariat until April 30th, to be reflected in the final statement.

Of the more than 100 commitments reached during the Forum, the climate theme accounted for more than 20 commitments, and gender issues produced 13 commitments.

Some of the global agreements included:

The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport of Japan has supported the establishment of the International Flood Network (IFNet), launched during the Third World Water Forum for flood mitigation at the global stages. IFNET is committed to launching the “Global Flood Warning System” project, with the capacity to create the precipitation maps all over the world every 3 hours. As a result, flood warnings in the world will be vastly improved, benefiting up to 4.8 billion people.

The World Water Council committed to developing and implementing with a consortium of International financial institutions, UN agencies, international non-governmental organizations, and research institutions a program aiming to precisely identify and highlight the benefits brought by sound water management and provide governments with appropriate tools and analysis so that they may be considered in priority setting, planning, development, management, and budgeting for the water sector.

UN-HABITAT signed a memorandum of understanding with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to create a program to build the capacity of Asian cities to secure and manage pro-poor investments and to help the region meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) of halving, by 2015, the proportion of people without safe drinking water and basic sanitation. The program will cover a pipeline of US\$10 million in grants from ADB and UN-HABITAT for the first two phases and US\$500 million in ADB loans for water and sanitation projects in cities across Asia over the next five years. Additional funding for Water for Asian Cities has also been made available to UN-HABITAT by the Government of Netherlands.

UNESCO and the World Water Council committed to promote, develop and support the establishment and operation of an independent, easily accessible facility that can help solving problems related to trans-boundary waters by providing on request access to experienced technical advisers, tools, training sessions and mediators.

The partner international organizations and research institutes (WWC, UNESCO-IHE, FAO, KIP, IFPRI, IWMI and SOAS) committed to continue their efforts and to lobby for financial support to develop a better understanding of the concept of Virtual Water, its application and its impact and to provide governments with information and tools to consciously utilize virtual water trade as an effective way to promote water saving and make it an integral part of government’s national and regional water, food and environmental policies.

A broad consortium of organizations (GWP, NRC, FAO, WWC, IWA, WMO, UNEP, IUCN, UNESCO, UNDP, WB, ISDR) which supported the International Dialogue on Water and Climate, are committed to continue building bridges between the climate and water sector, and develop activities to better cope with climate impacts. These organizations will form an “International Water and Climate Alliance”.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) commits to a Community Water Initiative, aimed at building on the power of the local community to solve water and sanitation challenges. Its aim is to provide innovative communities with small grants to expand and improve their solutions to the water and sanitation crisis. The Community Water Initiative has an estimated target budget of \$50 million for 2003-2008.

Through the Indigenous Peoples Kyoto Water Declaration, the indigenous participants of the 3rd World Water Forum commit themselves to forming a network on water issues that will strengthen the voice of indigenous people generally, and help empower local communities struggling to protect their water rights.

The Water and Sanitation Program (World Bank) committed itself to funding national capacity building projects for MDG monitoring. Candidate countries are welcomed to apply.

PricewaterhouseCoopers, UN Water and Care International commit to a Global Water Initiative, to bring a substantial contribution to the MDG. It will start soon with a pilot project in Africa supported by the French Government, with results by the end of the year 2003.

Some of the regional commitments include:

The international organizations active in the American region (IADB, OAS, ECLAC, IUCN, SICA, IWRN, CAN, LANBO and GWP) commit themselves to find and negotiate solutions for the following issues: (a) policy development, including rules for efficient and equitable water allocation; (b) meeting financial needs for water resources management; (c) effect of international trade agreements on national water public interest; (d) capacity building for effective decentralization, water governance, management and regulation of services; (e) participatory and efficient risk management; and (f) impact of first world agricultural subsidies on sustainable water management.

Australia commits over AUD\$80 million in the current financial year for water activities, primarily in countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Caribbean and Pacific organizations (CEHI and SOPAC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to implement the Joint Programme for Action (37 member states), providing for co-operation on matters including the freshwater environment, capacity-building, data and information management, applied research, sharing of expertise.

The Netherlands will concentrate its support to Africa and assist 10 countries in the development of their national plans. Further, it is committed to support the African Water Facility.

The European Commission is committed through EUREAU to include benchmarking into the EU Water Initiative.

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) with the governments of Cambodia, Laos PDR, Thailand and Vietnam, in collaboration with partners will prepare a navigation strategy and program by the end of 2003. The long-term goals of the strategy are to develop sustainable, effective and safe navigation on the Mekong, and to increase the international trade opportunities for the mutual benefit of the member countries of the MRC.

The final statement said that though increasing water use efficiency through developments in science and technology and improved demand management are essential, these alone may not be sufficient to meet the growing demand for water in most developing regions and particularly in cities.

“All options to augment the available water supply, including increased storage through the use of groundwater recharge and dams, need to be considered, ensuring that all those who will be affected will also benefit,” the final statement said. “The recommendations from the World Commission on

Dams (2002) can be used as a reference. A wider adoption of good practice is required in order to avoid the environmental and social costs and risks of the past.”

Other key issues:

Governance: Many countries face a **governance** crisis, rather than a water crisis, the final statement said. “Good water **governance** requires effective and accountable socio-political and administrative systems adopting an **integrated water resources management** (IWRM) approach with transparent and participatory processes that address ecological and human needs.”

Capacity Building: The need for **capacity building**, **education** and access to **information** for enhanced effectiveness in water management is unquestioned. These critical elements of the water development process are often treated as an add-on to programs, with scant regard to local capacity-building institutions, **gender** mainstreaming, **cultural diversity** and traditional knowledge or to long-term commitment.

Financing: **Financing infrastructure** for the water sector comes mainly from the public sector of developing countries and is “topped-up” with contributions from foreign aid, international financial institutions, commercial loans and private equity. Despite the link between water security, development and poverty alleviation, overall investment in water resources management has been seriously neglected. According to the Vision and other estimates, developing and transitional countries will require \$180 billion annually in order to produce global water security over the next 25 years. This will require greater efficiency and better financial management. Several models for combining public, donor and/or private funding have been attempted, and the results have been mixed. The debate concerning **public-private partnerships** has not been resolved.

Participation: In many regions, countries and local communities have come to realize that water is a multi-stakeholder issue, and that partnerships of all interested and affected parties are a viable mechanism to translate IWRM into practice. Major groups including **CEOs, unions, indigenous people, water journalists, parliamentarians, youth** and **children** all have a point of view and deserve the right to be heard. Yet large segments of society, especially women and the poor, are not given a voice. There is a need for a closer examination of participation based on race, ethnicity, economic status, age, and religion to ensure inclusiveness.

Regional Issues: Although most of the issues outlined above are global, some are of particular concern in certain regions. Asia and the Pacific face a main water challenge due to the growth in both water demand and population. Pervasive poverty has confined Africa to a vicious cycle of underdevelopment, conflict, and suffering. In the Americas, large investments in water-related projects and macroeconomic reforms have failed to stimulate sustainable economic growth. Dwindling water resources are threatening people’s livelihood, the environment, and economic growth in the Middle East-Mediterranean. And Europe’s water resources are subject to considerable pressure due to the relatively high population density, significant industrial activity and intensive agricultural production.

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