



# World Water Council

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## PRESS RELEASE

### **A Shared Responsibility for Water**

Strasbourg, October 21st 2005 - Europe must bring its own contribution to the two Millennium Development Goals relating to water: the goal concerning access to potable water and the goal concerning sanitation.

According to United Nations estimations, more than 40 million people in Europe today do not have sufficient access to clean drinking water. An even greater number are not connected to a public water supply network.

The hundred participants of the European Solidarity Week for Water, which is currently underway in Strasbourg, France (co-organized by the Europe Water Solidarity association, the Council of Europe and the World Water Council) hope that every European government will be able to reach their respective Millennium Goals before the 2015 deadline.

"These figures are even more shocking since Europe is not in an arid zone," Pedro Arrojo, co-author of the Declaration for a New Water Culture, explained. "One of the main problems of drinking water access is man-made pollution. Our lakes, our streams and our underground resources are sick. And if rich countries can treat their drinking water, poor countries generally cannot. "

For Gérard Payen, member of the United Nations' Water and Sanitation Consultative Council, ensuring access to water and sanitation is, first of all, linked to a political decision. "Access to water for all necessitates the collective organization of solidarity between urban and rural populations, between those who already benefit from a public supply network and those who are not yet connected, the organization of which is the responsibility of a public authority. Only the public authority responsible for ensuring access to water can guarantee the individual right of access to water," he affirmed.

"For how much longer can we continue to accept the unacceptable?" asked Loïc Fauchon, President of the World Water Council. "The lack of water kills ten times more people than does war. It slows the establishment of public health policies; it inhibits access to education. In a word: no water, no development."

"It is for this reason," he added, "that we must say loudly and clearly that water is an essential human right and that additional financial means are necessary. Faucets come before rifles and potable water comes before portable phones. It is up to political instances to define institutional competencies and to guarantee a transfer of adapted and adaptable know-how."

For Loïc Fauchon, one conclusion is evident: all must share the responsibility. Elected officials and local communities have important roles to play in guaranteeing access to water, quickly and in a sustainable way.

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