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"Bridging Divides for Water"

Kickoff Meeting in Istanbul: launching the preparatory process for the 5th World Water Forum

Istanbul, Turkey – Dwindling continued lack of water services and dwindling water resources world-wide has brought together over 300 water professionals and decision makers to launch the preparations of the 5th World Water Forum to be held in Istanbul in March 2009. During 2 years, politicians, youth and professionals will be working to contribute to "Bridging Divides for Water", the overarching theme of the 5th World Water Forum.

'Bridging Divides for Water' refers to the central location of Istanbul, at the cross-road of Europe, Asia, Middle-East and Africa. Bringing together politicians, citizens, world-leaders and professionals, the 5th World Water Forum will provide a bridge between rich and poor, young and older and developed and developing worlds.

As such, the two year of preparations provides a unique opportunity to create new alliances and major commitments to address dried-up rivers, crop failure from drought, and the millions of people dying every year from lack of drinking water and sanitation. Says Dr. Veysel EROGLU, Director-General of State Hydraulic Works, the Turkish lead agency for organizing the Forum: "Istanbul '09 will be successful and will hopefully mark an evolution in water discussions and actions. We will talk about 'before Istanbul' and 'after Istanbul'.

The 5th World Water Forum follows the success of the 4th World Water Forum held in Mexico in March 2006. During this gathering, over 15,000 participants presented more than 1500 concrete actions that will be taken and scaled up to solve the world water crisis. "The World Water Forum continues to provide a major impetus for drawing world attention to the millions of people world-wide without access to drinking water and sanitation", says Loïc Fauchon, President of the World Water Council, the co-organizer of the Forum.

In Mexico, parliamentarians campaigned for a minimum of 40 liters of free water per day for all citizens; the Asian Development Bank launched a new water financing program to boost investments in water; and the Dutch Bank for Water Boards set-up a Euro 25 Million fund for tackling water problems in developing countries. The 5th World Water Forum, will provide a unique opportunity to take stock on progress and mobilize further engagement of governments, citizens and professionals to step up efforts to solve the world water crisis.

Over the last 10 years, the World Water Forums have created a platform to raise awareness and dialogue on the state of water in the world. The World Water Council's confronts and helps to overcome the economic, political, institutional, capacity and technical challenges the world faces to address the water crisis.