

5th World Water Forum

Istanbul Declaration of Heads of States on Water

16 March 2009

We, the Heads of States, Governments and International Organizations, gathered in Istanbul on 16 March 2009 on the occasion of the 5th World Water Forum, under the theme "Bridging Divides for Water", appeal to all national governments, international organizations and other stakeholders to generate a common vision and framework to develop and manage water resources in a sustainable manner and to guarantee access to safe water and sanitation for all.

Water sustains human life and the environment; it connects people, cultures and economies. Water is indispensable for all economic and social development, food security, and ending poverty and hunger. It is also essential to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals.

The world is facing major global changes, such as rapid population growth, migration, uncontrolled and unhealthy urbanization, land-use changes, economic expansion, changes in trade patterns, climate change, which have a direct negative impact on water resources. These global changes are seriously threatening water availability and quality and encourage over-extraction. The recent economic and financial crisis also must be acknowledged and its consequences on integrated water resources management and services urgently need to be evaluated.

Water also has a power to destroy lives and livelihoods as has been experienced through floods, hurricanes and droughts, and climate change is expected to exacerbate these already disastrous events.

Water resources cannot be managed without appropriate capacity and properly designed and maintained infrastructure. Thus, investment in these areas should be given the highest priority.

Many decisions taken at all levels of government both influence and depend significantly on water. Yet this connection is rarely recognized and much less acted upon.

Therefore, we urgently need new policies, adaptation strategies, institutional reforms with the effective contribution of local elected administrations and water users, international commitments, financial mechanisms, technology and innovation in order to address global water issues and adapt water management strategies to the global changes.

We affirm our political will to take rapid action bearing in mind the key elements of success: Solidarity, security, adaptability and useful dialogue and cooperation on transboundary waters between neighbours. Working together with a participatory, inter-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approach to manage water resources, the world can and will attain greater prosperity and increased stability through the sharing of the many benefits of water.

To achieve this, we call on all nations to join efforts in order to develop a global framework for addressing the world's water issues and to implement tools that will help us accomplish solidarity, security and adaptability.

We, the Heads of States, Governments and International Organizations gathered in Istanbul, pledge to create a more sustainable and water safe world in the 21st Century and, in this context, appeal to everyone to join us in meeting this challenge.