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## Fourth World Water Forum

### European Parliament resolution on the Fourth World Water Forum in Mexico City (16-22 March 2006)

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Fourth World Water Forum which will take place in Mexico City on 16 to 22 March 2006,
  - having regard to the final declarations of the first three World Water Forums in respectively Marrakesh (1997), The Hague (2000) and Kyoto (2003),
  - having regard to the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the final report of the UN Millennium Project Task Force on Water and Sanitation entitled 'Health, dignity and development: what it will take' and published in 2005,
  - having regard to the second UN World Water Development Report entitled 'Water, a shared responsibility',
  - having regard to the G8 Water Action Plan adopted at the Evian Summit in 2003, as confirmed in the G8 Gleneagles Declaration of 7 July 2005,
  - having regard to the EU Water Initiative launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002,
  - having regard to the ACP-EU Water Facility launched in 2004,
  - having regard to its resolution of 4 September 2003 on water management in developing countries <sup>(1)</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 11 March 2004 on the Internal market strategy — Priorities 2003-2006 <sup>(2)</sup>, paragraph 5 of which states that 'since water is a shared resource of mankind, the management of water resources should not be subject to the rules of the internal market',
  - having regard to Rule 108(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas half of the world's population suffers from a lack of sanitation or access to drinking water and there is clear evidence of a looming global water crisis threatening not only sustainable development but also peace and security; whereas millions of women and children suffer disproportionately from insufficient access to drinking water and sanitation,
- B. whereas one of the main targets of the MDGs is to cut in half, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation,
- C. whereas the main theme of the Fourth World Water Forum is 'local actions for a global challenge'; whereas distribution of water is inegalitarian when it should be a universal public service planned and managed at local level, which is the most appropriate level for it; whereas innovative and democratic communal governance can develop around such local public services; whereas control over water and its quality is vital for the sustainable development of the most deprived populations,
- D. whereas water quality, which is essential to life, is one of the major factors in mortality in developing countries, causing millions of deaths every year, half of the casualties being children; whereas over a billion people do not have access to drinking water and two and a half billion have no access to sanitation,

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 76 E, 25.3.2004, p. 430.

<sup>(2)</sup> OJ C 102 E, 28.4.2004, p. 857.

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- E. whereas the European Union and its Member States provide around 1,4 billion euro per year for water and sanitation in developing countries, making the EU the largest aid provider in the world in this sector,
- F. whereas the above-mentioned ACP-EU Water Facility aims, within the framework of the MDGs and the WSSD targets, to 'boost the sustainable delivery of water and sanitation infrastructure and improve water governance and Integrated Water Resources Management practices in ACP countries by helping to address the financing gap',
1. Declares that water is a shared resource of mankind and that, as such, access to water constitutes a fundamental human right; calls for all necessary efforts to be made to guarantee access to water for the most deprived populations by 2015;
  2. Calls for the Commission to represent the European Union at the Fourth World Water Forum with a mandate to seek recognition in the final ministerial declaration that access to drinking water is a fundamental human right; calls, in this context, for the European Union and its Member States to propose, under the auspices of the United Nations, the drafting of an international treaty on water and the management of water resources which recognises the right to access to drinking water;
  3. Regrets the low level of incorporation of World Water Forum actions in the work of the United Nations; recalls that 21 international agencies deal in various ways with the water issue and, in this connection, calls for the establishment of a Water Coordination Agency under the direct responsibility of the United Nations;
  4. Stresses that this Water Coordination Agency should integrate protection of public health and the environment into water resource management and have the task of developing strategies that encourage forms of economic and agricultural development compatible with maintaining or restoring a high standard of water quality;
  5. Emphasises that the management of water resources should revolve around a participatory and integrated approach that associates users and decision-makers in establishing water policies at the local level and in a democratic manner;
  6. Calls for all programmes on water supply and sanitation to include specific actions directed at addressing gender inequalities so as to ensure equal distribution of benefits and the opportunities resulting from them and at supporting women's role in the supply, management and maintenance of water resources;
  7. Welcomes the allocation of 500 million euro from the 9th European Development Fund (EDF) made, together with another allocation of 475 million euro from the same EDF for water supply and sanitation, for the launching of the above-mentioned ACP-EU Water Facility; calls for water supply and sanitation to be adequately funded in the 10th EDF; hopes that international institutions will increase the role of water in their action plans and that debt relief will also benefit investment in water;
  8. Underlines and supports the findings of the above-mentioned UN Millennium Project Task Force on Water and Sanitation, according to which the main MDG targets will be missed unless a number of preconditions are met, including
    - increased development assistance for and increased targeting of the least developed countries,
    - a reallocation of resources from low- and middle-income developing countries to the poorest,

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- increased involvement of all relevant actors so as to create real ownership of water supply and sanitation initiatives and focus on community mobilisation;
9. Calls for local authorities in the European Union to be encouraged to allocate a proportion of the charges paid by users for the supply of water and sanitation services to decentralised cooperation measures and for the Union to set aside the necessary resources to enable it to support and back up such measures, in particular with regard to coordinating data and exploiting and disseminating results;
  10. Calls on the Commission and the Council to recognise the fundamental role of local authorities in water protection and management and regrets that the skills, experience and resources of local authorities are insufficiently exploited by EU funding programmes since, given their technical competences, know-how and experience, local authorities in the EU are particularly suited to helping local communities in developing countries;
  11. Underlines that action to improve water supply and sanitation must not be taken in isolation, but should rather be part of a coherent, cross-cutting development strategy that includes other policy areas such as health and education, infrastructure, capacity-building and good governance as well as sustainable development strategies;
  12. Underlines the importance of early prevention of regional water-related conflicts, especially in regions where countries share a common basin; calls, in this context, for further EU and international efforts to improve regional water policy coordination and to promote the setting-up of regional water management bodies;
  13. Underlines the increased risk of water scarcity due to climate change; recalls that desertification, melting glaciers, lowered water-tables and rising saltwater threaten water supplies in many parts of the world; calls on the EU and its Member States and the international community to implement measures against climate change in order to halt these negative trends;
  14. Calls for shared management of environmental and prevention policies in order to create a truly common water management policy implemented in all EU external policies, guided by the principles of the Water Framework Directive, which aims to achieve medium- and long-term conservation of the quality of water resources, and in this regard considers that all EU financing of cooperation projects and bilateral endeavours with regard to water should comply with the general approach of the EU's environmental legislation;
  15. Welcomes and encourages the work done by European and international civil society organisations in seeking solutions to problems relating to access to water, particularly for the poorest populations; recommends that the participants at the Fourth World Water Forum take an interest in the activities of civil society organisations while the Forum is taking place and that they seriously consider the proposals made by those organisations;
  16. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the ACP-EU Council of Ministers, the UN Secretary-General and the general secretariat of the Committees for the Global Water Contract.
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