5th World Water Forum

Ministerial Process

Istanbul Ministerial Statement

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey

World Water Council

22 March 2009

We the Ministers and Heads of Delegations assembled in Istanbul, Turkey, on 20-22 March 2009 on the occasion of the 5th World Water Forum, 'Bridging Divides for Water', are determined to address the global challenges related to water within the context of sustainable development. We, therefore:

Reaffirm the prior commitments made by national governments to achieve the internationally agreed upon goals on water and sanitation, including those in Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and acknowledge the decisions of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), the multilateral agreements relevant to water, water use, sanitation and health.

Recognize the need to achieve water security. To this end it is vital to increase adaptation of water management to all global changes and improve cooperation at all levels.

Recognize that the world is facing rapid and unprecedented global changes, including population growth, migration, urbanization, climate change, desertification, drought, degradation and land use, economic and diet changes.

Recognize, in particular, the specific challenges facing different parts of the world, especially Africa, in meeting the MDGs and attaining an acceptable level of water security for socio-economic development.

Therefore, we the Ministers and Heads of Delegations, present at the Ministerial Conference of the 5th World Water Forum, share the view on the following:

1. We will intensify our efforts to reach internationally agreed upon goals such as the MDGs and to improve access to safe and clean water, sanitation, hygiene and healthy ecosystems in the shortest possible time through appropriate policies and adequate financial resources at all levels.

2. We will further support the implementation of integrated water resources management (IWRM) at the level of river basin, watershed and groundwater systems, within each country, and, where appropriate, through international cooperation to meet economic, social and environmental demands equitably, inter alia to address the impact of global changes, taking into account the interests of all stakeholders, using a participatory process in decision making and planning while creating better links between relevant sectors to achieve solutions that benefit all parties.

3. We endeavour to improve water demand management, productivity and efficiency of water use for agriculture including, where appropriate, building irrigation networks and also improve rain-fed agriculture to increase crop productivity and conserve water with a view to achieving sustainable production of sufficient food for rapidly increasing populations, and changing consumption patterns, improving living standards, especially in rural areas, and ending poverty and hunger consistent and in harmony with internationally agreed development goals and other relevant international obligations/agreements.

4. We support country-led development projects in different sectors related to water, especially with regard to energy and food security and poverty eradication. We will work to build new and maintain, strengthen and improve existing infrastructure for multiple purposes including water storage, irrigation, energy production, navigation and disaster prevention and preparedness that are economically sound, environmentally sustainable and socially equitable.

5. We will strengthen our understanding of the impacts of global changes on water resources, natural hydrological processes and ecosystems. We will work to preserve environmental flows, increase the resilience of and restore degraded ecosystems, taking advantage of new mechanisms as well as partnerships with foresters to enhance water-related forest services.

6. We will strengthen the prevention of pollution from all sectors in surface and groundwater, appropriately applying the polluter pays principle, while further developing and implementing wastewater collection, treatment and reuse.

7. We will consider the need of water-short areas to invest in desalination and wastewater treatment for reuse and provide technological support and know-how to make them sustainable and affordable.

8. We will respect international law providing protection for water resources, water infrastructure and the environment in times of armed conflict and cooperate in its further development, as necessary.

9. We resolve to develop, implement and further strengthen transnational, national and/or sub-national plans and programmes to anticipate and address the possible impacts of global changes. Assessments of varying hydrological conditions, extreme water events and the shape and functionality of existing infrastructure are essential in this context. Investment efforts to establish necessary infrastructure, to increase storage and drainage capacity in particular, needs to be scaled up, taking into account water efficiency.

10. We resolve to work to prevent and respond to natural and human-induced disasters, including floods and droughts. We resolve to proceed, where possible, from crisis management to disaster preparedness and prevention of human-induced disasters and risk management by developing early warning systems, implementing structural and non-structural measures, both for water resources and access to water and sanitation, and building capacity at all levels. We resolve to also take necessary post-disaster mitigation and rehabilitation measures for affected people and hydrological systems.

11. We will strive to improve water-related monitoring systems and ensure that useful information is made freely available to all concerned populations, including neighbouring countries.

12. We will clarify at all levels, as appropriate, the roles, rights and responsibilities of all actors and promote cross-cutting coordination and policies, in particular to provide people with access to water and sanitation as a key to achieve sustainable development while maintaining responsibility in line with social considerations, with national governments and local authorities, and support various forms of partnerships.

13. To improve at the national level the governance of the water sector, we will, as appropriate, aim to:
    a) Promote institutional water management reform,
    b) Strengthen water sector laws and regulatory frameworks, increase political and administrative accountability for their implementation, and ensure their effective enforcement,
    c) Prevent corruption and increase integrity in implementing water-related policies, plans and practices,
    d) Ensure transparency in decision making processes,
    e) Strengthen public participation from all water stakeholders.

14. We will support scientific research, education, development and adoption of new technologies and broadening of technological choices in the field of water and promote their utilization towards sustainable use and management of water resources and to increase the adaptive capacities and resiliency of societies. We will make efforts to promote international cooperation in the development, application and diffusion, including dissemination of technologies, practices and processes in water issues, as well as in scientific, technological, socio-economic and other research, towards improving universal access to water and sanitation.

15. We acknowledge the discussions within the UN system regarding human rights and access to safe drinking water and sanitation. We recognize that access to safe drinking water and sanitation is a basic human need.

16. We will take, as appropriate, concrete and tangible steps to improve and promote cooperation on sustainable use and protection of transboundary water resources through coordinated action of riparian states, in conformity with existing agreements and/or other relevant arrangements, taking into account the interests of all riparian states concerned. We will work to strengthen existing institutions and develop new ones, as appropriate and if needed, and implement instruments for improved management of transboundary waters.

17. We invite international organizations and institutions to support international efforts to enhance the dissemination of experiences and sharing of best practices on sustainable water resources rehabilitation, protection, conservation, management and utilization.

18. We strive to prioritize water and sanitation in national development plans and strategies; develop local and national/regional water management plans; allocate adequate budgetary resources to water management and sanitation service provision; to lead donor coordination processes, and create an enabling environment for water and sanitation investments. We strive to mobilize resources from all sources, including public and private.

19. We will promote effective use of financial resources from all sources, including encouraging international financial institutions, development partners and beneficiary countries to increase support for water management, water supply and sanitation. We also will resolve to support more effective and diversified support, credit and financial management systems that are easily accessible and affordable.

20. Acknowledging that new and adequate resources are needed to achieve the MDGs, we call upon the international community, development partners and private sources of financing

to invest resources to complement the efforts made by developing countries and countries with economies in transition, to develop sustainable water resources management and to build the infrastructure base for a sustained socio-economic growth, especially in Africa and least developed countries.

21. We acknowledge the need of fair, equitable and sustainable cost recovery strategies and we will therefore promote and implement realistic and sustainable financing strategies for the water sector, especially water supply, good water quality and sanitation sectors. We acknowledge that exclusively economic approaches and tools cannot capture all social and environmental aspects in cost recovery. Financing strategies should be based on a best possible use and mix of tariffs for all forms of water services, taxes and transfers to cover needs related to infrastructure development and extension, operation and maintenance.

22. We finally acknowledge that water is a cross-cutting issue. Thus, we will communicate our message to those outside of the water sector including the highest political levels. We will make our best efforts to follow this issue in order to develop innovative governance, integrated water policy management, legal frameworks, cross-sectoral policies, financing mechanisms and technologies in combination with capacity development.

Therefore, we the Ministers and Heads of Delegations present at the 5th World Water Forum Ministerial Conference share the view to:

- ***(A)*** *Convey* the results of the 5th World Water Forum Ministerial Process to relevant international and regional processes,

- ***(B)*** *Challenge ourselves and call upon all stakeholders to take into account* this Ministerial Statement and its recommendations to be incorporated, as appropriate, into our national policies related to water resources management and services and link these results to the 6th World Water Forum, and take note of the Istanbul Water Guide and its recommendations.

- ***(C)*** *Continue to work together* with Parliaments and Local Authorities, to address water and sanitation issues in a mutual fashion,

Finally, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations present at the 5th World Water Forum Ministerial Conference would like to:

- ***(D)*** Thank the Government of Turkey, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and the World Water Council for their organization of the 5th World Water Forum and the Ministerial Conference.

- ***(E)*** *Note with appreciation* the participation of National Governments, Regional and International Organizations and stakeholder groups in the Ministerial, Regional and Thematic Processes of the 5th World Water Forum.