

8TH GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM 3-4 FEBRUARY 2007

Key Messages: Water Policy and Strategy

Civil society hopes Governments recognize the critical importance of the “UNEP water policy and strategy” and adopts this document as UNEP’s first step in taking action to address poorly managed freshwater resources that cross or mark international boundaries, access to water resources for agriculture and industry, and a growing public health crises due to lack of access to safe drinking water and sustainable sanitation. Civil society highlights two key messages for UNEP and Governments to bring into their decisions as they move forward addressing:

1. Access to and Benefit Sharing of Water Resources for Vulnerable Communities

- Recognizing indigenous, rural, and locals peoples’ safe and affordable access to water and sustainable sanitation.
- Addressing climate change’s impacts on the poor and rural communities by proposing guidelines and funding for methods measures of adaptation and mitigation;
- Elevating the important role of forest protection in ensuring urban and rural access to water supply and providing guidelines and funding for development of legal instruments;
- Promoting and providing guidelines for funding mechanisms to assure equitable sharing of benefits between upstream and downstream groups and access and participation in decision making for all affected sectors and communities (e.g. water basin agencies);
- Recognize access to safe water as a fundamental human right, essential for sustainable development and poverty alleviation, which means that each state should assume its role to guarantee water availability and quality for all users, rather than pursuing further privatization.
- Calling on UNEP and Governments to increase existing and future financial support through innovative mechanisms, e.g., the GEF and a “global sanitation bond” (under development, similar to GAVI Bond); and
- Highlighting UNEP’s role to build capacity on community education concerning root causes of water pollution and the linkages between public health, sustainable water management, beneficial impacts of safe water and sanitation on HIV/AIDS affected communities; and the preventative impacts of sustainable sanitation.

2. Trans-boundary River Basins, Lakes, Aquifers and Aquifer Systems

- Calling for a review of existing treaties that restrict basin state’s equitable rights of access to trans-boundary freshwater resources and for the adoption of agreements that promote interstate cooperation on the integrated management of these resources.
- Calling on the world’s governments to ratify and implement the UN Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses.
- Urging all member states of the Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) to accede to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Trans-boundary Watercourses and International Lakes, ratify its Protocols on Water and Health and Civil Liability, and accept its 2003 amendment that expands the convention’s geographic scope beyond the UNECE region.
- Calling on states to submit comments by December 2007 and engage in the drafting process of the UN International Law Commission’s Draft Articles on the Law of Aquifers and Aquifer Systems, for the adoption of a future aquifer agreement at the global level.

Prepared by the Water Working Group during the Global Civil Society Forum from 3-4 February 2007. The following attempts to represent the outcomes of discussions among the major groups present although this is may not be considered explicitly endorsed by all attendees.