



12 > 17 March 2012  
MARSEILLE - FRANCE



## Ministerial Declaration

13th March, 2012

*TIME FOR SOLUTIONS*

1. We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations assembled in Marseille, France, on 13 March 2012 at the Ministerial Conference of the 6th World Water Forum, “Time for Solutions”, are determined to address water challenges at all scales. Recognizing the Ministerial Statement and other outcomes of the 5th World Water Forum, held in Istanbul on 16-22 March 2009, and taking account of the contributions of the political, thematic, regional and grassroots and citizenship processes, as well as the inputs collected on the “Platform of Solutions” of the 6th World Water Forum, we therefore express our shared view on the following:

2. Reaffirming Chapter 18 of Agenda 21 (the United Nations Program of Action from Rio at the Earth Summit on 3-14 June 1992) and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development on 2-4 September 2002, water is key to peace and stability and central to provide powerful, multifaceted contributions to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development “Rio+20” on “a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication” and “the institutional framework for sustainable development”.

### **Ensure Everyone’s Well-Being: Accelerate Access to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation, Expand Sanitation and Deliver on Water and Health**

3. Reiterating our commitment to fully achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and following the adoption of United Nations resolutions (A/RES/64/292, A/HRC/RES/15/9, A/HRC/RES/16/2 and A/HRC/RES/18/1) related to the recognition of the human right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation, we commit to accelerate the full implementation of the human rights obligations relating to access to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation by all appropriate means as a part of our efforts to overcome the water crisis at all levels.

4. We are therefore determined to achieve access to safe drinking water and sanitation for all with the required availability, quality, acceptability, accessibility and affordability, focusing on the most vulnerable and taking into account non-discrimination and gender equality. To improve the situation of the billions of people without access to safe drinking water and proper sanitation, we intend to focus our efforts on local and national planning and coordination, adequate financing and investment, and robust regulatory, monitoring and accountability frameworks, involving all stakeholders.

5. An integrated approach towards sanitation and wastewater management, including collection, treatment, monitoring and re-use, is essential to optimize the benefits and value of water. We need to advance development and utilization of non-conventional water resources, including safe re-use, turning wastewater into a resource, and desalination as appropriate, to stimulate local economies, and help prevent waterborne diseases and the degradation of ecosystems.

6. We need to intensify our efforts to prevent and reduce of water pollution with a view to accelerating access to sustainable sanitation and improving the quality of water resources and ecosystems. We intend to promote a shared, innovative and integrated vision of urban, rural, industrial and agricultural wastewater management, including context-specific targets for the implementation of our actions, in the framework of national legislations, institutions and enforcement mechanisms supported by regional and international cooperation, including the dissemination of relevant technologies and knowledge sharing.

7. Water and sanitation are essential for health and hygiene and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. We are determined to follow up on the resolution on safe drinking water, sanitation and health, adopted by the World Health Assembly (WHA64.24), to fight water-related diseases. We intend to mainstream safe drinking water and sustainable sanitation, personal, domestic and collective hygiene, water quality protection and monitoring and warning tools in health strategies and programs. Their elaboration and implementation rely on strengthened, integrated and coherent inter-sectoral policy frameworks and cooperation between all authorities and stakeholders.

8. To contribute to health, hygiene and nutrition, solutions include effective institutional frameworks to operate and maintain existing water and sanitation services and to optimize investment in infrastructure. Integrated processes such as water and sanitation safety plans contribute to better water quality and health risk management. Strong support to community ownership, participation, education and empowerment is also needed to change behavior.

### **Contribute to Economic Development: Green Economy, Water for Food Security and Water and Energy**

9. Water has a critical role in all environmental, social and economic systems and should therefore be recognized as such in economic development in conjunction with its social and environmental benefits. In the framework of sustainable development, the contribution of water to policies towards a green economy should be promoted in a manner which leads to achievement of poverty eradication, growth and job creation while preserving ecosystems and tackling climate change.

10. A new approach to water, food and energy based on a better understanding and more systematic recognition of their inter-linkages in decision-making and planning has the potential to improve the production and sustainable management of these scarce resources. A more efficient use and reduced waste can improve access to water, food and energy. We intend to enhance policy coherence, adapt existing institutional arrangements and establish frameworks to maximize benefits and synergies across sectors.

11. Given the increasing global cross-sectoral demands for and multiple uses of water, sustainable development requires integrated water resources management, which offers a set of principles and processes to facilitate decision-making, planning and investment at all levels. As part of the solution, we encourage the competent authorities, including basin authorities, to adopt the most coherent, equitable and sustainable cross-sector frameworks needed to achieve sustainable development.

12. Water is key for agriculture, rural development, food processing and nutrition, as there can be no food security without water. Therefore water and food security policies need to be integrated, ensuring at the same time an efficient use and protection of water resources. To achieve food security for a growing world population, in a context of global climate change, solutions involve tailor-made and innovative approaches to address the diversity of situations worldwide, taking into consideration the availability and quality of water, soil and land, the level of infrastructure development for rain-fed and irrigated agriculture, the exposure to floods and droughts, the sustainable utilization of water resources and the institutional capacity of the stakeholders concerned.

13. We intend to ensure that water and food security policies meet the needs of the most vulnerable, in particular local communities, smallholder farmers, women and indigenous peoples. Soil and water management needs be promoted to minimize erosion, land degradation and water pollution, with a view to increasing total food supply-chain efficiency “from field to fork”. Solutions include water saving and storage technologies and practices in rain-fed and irrigated areas, reduction of water and food losses and waste, safe re-use of wastewater in agriculture and industry, intensification of the cultivation of traditional and new water-stress tolerant plant varieties and the involvement of food security stakeholders, especially producer organizations, in water policies. The commitment of the G20, D8 and other relevant entities to address water and food security is welcome.

14. Water and energy are increasingly interdependent, as water is one of the major inputs to energy production, technology and industrial processes and energy is needed to produce and distribute water and manage wastewater. We need to address water and energy policies coherently and in harmony with natural water cycles to foster the sustainable and efficient use of water and energy to satisfy access to both for all while favouring growth opportunities and poverty eradication. In this perspective, multi-stakeholder platforms will help harmonize water and energy policies, through multi-sectoral processes in the framework of national sustainable development policies.

15. Accounting for water use in energy production and for energy use in the water and sanitation sector can improve water and energy efficiency. Improved energy efficiency in water and sanitation services, especially for desalinization, and improved water efficiency in agricultural and industrial water use, can contribute to greenhouse gas reduction. We intend to support the Sustainable Energy for All initiative, acknowledge hydropower, consistent with sustainable development principles, as a viable renewable source of energy for many urban and rural areas and promote the production of “more energy per drop”. Investment in sustainable multi-purpose water storage, the utilization of wastewater as a source of renewable energy as well as the use of renewable energy, such as solar and wind, in water supply and sanitation, need to be promoted.

### **Keep the Planet Blue: Water in the Rio Conventions, Water-Related Disasters and Water and Urban Development**

16. Due to its cross-cutting nature, we need to ensure that water is an integral part of strategies and programmes pertaining to climate change, biodiversity and desertification, leveraging synergies among the 3 Rio Conventions as well as the Ramsar Convention on wetlands, reiterating our commitment made to water. A similar focus on water with respect to other relevant international instruments and fora, related to forests, waste and chemical management, will enable coordinated solutions, especially in terms of knowledge and experience sharing, long-term forecasting and planning, strategic financing and investment and research and policy interactions.

17. We need to build resilience to climate change and variability including through a more flexible and integrated land and water resources management system, by adopting strategies on both adaptation and mitigation, improving water use efficiency, regulation and storage, inland navigation, ecosystem services, wetland, forest and mountain ecosystems restoration and conservation as well as agricultural practices. Solutions to adapt to climate change also include tapping into traditional knowledge and operation, better water demand management, preventive measures and insurance schemes.

18. We recognize that water-related biodiversity and ecosystem services are an integral part of water management infrastructure, as they provide substantive economic, social and environmental returns on investment at all levels. We intend to take actions for the valuation of costs and benefits associated with the protection and sustainable use of water-related ecosystems in all projects. We also intend to encourage investment in water resources as natural capital through appropriate incentives and policies.

19. Due to the increasing adverse impacts of water-related disasters, such as floods and droughts, including man-made disasters, we intend to develop and strengthen national and transboundary disaster prevention and response strategies. Solutions encompass integrated risk management, preparedness, emergency, relief, recovery and rehabilitation plans, which fully take into account water and sanitation, ecosystems protection and restoration, sustainable integrated flood and drought management and infrastructure construction and operation. We recognize the urgent need for multi-stakeholder platforms, preferably at the basin level, for the implementation of joint strategies and the coordination of prevention and response in emergency situations.

20. We need to take into full consideration the central role of water and sanitation requirements in humanitarian and emergency crises in implementing the Humanitarian Reform Principles. Improved coordination on water and sanitation will help develop adequate strategies for a transition from emergency, reconstruction and development towards sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

21. Cities generate opportunities in terms of improved public health, job creation and more efficient use of resources, but pose major challenges for water and sanitation, due to the increasing demand for water and the correlated growing generation of wastewater, storm water and water pollutants, particularly for groundwater, exacerbated by the adverse impacts of climate change. We intend to promote solutions such as improved urban infrastructure and spatial planning processes at the appropriate level and integrated policies among different authorities, taking into account interactions between cities and their rural

surroundings. Local and regional authorities are at the front line of such integrated policies and we welcome their participation in and implementation of the “Istanbul Water Consensus” launched at the 5th World Water Forum.

22. Sharing of good practices and lessons learnt, as well as decentralized cooperation, can also help scale up successful experiences and expand public and private partnerships with civil society and economic actors to optimize funding of operation and maintenance of infrastructure and social services, including the development of equitable and sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation services for all. Ensuring a sustainable urban development will hence contribute to improve the living conditions and revenues of urban citizens and peri-urban dwellers.

### **Conditions of Success: Governance, Cooperation, Financing and Enabling Environment for Water**

23. Good water governance requires multi-stakeholder platforms and legal and institutional frameworks enabling the participation of all, including indigenous peoples, marginalized and other vulnerable groups, promoting gender equality, democracy and integrity. Given the particular role of local and regional authorities, in the principle of subsidiarity, we recognize the need to strengthen their capacity to fulfil their responsibilities, as appropriate. Timely and adequate information is crucial to enable all stakeholders to make informed choices and actively participate in the design, implementation and assessment of water and sanitation policies. We need tools and indicators to strengthen water policy monitoring, evaluation and accountability. The development of water information systems will facilitate sharing data and developing scenarios to cope with water challenges.

24. In line with the Principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and taking advantage of the 2013 International Year of Water Cooperation, we are committed to enhance cooperation across and beyond water, taking into account the interests of all riparian States concerned, to foster peace and stability. We appreciate cooperative efforts in the field of transboundary waters. We intend to further promote and encourage coordinated, equitable, reasonable and optimal water utilization in transboundary basins, with a view to deepening mutual trust among riparian countries and achieve sound cooperation. Several of the principles of the relevant international Conventions on water can be useful in this regard.

25. Investment in water provides large returns in economic, social and environmental terms and significantly contributes to sustainable development and poverty eradication, in rural as in urban areas, in the agricultural as in the industrial sector. The importance of prioritizing investment in water and sanitation was underlined in all the regional processes leading to the 6th World Water Forum, in particular to drastically reduce poverty, to explicitly consider equity and poverty alleviation measures, to step up investment to achieve the Millennium Development Goals water and sanitation target and to develop international cooperation in water.

26. Prioritization of water and sanitation in budget allocations and in international cooperation is key as well as effective use of financial instruments. We will promote strategic and sustainable financial planning, through an appropriate mix of contributions from water users, public budgets, private finance, bilateral and multilateral channels. We recognize the need for sustainable and efficient cost recovery, pro-poor and innovative financing mechanisms, such as appropriate payment for ecosystem services, and private investment, in a spirit of solidarity, justice and equity. Contributions on water services provided by local and regional authorities to implement their water-related development cooperation programmes offer an example of innovative financing mechanisms.

27. To build, implement and monitor sound water policies, accurate information and agreed upon evidence rooted in robust scientific knowledge are needed. Taking into account initiatives and reports such as the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water (GLAAS), we expect to foster inclusive partnerships between scientists, policy makers, service providers and other stakeholders, to meet the policy needs and facilitate the science-policy interface, through the provision of state of the art technical tools and methods, the involvement of partners in the formulation of research questions to boost innovation



and the dissemination of knowledge and the transfer of technology. Improved coordination on water-related issues within the global system is needed to strengthen and streamline its capacity to provide targeted support to countries.

28. Capacity development, based on partnerships between public authorities, international and non-governmental organizations, utilities, private institutions and communities, is required to face the multiple challenges associated with emerging issues. In this context, we intend to support a helpdesk mechanism to enable exchange of best practices on water laws, regulations, standards and budgets, among and in support of Parliaments. We plan to develop training solutions for different categories of water professionals adapted to the labor market and attractive to the youth, through centers of excellence, associations of water professionals, water operators' partnerships, water training center networking and twinning. We intend to pay particular attention to awareness and water education for responsible citizens, women and the youth, in order to empower them.

29. Bearing in mind the primary responsibilities of the governments concerned, the specific needs of developing countries, and the least developed among them, require special focus in terms of adequate, predictable and sustainable financial resources, capacity building and technology transfer to achieve internationally agreed goals, especially on integrated water resources management and access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

30. We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations, welcome the results of the 6th World Water Forum, "Time for Solutions", held in Marseille on 12-17 March 2012, and agree that they must be widely disseminated in relevant fora, including the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development "Rio+20", focusing on the following priorities:

- The acceleration of the implementation of human right obligations relating to access to safe drinking water and sanitation for everyone's well-being and health, in particular for the most vulnerable, and improving wastewater management;
- The interlinkages between water, energy and food security, ensuring full policy coherence and well-functioning water-related ecosystems, with a view to exploiting synergies and avoiding adverse consequences across sectors, as a basis for sustainable growth and job creation;
- The incorporation of water in all its economic, social and environmental dimensions in a framework of governance, financing and cooperation, taking into account the progress achieved towards the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and beyond.

31. We further share the view on the following:

- The High Level Roundtables held during the Ministerial Conference offer opportunities to identify solutions and commitments to better deliver on water issues;
- Partnerships undertaken with Parliaments, as well as with local and regional authorities, who play a pivotal political and operational role on these issues, should continue, as appropriate, in connection with the thematic, regional and grassroots and citizenship processes of the 6th World Water Forum;
- Our water solutions and commitments should, as appropriate, be consolidated and disseminated and their implementation monitored and evaluated, by the competent authorities, so as to benefit the next World Water Fora; and

32. We thank the Government of France, the City of Marseille and the World Water Council for their organization of the Ministerial Conference.



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