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## **Declaration by the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development<sup>1</sup>**

### **Parliamentary contribution to the 6th World Water Forum to be held in Marseilles (France), 12-17 March 2012**

1. Water - a source of life and development - has become a major strategic challenge for the international community. Under the constant and growing pressure from human activities, population growth, accidents and climate change, water resources cannot be taken for granted and require forward-looking action at different levels of governance.
2. Parliaments of all countries - as key stakeholders in promoting shared values, sustainable development and the implementation of Millennium Development Goals - advocate a coherent and integrated approach to water management. Building on
  - the “European consensus on development” (20 December 2005), which defined a common framework of principles to lead development policies in a spirit of better coherence and complementarity,
  - the European Parliament resolutions of 15 March 2006 and 12 March 2009 regarding the fourth and fifth World Water Forum of Mexico and Istanbul,
  - the United Nations General Assembly resolution of 28 July 2010 and the Human Rights Council (UN) resolution of 30 September 2010, which both recognise access to water and sanitation as a Human Right,
  - the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 1809 on “Water – a source of conflict” of 15 April 2011, which calls on the public authorities of its member and non-member States to recognize access to water as a fundamental human right and which recommends revising the rules of international water law and reviewing the systems for the joint management of transfrontier water basins,
  - the preparatory meetings of the parliamentary process<sup>2</sup> of the 6th World Water Forum, to be held in Marseilles from 12 to 17 March 2012,
3. We, members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, reiterate our call on the public authorities across Europe and beyond to recognise the right of access to clean water and sanitation as a fundamental Human Right and to act with determination to translating this right into reality.
4. We deplore that in 2010, just five years before the 2015 deadline towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals, about 840 million people around the world still lacked access to water and a third of the global population (some 2.3 billion people) still lived without access to sanitation. As a result, half of the sick people in hospitals around the world are in developing countries and suffer from diseases due to water-related problems. This calls for the renewed mobilisation of public authorities in order to improve the situation rapidly.

<sup>1</sup> Adopted by the Committee on 25 January 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Notably the Conference on “Conventions on international waters: need for updating” (22 March 2011, Monaco) and the Strasbourg Meeting on the Political Parliamentary Process of the 6<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum (10 June 2011), as well as the networking of the Good Governance Core Group and the meeting of the Steering Committee of the European Regional Process (12-13 January 2012, Nice, France).

5. We are committed to promoting political, operational and communication measures that support the expansion and development of innovative cooperation processes in the water and sanitation sector at local, national and international level based on the principles of solidarity, subsidiarity and sustainability and the respect, protection and fulfillment of the basic human right to water and sanitation.
6. We hence call upon the European Union authorities and the member states of the Council of Europe, to commit themselves to facilitate the adoption of a principle of "solidarity financing" in the water and sanitation sector at the 6<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum.
7. We propose that the European Union and the Council of Europe encourage their member States to set up policies that will allow the authorities in charge of water and sanitation services to voluntarily dedicate up to 1% of their income from water supply to solidarity actions (such as for capacity building, resource-sharing and emergency assistance) on national, European and international levels in this sector.
8. We believe that national parliaments, parliamentary assemblies and parliamentarians can play a particularly valuable role by fostering public participation in developing and applying water protection policies, disseminating good practices and promoting responsible water consumption. The public should be closely associated with decision-making on water issues in a coherent, holistic and integrated way.
9. We also invite our peers to seek greater parliamentary involvement in monitoring the application of, compliance with and effectiveness of the essential legal instruments for water management. Where necessary, parliamentarians should consider launching initiatives for the adjustment of existing legal instruments or the adoption of new tools for good governance in water management.
10. In the light of the current context of increasing budgetary constraints, we call on the parliaments to be particularly vigilant to ensure that fiscal rationalisation measures would be applied fairly and that sufficient resources - human and financial - would be allocated towards tackling water management challenges in line with national development priorities and international commitments.
11. Finally, we urge all stakeholders to do their utmost to strengthen transparency and accountability in water management, not least in order to defuse or prevent conflicts, to enhance equity and to combat corruption and bribery from a human right perspective.
12. We therefore invite parliamentarians to support the establishment of the global parliamentary network for water issues during the 6<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum. We would particularly welcome the participation of young people and their contribution to the shaping of parliamentary work on water challenges.