

Mediterranean Civil Society Statement
to the
Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Water
(Dead Sea, 22 December 2008)

This statement is issued at the conclusion of the Mediterranean Civil Society Meeting held at the Dead Sea, Jordan, on 21 December 2008 preceding the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Water. We thank the Government of Jordan represented by the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, the French Presidency of the European Union, the Government of Egypt, and the European Commission for the opportunity to present this statement. The statement reflects the deliberations of 80 participants from over 60 organizations from throughout the Mediterranean, informed by their accumulated experience in the water sector over recent decades.

We recognize that:

- **The Mediterranean countries face a severe water crisis.** The gap between water demand and available water resources is widening; the quantity of available water is decreasing and the quality is deteriorating. Within the region, the combination of pressure from increased population and the effects of global warming is likely to exacerbate the situation.
- **Increasingly the water crisis impacts negatively on the region.** It harms the health of the people; it constrains economic development; it damages ecology and bio-diversity; and it poses a risk to peace and stability in the region.
- **A strategy for sustainable water management including demand management in the Mediterranean** is a must. Such a strategy should acknowledge the importance of water in the life of people as well as for ecosystem needs, as a prerequisite to ensure human, socio-economic, and environmental development.

We believe that:

- **Governments cannot face this crisis alone.** All stakeholders, both national and regional, must play their part in dealing with the crisis in the immediate, medium and longer term,
- **Parliaments and informed Parliamentarians** have a distinctive role in influencing Governmental water policies. Their role in addressing the needs of citizens and proposing solutions to inform the decision making process of government should be enhanced.
- **Civil society** (Organizations including grassroots movements from all major groups, women, youth, indigenous peoples, unions, water users, farmers, local authorities, science and technology, business and NGOs) **has a critical role to play as a key partner of government** in its efforts to mitigate the crisis and brings unique strengths to this process. The comparative advantage of civil society complements and supports national governments' efforts in sustainable water management.

We note the importance of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) targets, and the various initiatives of UN, EU, other parties, including civil society, in pursuit of relevant goals for the water sector.

However, in spite of these considerable efforts and notable successes, there is still a recognizable gap between the targets set and the results achieved.

We emphasise that there is insufficient policy coherence and implementation at the national and the Euro-Mediterranean levels related to IWRM and sustainable water services including WSS, which should include in particular the water aspects of poverty alleviation, gender equality, climate change, environment, health, agriculture and other land use, and energy.

We also express our anxiety about the deterioration of livelihoods in parts of the Mediterranean region due to the unstable political and security situation and are convinced

that the removal of root causes of armed conflicts and the respect of human rights, including the right to water and sanitation, are necessary prerequisites for establishing the appropriate conditions for IWRM and water governance.

In front of such a problem, multi-stakeholder partnerships in the region are not yet adequate nor effective, due to lack of capacity and financial support.

In this context, we consider the *Union for the Mediterranean* to be an opportunity for meeting water challenges. This requires increased synergy of efforts and effective national and regional partnering of all stakeholders both within the water sector and between key sectors related to development and human security, such as domestic water supply, nature, agriculture, energy, industry, tourism, trade and others.

We therefore welcome

- The **fostering of sectoral, national and Euro-Mediterranean integration** through the Long Term Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean region.
- The **inclusion of civil society representatives** in the Water Expert Group responsible for the elaboration and follow-up of the Strategy.
- The opportunity to **attain greater policy coherence** that reflects the integration of sustainable water use in both domestic policies as well as policies for development assistance for the region.

We note that the implementation of the Strategy through the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the Horizon 2020 and the EU Water Initiative – Mediterranean Component (MED EUWI), the National Action Plans will be enhanced if the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument (ENPI) financial instrument is updated with the full participation of representatives of civil society and the support of the EU Delegations.

The active participation of civil society in strategy elaboration and implementation is an essential element for success of the process. We stress the necessity for enhancing transparency, participation of all and in particular of marginalized groups, ownership of proposed solutions by local communities and the mainstreaming of gender concerns in water resource management. Moreover, civil society supports the reaching of a level of services that ensures environmental sustainability, distributive justice, social equity and economic rationality. Environmental and social costs and benefits should be taken into account in the design and implementation of water supply and sanitation systems.

Civil society requires from the governments, in order to fulfil the above tasks, to be empowered, informed, and involved in the whole spectrum and all stages of water management processes. Particular attention should be paid to encouraging and maintaining a robust tripartite dialogue between civil society, governments, the Euro-Mediterranean and International Financial Institutions.

In order to be able to fulfil its role adequately, Civil Society needs:

- Appropriate institutional frameworks particularly at national and local levels;
- Access to and sharing of environmental information;
- Suitable capacity building and development;
- Core financial support from governments and regional and international organizations in a structured way.

We ask the Ministers to enable a funding mechanism for water under the Union for the Mediterranean to enable this.

Call on the Ministers to base the Water Strategy on sustainable use and demand side management employing a mix of regulatory, financial and policy measures that reflect the degree of water scarcity that the Mediterranean region faces.

Recognize that potable water for irrigated agriculture will need to be considerably reduced. To some extent this can be replaced by appropriate non conventional water resources such as properly treated waste water.

In the domestic sector there is room for substantial improvements in water efficiency, which should be encouraged, using appropriate tools.

Also remind the Ministers that **Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)** should be promoted as a tool for setting solid foundations for peace, dialogue, cooperation and better understanding and promotion of a new *culture of water*.

Urge the Ministers to include in their Declaration clear **reference to the Ecosystem Approach** and to base the future Strategy on this approach, in compliance with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) founding principle and in line with other regional and international efforts (WSSD, EC, UNEP-MAP, etc.).

We consider it is important to **recognize the potential negative and accumulated impacts** (direct and indirect) of the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area (EuroMed FTA) on the water resources of the Mediterranean. We urge the ministers to act on the recommendations of the Sustainability Impact Assessment of the EuroMed FTA.

We underline the need for reliable data and to enable the **free flow of information and sharing of data** between civil society and governments to find solutions for problems that go beyond the means of any country or that concern cross-border water resources. There is a need to support sharing of good practices through regional civil society organisations and networking.

International agreements for transboundary water management are needed: we urge all governments to recognize and ratify the relevant Conventions (e.g. UN Watercourses Convention) and other treaties since they provide a useful framework for "hydro-diplomacy" and involvement of stakeholders and so enhance accountability and transparency as well.

We stress the need to foster the initiatives and involvement of stakeholders in international understanding and facilitation of all hydrodiplomacy efforts in case of shared water resources.

In light of the above we, the participants of the Civil Society Meeting, renew our commitment to work in partnership with the governments of the region for the development and implementation of the Strategy and look forward to the setting up of an appropriate mechanism to facilitate this.

Finally, we would like to thank all those who supported our meeting, the French Presidency of the EU, the EC, UNEP/MAP, MED EUWI, MIO-ECSDE, the GWP-Med, JOHUD and the Government of Jordan.