

CSD-13: OPENING STATEMENT BY THE NGOS' MAJOR GROUP ON WATER AND IWRM ON APRIL 11TH 2005

Chair,

Water is a human right.

That is the starting point for our work as NGOs. It should have been the starting point of your Summary from the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting (IPM). It wasn't. It was in paragraph 29, page 7. The CSD-13 text must put that right.

Starting with the right to water is not rhetoric. It has immediate practical implications. A right to water means:

- A right for women to participate in decision making
- A right to choose appropriate indigenous technologies
- A right to information about the performance of the water sector

And critically a right to water means protecting and managing the natural resource base for present and for future generations. All of our efforts are meaningless when there is no more water.

Chair, you have asked for priority actions at international, regional and national levels. NGOs propose:

At **international** level CSD-13 must:

- Input to the UN Millennium Review and ensure that water priorities, including IWRM, are integrated into each one of the MDGs
- Create transparent inter-governmental monitoring arrangements and a UN-coordination mechanism for follow-up, including for IWRM and regional initiatives ;
- Increasing ODA to the sector is a priority, but will not help and the poorest countries will not be able to commit their own resources –until unpayable debts are cancelled and trade is made fair. CSD 13 must make this crystal clear to the Financing for Development meeting in June.
- Define IWRM to include water quality and ecosystem management. These issues are decoupled in the IPM summary. In contrast, the recently published **Millennium Ecosystem Assessment** stresses that '*any progress achieved in addressing the goals of poverty and hunger eradication improved health and environmental protection is unlikely to be sustained if most ecosystem services on which humanity relies continue to be degraded.*'

At **regional** level CSD-13 must:

- call for strengthened transboundary water and river basin catchment cooperation
- follow up the outcomes of this meeting, by using and strengthening regional bodies for monitoring and decision making, such as AMCOW or the UN regional economic commissions.

At **national** level cSD13 outcomes must recommend :

- Public financing to become more efficient by the effective coordination of donor assistance and the removal of the burden of multiple reporting requirements.

DRAFT

- Decentralisation of responsibilities must be accompanied by the decentralisation of financial power, and accountability to local people
- Promotion of full cost accounting so that the real value of ecosystem services is used while planning any development
- Mobilisation and scaling up of initiatives which build on communities' own resources and knowledge of their own environment As NGOs we commit to continuing our work with communities that already do much to manage their own water resources. We seek the support of governments through recognition of the right to water and water as a public good in national legislation to this end.
- Promotion of microfinance for appropriate local solutions
- Elimination of corruption through improving access to information and downward reporting systems, which will enable NGOs and citizens to help effective implementation

Chair, we are disappointed that your recommendations now include the promotion of large-scale private sector provision of water services when there are many failed examples, such as in Manila and El Alto (Bolivia). Rather, there is **much more potential in building local entrepreneurship and strengthening public water utilities.**

In our closing statement at the IPM we identified **three things which must happen:**

Firstly the sense of urgency; secondly the central importance of participation, accountability and transparency and thirdly that the actions to which states commit must add up to coherent packages in the context of each country. Spectacular results can be achieved when we pull together. An international declaration of "lowest common denominators" will not make the day-to-day life and work of people living without clean water any easier.

We call therefore on CSD-13 to result in coherent international policy environment and **country-specific tables of commitments** with each player active in the country concerned making their contribution in line with country-led sector plans.

Chair, we thank you.