

14TH March 2012

“Friends of a Global Goal on Water at Rio+20 2012”

An overarching and very important measure to address the global water challenge would be the adoption of a global goal on water at the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in June.

We agree to join forces and call for a global goal on water to be adopted at the Rio+20 Conference. We encourage all parties to discuss how such a goal could meet the global challenges we have before us.

Initiative taken by Portugal, Hungary and Denmark at the 6th World Water Forum in Marseille.

Open for support and development until 22 June 2012 from governments, politicians, major groups, non-governmental organisations, business and others.

Background

Sufficient clean water is vital for life. Human demand for clean water supply is estimated to surpass its availability by as much as 40 percent by 2030 if the world continues with its 'business as usual' approach. From 2030, it is expected that 50 percent of the world population will live in regions with inadequate access to water. Drought and water shortage is still a main reason for hunger catastrophes in Africa. Shortage of water was one of the central reasons for the food crisis in 2008, and is still one of the main barriers in the production of vegetable-based biomass.

Wetland ecosystems, including lakes, rivers and coastal regions, deliver a wide range of services that contribute to human well-being; food, water supply and purification, climate regulation, coastal protection, and, increasingly, recreation and tourism. In many places, wetlands are under pressure from population growth and unsustainable production and consumption.

We will risk not having adequate access to water for basic human needs or for economic sectors that rely on sufficient quantity and quality of water for their activities; the result being negative effects on health, production and employment.

Around 900 million people still have insufficient access to drinking water and 2.6 billion are lacking access to sanitation. An unacceptable share of the water extracted is wasted; Reduction of urban water leakage will, on a global scale, provide tremendous savings of scarce water resources throughout the world, as will increase water efficiency in the agricultural and other water intensive sectors.

Water challenges are increasingly common to us all, and it is time to improve global action. The solutions to the huge and diverse challenges are multi-faceted, and there is no one-size solution that fits all. The measures have to be numerous, wide spread and innovative and must involve all levels of government and civil society.

Possible elements of a global goal on water (to be developed inter alia in the process of the UN Friends of Water Group):

The essence of a global goal on water could be to ensure that water is managed for sustainable growth and development. In that sense such a goal could be formulated as a sustainable development goal.

A global goal for water in Rio could *inter alia*:

- fully encompass all three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced and collaborative way;
- be universal, while also acknowledging that "no one size fits all" and the need to apply different approaches in different countries;
- be easy to communicate and, where possible, linked to concrete targets and indicators and
- in this regard be coordinated and coherent with the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) review process without deviating efforts from the achievement of the MDGs by 2015.

Contact: Jonas Fredsted Villadsen, jofvi@mim.dk, Danish Ministry of the Environment