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**ELEMENTS OF EU POSITION/SPEAKING POINTS FOR HIGH LEVEL INTERACTIVE
DIALOGUE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECADE FOR ACTION “WATER FOR
LIFE 2005-2015” (PANEL ON WATER AND THE MDGs)**

“WATER AND THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS”

The Millennium Development Goals include the target of reducing by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. A broad consensus exists on the direct impact of water and sanitation on the other Millennium Development Goals.

As stated in UN Resolution “ International Decade for Action “Water for Life 2005-2015”, water is critical for sustainable development, including environmental integrity and eradication of poverty and hunger and is indispensable for human health and integrity.

The EU has clearly stated that the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger requires a combination of different sectoral and thematic interventions (...). It also includes reducing the financing gaps for critically needed investments in infrastructure, in particular (...) water and sanitation systems. During the Trio Presidency, special attention will be devoted to an integrated approach to a sustainable water policy.

The link between the MDG target for water and sanitation and other MDGs is of a multidimensional nature:

-Half the population living on less than a dollar a day depends on agriculture, for which water is crucial. Moreover, the poor pay the most for their water, because they frequently have no choice but to purchase it from informal providers, with no guarantees of the water quality.

-MDG 2 (universal primary education): A clear link can be established between large school absenteeism rates in developing countries and water-related infections, the lack of sex-segregated toilets in schools and the problem of many girls being forced to walk long distances on a daily basis in order to fetch water.

-MDG 3 (empowerment of women): in most developing countries women need to walk for hours a day to fetch water for their households. Moreover, for millions of women, inadequate sanitation is a source of insecurity.

-Health related MDGs: according to the WHO, access to clean water and sanitation could halve the risk of child mortality in developing countries. Lack of clean water brings about nearly 2 million child deaths a year from diarrhoea, (more than 5,000 deaths

every day). Incidence of diseases responsible for high maternal mortality rates could be reduced by the availability of drinking water and basic sanitation. Diseases such as HIV / AIDS and malaria tend to spread more easily in environments of poor sanitation.

-MDG 7: Appropriate and effective management of water resources is crucial to reverse the loss of environmental resources and to ensure sustainability. More than 1,400 million people worldwide live in river basins and overexploit them.

The UN Human Rights Council has clearly recognised that sanitation and water are human-rights related issues. The EU fully endorses the work that has been undertaken so far by the UN Independent Expert on Human Rights Obligation on access to safe drinking water and sanitation. It is already contributing to shedding light and clarifying the content of human rights obligations related to access to water and sanitation. The EU considers that sanitation and water are fundamental in order to achieve an adequate standard of living and sustainable development. Therefore, the EU is looking forward to examining the conclusions and recommendations of the IE's first report to the GA (to be submitted next autumn), which will focus on improving the realisation of the MDG's, in particular of MDG 7.

Reflecting this multidimensional nature of water and sanitation, the EU clearly acknowledges that water and sanitation is one of the key areas where "Action is needed as a priority" in order to achieve the MDGs. This year's UN High Level Event to review progress on the MDGs presents an opportunity to integrate a comprehensive water strategy into development strategies around the world.

The world is on track to meet the MDG drinking water-target but not the MDG sanitation target: 883 million people do not use an improved source of drinking water and more than one billion people in developing countries live without clean water and over 2,5 billion lack most basic sanitation. This is hampering developing countries' efforts to improve their citizens' living conditions.

The EU's commitment to the timely accomplishment of the MDGs does therefore include a commitment to transforming the "Water for Life" decade in a decade of action in this sector. Based on experience so far, the EU would recommend to agree on a set of measurable milestones should be established to increase the number of people with access to water and sanitation by 2015.

Given the number of initiatives in this sector, donor coordination at a global level is essential in terms of aid effectiveness. The EU is willing to take the leading role in this regard, and in particular, as far as EU aid is concerned, the European Union Water Initiative (EUWI) and the ACP-EU Water Facility can play a positive role towards greater aid effectiveness in this field.

Besides these specific European initiatives the need exists for strong coordination at global level and the EU will take a leading role in this. The Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) partnership, which is being developed by a number of bilateral donors, developing countries and multilateral agencies, constitutes a suitable framework for global donor coordination on water and sanitation at global level. The EU is participating

in this partnership and calls on countries and regional organisations to take part in the SWA partnership and attend the High Level meeting.

It is indeed essential to ensure the effectiveness of financing for the water and sanitation sector in developing countries in particular. Therefore, we urgently need to map and disseminate best practices that provide us with assurance on the robustness of financial procedures, the results-oriented nature of fund management and, above all, on the achievement of development objectives.

According to a recent OECD report only 23% of aid to the sector went to the countries most in need (least developed countries) in 2002-2007. The EU recognises the need to focus resources and attention on where it is most needed i.e. countries off-track on the MDGs, sanitation, marginalised groups, women, and children.

The ownership of the proposed actions by partner countries will represent a key factor for its success. Thus, experience has shown that further efforts could be done on the side of partner countries to start considering water and sanitation as a priority in their annual budgets and in their plans for poverty reduction. It would be essential to guarantee, in the mid-term, universal access to a clean water point and safe sanitation facilities within short distance. Partner countries spend an average of 0,5% of GDP in water and this issue is not yet on top of their development agendas. Efforts must be made to address the situation of the unserved or underserved populations of the world, ensuring their participation in the design, implementation and monitoring of such interventions.

Considering the consequences of climate change in water availability, and the importance of water resources management in disaster risk reduction, these issues should be integrated into climate change adaptation strategies as well as into national and regional development plans. The effects of a changing climate, an increased frequency and intensity of natural disasters affect poor and vulnerable groups hardest. Climate change often exacerbates water problems and can have a multiplier effect on other factors affecting water resources.
