



## INGOs WATER CONSORTIUM STATEMENT ON CONCLUSION OF CSD-13

### **Governments stall while polluted water kills**

Despite five weeks of discussions in New York spread over two years, world governments have failed to put names or dates to any of the actions needed to get water and sanitation targets back on track.

Over a billion people lack safe water, 2.6 billion are without adequate sanitation, ecosystems are being degraded so fast that they will not be able to sustain further human development and poverty reduction.

The UN Commission on Sustainable Development has been meeting to identify policy actions to deal with blockages to the performance of the water sector: on present rates the target to halve the proportion of people without access to adequate sanitation will be missed by more than half a billion people.

A consortium of International NGOs including Birdlife International, Tearfund, Green Cross International, WaterAid and WWF has been lobbying government delegations to the Commission. It has however proved impossible to get governments to move beyond their comfort zone of discussing the "what?" of policy and commit to the "who?", "where?" and "when?" of action.

David Redhouse, WaterAid Policy Officer commented:

"While the Commission has talked, over 200,000 children have died from diarrhoeal diseases caused by unsafe water and poor sanitation. But despite the urgency of the situation governments have produced only a bland statement of aspirations. It contains no time-bound commitments to offer hope to:

- the Uganda Water Officer awaiting his delayed budget
- the Mozambique community offered only unaffordable imported water supply technologies
- the Bangladesh or Ghana Finance Ministers forced to divert more money into debt repayments, or
- the Ethiopian school with just one toilet for its 2,300 girls."

Bertrand Charrier of Green Cross International spoke of his regret that: "The reference to a rights-based approach to water access and management was removed from the final declaration despite the pressure of most NGOs present at the CSD".

Jo Phillips of BirdLife International added: “The response to the warning of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment that progress in reducing poverty *‘is unlikely to be sustained if most ecosystem services on which humanity relies continue to be degraded.’* has also been inadequate.

She continued: “The vital role of healthy ecosystems in meeting the Millennium Development Goals and our global commitments to sustainable development has been voiced by many Ministerial Statements and a few governments. But, despite some positive text, this rhetoric has not been followed through in commitments to ensure ‘environmentally sound’ integrated water resource management globally.

There has been no commitment to new resources for the protection, restoration and management vital forest catchments or essential wetlands that provide goods and services worth trillions of dollars<sup>1</sup>. Without full recognition of the value and importance of natural ecosystems and without committed resources and concerted efforts to protect and manage them, sustainable development and long term water supply will remain a pipe dream.”

The NGO Consortium believes that a better way must be found to structure and facilitate such international discussions if their expense is to be justified. The multilateral process is crucial and must be supported, but governments need to think long and hard about the dangers of backtracking from Rio and Johannesburg. Action is needed now for a better, fairer and sustainable world.

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<sup>1</sup> Wetlands provide services to humanity valued as highly as US\$15 trillion dollars