

**Joint NGO statement on WATSAN presented by Danielle Morley, Freshwater Action Network to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)16 review of water management**

**May 2008**

Mr Chairman

**Access to safe affordable water is a human right and it is time that governments of the world made this explicit internationally and nationally.** We call on the governments assembled here to actively **support the Human Rights Council recent decision to appoint an Independent Expert** on access safe drinking water and sanitation who will compile best practices and further elaborate on the content of these obligations over the next 3 years. We welcome

**We call on the international community agree a roadmap for action on IWRM with clear milestones towards 2015, and urge countries again to ensure that the** process of preparing the IWRM plans is less technocratic and works with local communities to reflect their priorities

We welcome yesterday's comments on the issue of transboundary water cooperation. The CSD can't keep avoiding to deal with this issue, and in line with the Netherlands we too are eager to hear progress reports for ratifying the 1997 UN Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses, as a necessary instrument for improving the governance of the world's 263 international watercourses.

Chair, failures on water and sanitation undermine other efforts to achieve MDGs especially, education, and the environment. This crisis threatens to derail progress and an immediate and extraordinary effort is required by governments matched with a major change of paradigm towards the oft-promised but rarely delivered centred, democratic, environmentally sensitive approaches. Action is needed as if all peoples matter.

Sanitation is consistently overlooked. Is it because it affects the most vulnerable in our societies, especially women and children? Let us not forget that it is rural women who are walking 4 hours a day to collect clean water and their children who are dying from diarrhoeal diseases. Governments must take up their responsibilities. Earlier this year, we were pleased to work with African ministers on the eThekweni Declaration, and the resulting commitments made in the Africa-EU Statement on Sanitation. It is such high-level commitments, coupled with time-bound action plan and an up-front monitoring process that we need. NGOs look forward to continued partnership in following up and implementing the Declaration.

Sanitation, as well as water, is a key inter-linkage with the other themes of CSD16 for rural development. Without co-ordinated action among all relevant stakeholders and across sectors, the challenges of climate

change, urbanisation and changes in agriculture production are likely to exacerbate the crisis on access to water and sanitation in coming years. We hope that the Ministerial Roundtable tomorrow will make some headway on these issues.

UN Water is playing a useful international coordinating and reporting role. We recommend the initiative is scaled up. We want to see a global action plan for water and sanitation, setting out a comprehensive strategy for ensuring progress towards the MDG targets, monitored by one global task force with one single global monitoring report on access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

The sector has suffered from political neglect and low investment for many years and investment falls far short of need. The priority for ODA should be directed at the lowest-income countries, while national governments should commit to allocate at least 1% of GDP to fund water and sanitation plans.

National level plans would help to better plan, coordinate and monitor the delivery of services. These plans must include the means to allow poor people, and especially women, to hold their Governments and service providers accountable.

Mr Chairman, The UN has declared 2008 the International Year of Sanitation. This should be a year of proactive action and alternative announcements not only an opportunity for expert meetings and conferences. We call for a strong commitment to policy discussions on water and sanitation at CSD-17 next year.

We must seize this opportunity and capitalise on growing political momentum, at the G8 summit, at the UN MDG summit and indeed African Union summit.

A failure to act will be a failure to the world's poor, denying them access not just to Water and Sanitation but to the broader benefits offered by health, education and sustainable development in general.

Thank You.