Resolution on the 6th World Water Forum taking place in Marseille on 12-17 March 2012

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled by the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety on the 6th World Water Forum taking place in Marseille on 12-17 March 2012. It notes that over 800 million people still use unsafe drinking water sources, and inadequate access to safe water and sanitation services and poor hygiene practices cause the death of more than 2.5 million children every year. It recalls that the 6th World Water Forum, whose theme is ‘Time for solutions’, has identified 12 key priorities for water action, grouped into three strategic directions, namely ‘ensure everyone's well-being’, ‘contribute to economic development’ and ‘keep the planet blue’, as well as three ‘conditions for success’.

Ensure everyone's well-being: Members declare that **water is a shared resource of humankind** and, therefore, should **not be a source of illegitimate profit** and that access to water should constitute a fundamental and universal right. They call on the Commission and Member States to reinforce their commitment to achieve fully the United Nations Millennium Development Goals in the field of water and sanitation, and also to take into account the relevant outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development. The World Water Forum debate should aim at strategies and solutions for agricultural and economic development that can guarantee a high level of water availability and quality.

Members call for the planning and implementing of water measures at river basin scale covering the entire hydrological cycle. Water pollution should be tackled at source, limiting the amount of hazardous substances that enter the environment and drinking water resource zones. Parliament calls for the implementation of the ‘polluter pays’ principle. It also calls for the conclusion and implementation of international agreements for the shared management of transboundary surface waters and groundwater, drawing populations and administrations together to ensure the sustainable management of water resources and as a safeguard against local and international conflicts.

Contribute to economic development: Members stress that the sustainable use of water is as much an economic necessity as an environmental and health necessity, and they call for increased transparency in water pricing schemes. They note that new technological developments have the potential to achieve increased water efficiency and sustainability, and can be used in particular to the advantage of developing countries, and they call for:

- the adoption of integrated water resource management plans together with land planning at the international, national and local scale;

- public and private investment in research into and development of innovative technologies for water in all fields; the use of new water technology, equipment and facility in agriculture, to produce sufficient and safe food in a sustainable way, using water more efficiently and making better use of non-conventional water sources;

- the removal of barriers which prevent the transfer of knowledge and technology relating to water conservation, water collection, irrigation techniques, groundwater management, treatment of waste water etc.;

- more efficient water usage especially in sectors where most water is used, such as the agricultural sector, as it is within these sectors that major efficiency gains can be made;

- minimum efficiency requirements to be set for products with major water consumption implications that are placed on the EU market, also taking into account the related energy saving potential.

Keep the planet blue: since water is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, Parliament calls for climate change adaptation and mitigation policies to take due account of the impact on water resources. It underlines the importance of risk prevention, mitigation and response strategies to prevent water-related extreme wants all countries to **set, by 2015, a quantitative target for the reduction of chemical and biological pollution** from urban wastewater and land-based activities, in order to protect and restore water quality and to support the sustainability of water resources and ecosystems. The resolution reminds the Member States of their obligations under the Water Framework Directive to achieve good water status by 2015, and calls on the Member States to take all the necessary measures and to make sufficient funding available to reach these water quality targets.

Conditions for success: Parliament calls for the **development of key global indicators** for water quality, quantity, availability and affordability, as well as indicators for water efficiency at river basin level.

Members want the EU to accede to the 1997 United Nations Convention on International Watercourses and to promote the entry into force of the amendments to the 1992 Helsinki Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, in order to extend the scope of this instrument beyond solely the UNECE countries.

Parliament recalls that in its resolutions on the 4th and 5th World Water Forums, it called on the Commission and the Council to encourage EU local authorities to **devote a proportion of the levies collected from users** for the supply of water and sanitation services to decentralised cooperation measures, and that despite the fact that action in this area would result in increased access to water and sanitation for the poorest people, such demands have not given rise to any action. Parliament reiterates its call on the Commission and the Council to encourage EU local authorities to devote a proportion of the levies collected from users for the supply of water and sanitation services to decentralised cooperation measures. It draws attention to the principle of ‘1% solidarity for water’ adopted by some Member States as a possible example to promote.

Lastly, Members stress the need to achieve a **thematic concentration of available financing on water issues** and to **mainstream the issue of water into all policy areas**, including all EU financial and legal instruments. They emphasise that addressing water challenges is integral to the successful transition to and functioning of a ‘green economy’.