

Resolution on the Fourth World Water Forum in Mexico City, 16-22 March 2006

2006/2514(RSP) - 15/03/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the Fourth World Water Forum in Mexico City (16-22 March 2006). Pointing out that half of the world's population suffers from a lack of sanitation or access to drinking water, Parliament declared that water is a shared resource of mankind and that, as such, access to water constitutes a fundamental human right. It called for all necessary efforts to be made to guarantee access to water for the most deprived populations by 2015.

Parliament further called for the Commission to represent the EU at the Fourth World Water Forum with a mandate to seek recognition in the final ministerial declaration that access to drinking water is a fundamental human right. The EU and its Member States should propose, under the auspices of the United Nations, the drafting of an international treaty on water and the management of water resources which recognises the right to access to drinking water.

Parliament called for the establishment of a Water Coordination Agency under the direct responsibility of the United Nations. This Agency should integrate protection of public health and the environment into water resource management and have the task of developing strategies that encourage forms of economic and agricultural development compatible with maintaining or restoring a high standard of water quality.

Parliament welcomed the allocation of EUR 500 million from the 9th European Development Fund (EDF) made, together with another allocation of EUR 475 million from the same EDF for water supply and sanitation, for the launching of the ACP-EU Water Facility. It hoped that international institutions would increase the role of water in their action plans and that debt relief will also benefit investment in water.

Parliament went on to state that local authorities in the EU should be encouraged to allocate a proportion of the charges paid by users for the supply of water and sanitation services to decentralised cooperation measures. It called on the Commission and the Council to recognise the fundamental role of local authorities in water protection and management and regretted that the skills and resources of local authorities are insufficiently exploited by EU funding programmes for helping local communities in developing countries.

Parliament underlined the importance of early prevention of regional water-related conflicts, especially in regions where countries share a common basin. There must be further EU and international efforts to improve regional water policy coordination and to promote the setting-up of regional water management bodies.

There was also the increased risk of water scarcity due to climate change. Desertification, melting glaciers, lowered water-tables and rising saltwater threaten water supplies in many parts of the world, urgently requiring measures against climate change in order to halt these negative trends.

Finally, Parliament recommended that the participants at the Fourth World Water Forum take an interest in the activities of civil society organisations, whose work in seeking solutions to problems relating to access to water was commended.