

NGO Major Group Statement

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The NGO major group reaffirms that NGOs are working with communities all over the world who are successfully managing their own resources, and actions on water sanitation and habitat. **We are willing and able to do more, but our commitment requires action and support by governments.**

Agendas and action programmes on water, sanitation and human settlements have been accepted in various international forums. In practice, however...:

1. The human rights to adequate, affordable water, housing and sanitation are not respected;
2. Participation although accepted is not adequately implemented;
3. Fragmentation of responsibilities between government agencies is very problematic;
4. Prioritisation for the poor rarely occurs;
5. Impacts on the environment are not considered;
6. Over consumption of resources continue to be problematic;
7. IWRM plans are missing in most countries;
8. There is insufficient consideration of cultural diversity and gender; and
9. Objectives don't link to local financing structures and capacities.

Thus NGOs prioritise the following actions: Safe, affordable, sufficient housing and water are recognized human rights under international law. We will therefore strongly support, within our means, that these principles, including inter alia, Rio Principle 10, are recognized and incorporated into national laws and regulations, backed by measurable implementation plans, including for the millions of people living in unplanned settlements. An integrated sector wide approach, involving all relevant ministries and stakeholders, needs to be the basis for planning and implementation.

Considering the lack of progress on the 2005 IWRM target, **CSD 13 should agree to a common framework for drafting and implementation of IWRM and water efficiency plans, that should:**

1. Ensure a fair and equitable allocation of water;
2. Adopt an ecosystem and river basin approach to achieve full scale sustainable water resource management;
3. Ensure integration of sanitation;
4. Evaluate the allocation of water to agricultural production and put in place incentives to improve water use efficiency; and
5. Incorporate environmental impact assessment and social economic gender cultural impact assessment as standard policy and practice.

On the financing gap..... all governments must significantly increase their political and financial commitment to the sector taking a poverty eradication and rights-based approach.

Mobilising resources for long-term investment in the sector will require actions at all levels, but investments must always respect the needs and desires of local users. Don't make them pay for a service they can't afford or need.

Developed country governments should commit during 2005 to reverse declining levels of ODA to the sector and focus on countries most in need, particularly sub Saharan Africa. They should also agree on a concrete timetable to implement the Monterrey consensus and coordinate their multilateral and bilateral programmes working on the same target group, and/or region.

We strongly support the initiative of the UK government as presidency of the G8 to cancel all debts of poor countries at the 2005 G8 summit and to use debt swaps through endowment funds to finance the MDGs, particularly MDG 7.

Governments should prioritise the needs of the poorest in national budgets, set up tariff structures for water use, including rising block tariffs for high consumers of water, but without preventing poor people's access to affordable water and sanitation. "In kind" contribution by communities and NGOs is already widely in practice, and now must be matched by governments.

Private sector participation is not in itself the solution to the financial gap and must never be imposed as a condition of grants or loans. Water is a public good, therefore regulation of and control over water must always remain with the public sector. Water must never be traded as a commodity.

Decentralization is an important principle for water management, but must include the decentralization of fiscal powers to local authorities.

The goals of CSD13 can only be delivered by governance structures that allow local communities and marginalized people to participate as equal partners with women,

farmers, trade unions, business, municipalities, in a multi-stakeholder framework where different interests and responsibilities are acknowledged from the outset.

We need to strengthen institutional capacities that can result in changing behaviour, optimal use of traditional knowledge and technologies from the local level, that promote self reliance. Major groups have the capabilities to bring this about.

Monitoring and reporting should always distinguish between impacts according to gender, ethnicity and cultures.

Regarding human settlements, we must emphasize that MDG Target 11 of reducing the number of slum dwellers by 100 million is overshadowed by the fact that the number of slum dwellers will actually increase by five times that number over the same period. The CSD process should address the root causes of rural/urban migration as well as the destruction of human habitat caused by military operations, political violence, forced evictions and related criminal acts.

Sanitation and hygiene promotion is lagging behind and a true commitment is required by governments such as is happening in Senegal and Bangladesh. There are many good examples to be adopted including city wide sanitation strategies, eco sanitation, social marketing of hygiene practices. This is an area that requires a cultural and gender sensitive approach: coordination between local authorities NGOs and community groups.

Mr. Chairman, we are committed to bringing all this about. It would be an utter shame if something so “utterly affordable” is left unfulfilled in our lifetimes.