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**STATEMENT OF THE SYMPOSIUM ON  
“WATER, THE CITY AND URBAN PLANNING”,  
HELD IN PARIS, 10-11 APRIL 1997**

## PARIS STATEMENT

### **The Symposium on Water, the City and Urban Planning,**

held in Paris on 10-11 April 1997 with 300 participants from over 50 countries, having considered the importance and urgency of addressing water and sanitation problems of the world's cities in a forceful and operational way and building upon the findings of previous international conferences, including the Dublin Statement (1992), the Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio, 1992), the Beijing Declaration (1996) and the Habitat-II Agenda (1996) and in the spirit of the First World Water Forum (Marrakesh, 1997), urges the international community, authorities, local groups and citizens to adopt the guidelines, measures and recommendations found below.

#### **Whereas:**

- **The marked process of urbanization in most countries and especially in the developing world is causing exponentially increasing pressures on the available water resources that is reaching critical proportions. The sanitary and ecological problems arising from the human concentrations and disposal of waste from urban agglomerations pose formidable challenges. The attainment of effective water management strategies to achieve a sustainable urban development, and in some cases just to ensure the long-term survival of cities, threatens to become an elusive goal and calls out for our attention;**
- **Water related problems in cities touch upon all elements of the water cycle: water, land, air, and energy; that is, they are associated to all human activities. Furthermore, the social, cultural, political, institutional, and economic aspects are integral, even dominant components of water management issues and can not be set aside when designing solutions to existing problems, particularly when dealing with questions of equity and sustainability. The nature of water as an endowment and economic good, and as a basic necessity not to be denied to any sector of society is a duality which must be faced with wisdom and compassion;**
- **An integrated approach is necessary with regard to environmental and water management. Urban planning and its connected water aspects should encompass integration from the physical standpoint beyond the city limits, considering both the river basin where it is located and the surrounding region affected by and interacting with the city; and from the multi-sectorial standpoint. All relevant sectors must be functionally and meaningfully involved in this process including education, agriculture, finance, energy, etc. The presence of a responsive population with proper mechanisms to participate in decision-making at local and higher levels is essential for effective results;**
- **Each city has a set of particular conditions and problems which precludes the automatic application of imported solutions. Nevertheless, a wealth of experience and information has been accumulated by different cities over the world in facing various types of urban water problems which deserve to be studied and shared in order to learn how they may benefit other cities.**

## **Recognizing that it is pressing to act on:**

- **The implementation of demand management measures**, tending to decrease the total water demand and to give priority to higher value uses, given the rising pressures on available water resources today. A wise water pricing policy recognizing the economic value of water but having social sensitivity is an essential component. Ill-conceived subsidies benefiting the urban over the rural population or the more affluent urban residents over the less well-off (who might buy water from vendors) should not subsist. Well-designed incentives for water saving and water reuse are a complementary component. Integrated sets of technical, legal, economic and educational mechanisms considering the responsiveness of the population are necessary;
- **The alleviation of competing needs for water of rural and urban areas** by adopting more efficient agricultural approaches, such as the ones advocated in the Cairo Statement International (Congress on Sustainability of Irrigated Agriculture, 1996) and methods for the safe supply of urban stormwater and wastewater for agriculture;
- **The integrated management of surface and ground water in urban areas**. Groundwater is a resource often polluted by urban wastes. The interaction between surface and groundwater, methods for safe recharge with wastewater and/or stormwater, infrastructure systems and groundwater, consequences of over-exploitation of groundwater, and, conversely, processes leading to uncontrolled rise of the water table need to be looked into;
- **The timely consideration of environmentally sound projects** that will increase the availability of water where it is needed with the understanding that there is largely no real global shortage of fresh water, but that its temporal and spatial distribution is not the best. Because of the long span of time between conception and implementation of water projects, a delay today may be critical tomorrow;
- **The development of appropriate approaches for urban drainage** according to climatic differences, as types of problems and relative weight of factors to be considered varies considerably between, for instance, the humid tropics and semi-arid zones; special problems of developing countries, such as lack of funding, improper maintenance, lack of qualified staff and public awareness have to be properly addressed;
- **The investigation of novel approaches**, including: diversified water quality demand management, with higher prices for higher quality water; dry sanitation as an alternative to traditional water-borne sanitation; consideration of stormwater as a resource for less demanding uses with open drainage/storage options for on-site reutilization or groundwater recharge; local treatment of stormwater using biological systems; harvesting and safe storage of rainwater; and development of technologies to recycle nutrients from wastewater and dry sanitation facilities to agriculture with due account of constraints;
- **The adoption of non-structural means for urban flood mitigation**, as structural solutions have proved to be at best partial solutions. Urban planning guidelines and flood management strategies and tools should be developed as part of an integral approach to the problem;

- **The active involvement and participation of local communities** including concerned individuals, women, youths and local associations to ensure the success of such measures. A dialogue between stakeholders and a willingness to invert the traditional top-down decision process must be instituted;
- **The specific and urgent problems of the peri-urban, less privileged areas** in the outskirts of cities in developing countries caused by their precarious status, lack of integration to the water supply and sanitation systems and poor access to authorities and legal mechanisms, and that special urban water programmes should be directed to them.
- **And, above all, the willingness and daring to conceive and apply new solutions and systems** when existing ones have proved inadequate and/or may be infeasible in other settings, as when attempting to view a developed world city as a model for a humid tropics city with explosive growth. Also, when there is no heavy burden from the past, such as massive drainage and sanitation infrastructure, new ideas can flourish.

### **The Symposium recommends :**

- **The creation of a single and integrated structure for coordination and/or management** of each city in order to facilitate the participation of stakeholders within the city, and the discussions with outside areas in order to propose and carry out sound urban planning and water management actions;
- **The improvement of knowledge** on links between water, climate, urban ecology, urban planning, health and the environment in each urban center, and to use the knowledge gained to inform and facilitate the communication between the concerned actors; the formulation of reliable projections of water resources and demand and of urban infrastructure equipment needs in order to properly plan investments; and the adoption of a clear water pricing structure with a lifeline rate considering the real payment capacity of users and covering service charges (operation & maintenance, non-subsidized new works) to ensure continuity of service; and
- **The establishment of a permanent dialogue** between urban planners and water professionals to develop integrated plans and to promote the integrated management of urban waters, protecting the environment and incorporating external constraints, while considering all relevant aspects: water supply, drainage and sewerage, flood management, agricultural and recreational uses;

### **and proposes**

- **The formulation of a pragmatic Management Support System** for each city for the pursuit of sustainable development, built around a reliable and interactive database of urban development and water resources and an associated Geographical Information System (GIS), to be progressively implemented according to the means available in each case. At first it will be a vehicle for communication and interaction between municipal authorities, urban professionals, water industry and user associations to test and improve the indicators; and

- **The establishment of an International Network of Cities**, a partnership of cities that will facilitate the application of the recommendations of the Symposium and the sharing of their experience for their mutual benefit and for that of other cities of the world. UNESCO and the Académie de l'Eau have offered their support to this initiative, and the International Hydrological Programme (IHP) stands ready to provide the technical advice and appropriate training tools that the network of cities may require.