

**5<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum  
Istanbul, 16 – 22 March 2009**

20 March 2009

**Statement on behalf of the European Union  
by Mr. Jan Dusik****First Deputy Minister of the Environment of the Czech Republic***Madam Chairperson / Mr Chairman, distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

The Czech Republic has the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its twenty-seven Member States. Let me first express our gratitude to the World Water Council and the Government of Turkey for organizing the 5<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum.

Water is an essential component of the environment and is central to sustainable development, health and well being, peace and security. A competition among different players for limited water resources and increasing water quality concerns have been bringing more attention to transboundary water management. An active cooperation between all stakeholders is of the utmost importance in addressing water challenges. These challenges, however, cannot be resolved by the water sector alone - other sectors including energy, finance, agriculture, education, health, forestry and industry have to be involved more closely in the debate.

The 5<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum in Istanbul should represent a turning point for water management in the world. It takes place at a time of global economic and financial crises. We should therefore strive to find win-win solutions in addressing environment and economic challenges simultaneously. We simply cannot afford to ignore environmental concerns, as they are actually an essential element of an effective response to the crisis. A holistic approach to all water-related issues and at all levels is required to overcome competing policies and financial demands.

We need to recall that access to water, sanitation and hygiene are central to sustainable development. After the year of sanitation we laied behind the international sanitation targets therefore efforts to achieve this targets should be intensified at all levels. Effort in this sector facilitate the achievement of other objectives as water is closely related to poverty alleviation, health, security and ecosystems preservation as well as to social aspects including education and gender perspectives. Moreover sustainable use and access to safe water and sanitation are key cross-cutting and interlinkage issues, and as such should be included into sectoral policies.

EU enhances water efficiency including water saving measures, in particular in agriculture, both in terms of more efficient technology and improved agricultural practices as a contribution to secure water resources and food production.

Sustainable water management and Integrated Water Resource Management needs to be seen in the context of sustainable development as a whole and in the light of increasing concerns for food security, energy security, economic stability and conflict prevention.

The world is recently dealing face to face with a new challenge – climate change. IWRM and adaptation to climate change should be integrated into national development strategies, policies and plans– and are crucial to building resilience and supporting adaptation. River basin management and transboundary cooperation are central to

addressing impacts of global change (drought, flood, climate change, ecosystem preservation). Moreover, transboundary waters will be the topic of World Water Day 2009.

The eight Millennium Development Goals have been adopted by the international community as a framework for the development activities of over 190 countries. Now, the global community has to face the global crisis, that jeopardize our efforts to achieve the goals. Therefore we must gather our strengths as never before, in order to ensure greater long-term quality of life for all human beings, in a sustainable manner. Furthermore, water should be high on the political agenda when formulating and implementing national Development strategies, Poverty Reduction Plans and national budgets. In addition, political commitment must be strengthened, ensuring among other issues, adequate financing for the water sector and good governance.

Furthermore, the EU considers the evaluation and following up of water related decisions as a crucial means to further mobilize and streamline resources. Finally, efforts should also be strengthened as regards capacity building.

"Bridging Divides for Water" has been chosen as the over-arching theme for the 5<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum, given unique location of Turkey and the city of Istanbul at the crossroads between continents, regions, cultures and civilizations. In the year of the 5<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum, the Czech Republic is presiding over the Council of the European Union. The main motto of the Czech EU presidency is "Europe without barriers", a motto very close in nature to the one of the 5<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum. We therefore appreciate the efforts of the World Water Council and the Government of Turkey in bringing together a wide range of stakeholders to jointly discuss water-related issues in an attempt to find global solutions to them. Current crises affect all levels of society and we believe that only when bringing all stakeholders together we can succeed in solving the problems we are facing.

The EU welcomes the proceedings of the 5<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum and expects that the results of the Ministerial Conference as well as the thematic and regional statements will constitute an important step forward in promoting water actions. Further, outcomes will provide a valuable input to the ongoing preparations for the upcoming sessions of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development 17 and COP15 of UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The EU is committed in keeping the water issue high on the agenda as a prerequisite for sustainable development and good health of the present and the future generations.

On behalf of the EU, I wish you all the best in guiding our discussions here in Istanbul and I wish that they lead to concrete and timely action.

*Thank you.*

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