



At the 3rd World Water Forum in Kyoto, the Ministerial Declaration fails to commit to either Water for Peace, or Peace for Water

Green Cross International is extremely disappointed at the final outcome of the Ministerial Conference held in parallel to the 3rd World Water Forum. The Ministerial Declaration agreed to in Kyoto on the 23rd March is a weak document, with few identifiable new commitments or proposed mechanisms for translating already stated goals into action. This Ministerial Declaration lacks the vision of the declarations agreed to in The Hague (2000) or in Bonn (2001), and while it reaffirms the water-related Millennium Development Goals and Johannesburg commitments, it does nothing to bring us closer to achieving them.

Participants at the 3rd World Water Forum were instructed to provide the Ministerial Conference with clear recommendations. In the course of the Forum, the major regional and thematic sessions identified dozens of recommendations for action, commitment, policy change and financing: it is therefore a source of great frustration for all concerned that the Ministerial Declaration has failed to take these recommendations into account.

Green Cross International and UNESCO shared the task of coordinating the theme "Water for Peace", following several years of extensive work and research in the field of water conflict prevention and resolution. Bringing together some of the most knowledgeable experts on the subject of transboundary waters, as well as a wide range of representatives from government, the private sector and civil society with practical experience in managing shared water resources and associated conflicts, two days of intensive discussions resulted in a very concise and realistic set of recommendations being presented to the Ministerial Conference.

As war broke out in Iraq on the 20 March, it was hoped that the Water for Peace message would be considered more relevant than ever to maintaining stability and promoting sustainable development. Unfortunately, the Ministers missed this opportunity to take concrete steps to ensure the peaceful sharing of the world's water resources, or to protect water sources and infrastructure during times of war. There is no mention of either issue in the Ministerial Declaration, only a very vague commitment to "encourage states to promote such cooperation" in transboundary basins.

Mikhail Gorbachev, President of Green Cross International, presented the Water for Peace recommendations to the Opening Session of the Ministerial Conference on the 22 March. Among the concrete actions he called for were:

- Immediate ratification of the **UN Convention on the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses** by all states, as a first step towards the negotiation of a **Global Water Convention**.
- Immediate adaptation of **funding mechanisms** to support activities related to internationally shared water bodies.
- International support for the creation of a **Water Cooperation Facility**, to work with basin authorities, governments and other stakeholders to resolve particularly intractable water related disputes.
- Measures to ensure respect for the right of stakeholders to take decisions regarding water resources in transboundary basins. All stakeholders should be helped to obtain the capacity to **fully participate** in the process of development of basin and aquifer strategies, agreements and institutions, through transparency and information.
- Community responsibility and ownership of cooperation processes, backed by international solidarity and commitment to an **alternative form of development** which respects cultural diversity and environmental sustainability.

None of the above recommendations are included in the Ministerial Declaration.

In addition, despite the events unfolding in Iraq during the week, the strongest recommendation of the Water for Peace theme, and other important spokespeople at the Forum, to take immediate action to **protect water infrastructure during times of armed conflict and from terrorist attack**, was also overlooked.

Just days later, the ICRC and United Nations have now declared an humanitarian crisis to be looming as people in Basra and other towns in Iraq face the disruption of their drinking water supplies as a result of the war.

Green Cross International deeply regrets that such an important opportunity to promote **Water for Peace** and **Peace for Water** was wasted at the 3rd World Water Forum and Ministerial Conference.