

BUSINESS ACTION FOR WATER

BUSINESS CALLS ON ISTANBUL FORUM TO RAISE POLITICAL PROFILE OF WATER

Geneva, 12 March 2009 -- The 5th World Water Forum to be held in Istanbul is an opportunity to raise significantly the political profile of water and highlight its interconnection with other global challenges including climate change, food, energy and the current financial crisis.

Water, the most precious of all natural resources and vital for the security of life itself, remains largely overlooked in all its aspects -- water supply, sanitation, agriculture, power, transport, environmental protection, and climate change adaptation, according to Business Action for Water (BAW), an industry group.

The business group warned that the consequences of neglecting water would be catastrophic. Jobs would be lost as industry, agriculture, and their customers and suppliers, face shortages because of diminishing water availability, BAW said. In addition, the failure to treat polluted water would lead to rising health costs, reduced productivity and commodity price increases.

The current economic crisis should be seized upon as an opportunity for governments to promote investment in water infrastructure and water resources as part of their economic stimulus programs. Many facets of water, ranging from irrigation and water management to water supply, sanitation and pollution removal are ideal candidates in this regard as they provide long-lasting benefits for all sectors of society.

BAW is calling on the heads of state and the ministers attending the Forum to increase their involvement at all levels. The complexity of water issues requires strong political leadership and decisions. BAW is calling on the ministers to accelerate progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals and to go beyond them.

The ministers should also undertake a program of new research and analysis to show the high cost of inaction in addressing water issues and the benefits to society and the economy that would come from tackling the problem.

Businesses around the world have taken an increasingly important role in dealing with water problems over the past 10 years. The World Water Forum will discuss the role of business in developing technologies and practices to increase water efficiency and conservation as well as reduce pollution, together with its responsibility as a water user.

Businesses from all sectors are part of the solution, with a real contribution to make.

The Forum, which will bring together about 15,000 participants and some 15 heads of state between March 16 and 22, provides an opportunity for governments to increase their commitment to meeting the UN Millennium Development Goals on water issues and putting water on top of their agendas.

Business Action for Water (BAW) is a partnership that brings together a comprehensive network of businesses from around the world drawn from many sectors and regions. Its aim is to profile business and industry as positive stakeholders to achieve the goals, commitments, and conclusions of the 5th World Water Forum.

BAW, comprised of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) with its local branch ICC Turkey and TOBB (the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey), the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) with the local support from

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its regional network partner (TBCSD), Aquafed, the International Federation of Private Water Operators, TUSIAD (Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association) and the Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD (BIAC), will ensure that the voice of business is heard at the Forum, the world's largest gathering of water experts.

ICC <http://www.iccwbo.org/policy/environment/>

WBCSD <http://www.wbcds.org/web/water.htm>

AquaFed <http://www.aquafed.org/>

BIAC <http://www.biac.org/>

TOBB <http://www.tobb.org.tr/eng/index.php>

TUSIAD www.tusiad.org

ICC Turkey <http://icc.tobb.org.tr/>

TBCSD <http://www.tbcsd.org/>

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