



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Brussels, 22 March 2010
7810/10 (Presse 72)
P 12/10

**Declaration by the High Representative, Catherine Ashton,
on behalf of the EU to commemorate the World Water Day,
22nd March**

The EU reaffirms its commitment to the full realisation of all human rights, considering that all human rights derive from the inherent dignity of the human person. As an example of its firm commitment to the promotion and protection of the economic, social and cultural rights, the EU celebrates the European Water Day and commemorates World Water Day.

On World Water Day, the European Union reaffirms that all States bear human rights obligations regarding access to safe drinking water, which must be available, physically accessible, affordable and acceptable.

P R E S S

The EU also recognises that the human rights obligations regarding access to safe drinking water and to sanitation are closely related with individual human rights - as the rights to housing, food and health. In fact, 88 per cent of diarrhoeal disease is caused by unsafe water and sanitation, leading to the death of about 2,2 million people annually, most of them children under five. Approximately every 20 seconds a child dies somewhere in the world as a result of diarrheic or infectious disease related to the quality and availability of drinking water, lack of hygiene and inadequate sanitation facilities.

But even more than being related to individual rights, access to safe drinking water is a component element of the right to an adequate standard of living and is closely related to human dignity.

The EU acknowledges the fact that several United Nations bodies, civil society organisations, experts, practitioners, governments and others call for a broader recognition of the human right to water. The recognition of human rights obligations related to access to safe drinking water has the potential of improving the situation of the approximately 884 million people who lack access to improved drinking water sources and over 2.5 billion who do not have access to basic sanitation

The EU commemorates the 13th World Water Day and celebrates this year the 1st European Water Day. For the EU, 22nd March is a unique occasion to remind us all that solutions are possible, and also that human rights have a decisive contribution to putting these solutions in place. The principles of participation, non-discrimination and accountability are, in fact, central to empowering the most marginalized sections of society and demonstrating that these crucial matters are no longer an issue of charity.

This year's World Water Day's theme is "Clean Water for a healthy world". Water for personal and domestic uses must be safe, therefore free from substances constituting a threat to a person's health. Access to adequate and safe sanitation constitutes one of the principal mechanisms for protecting the quality of drinking water.

The EU applauds the efforts taken by some countries - including a number of EU member states - to improve this tragic situation, by taking specific measures, including legislative ones, at the national and international levels to improve access to safe drinking water and to sanitation.

The Candidate Countries Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
