



PRESS RELEASE

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Journalist interested in attending the ceremony at Los Pinos on March 22, 2004 should contact the Presidential Media Office in Mexico City. Journalists interested in a phone interview with an international water expert, please contact Ian Larsen 1-703-929-2099, Fred Kiel 1-703-801-8602 or Marshall Hoffman 1-703-820-2244. B-rolls available for TV producers, graphics and maps are available for all at <http://209.123.255.51/hhwpress>

Global Water Crisis Could Leave Four Billion Short of Water by 2025

Mexico to Host World Water Summit to Address Global Water Crisis

About four billion people could face water shortages by 2025, nearly three times the current figures, even in water-abundant regions like the Americas, say coordinators of the **IV World Water Forum**, the first of these triennial international meetings ever to be held in the Americas.

Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, have vast water resources. With only 15 percent of the world's land and 8.4 percent of its population, the region receives 29 per cent of total precipitation and has a third of the world's renewable water resources. However, the region regularly experiences water shortages, poor water quality and poor sanitation similar to those found in the much poorer, more arid countries of Africa and Asia.

"This situation illustrates that there is much more to the looming water crisis than simply water availability," says President Vicente Fox of Mexico. "While the symptoms of the water crisis are often starkly similar in countries around the world, the causes are frequently disparate. How else could it be that those in water-abundant regions can have the same problems as those in the most arid, least developing countries? Clearly there is a need for a coordinated effort to provide water for the planet, but the solutions must be found at the local level."

Japan, which hosted the 3rd World Water Forum in 2003, made the formal turn-over to President Fox as host of the March 2006 meeting at a ceremony at Los Pinos, the presidential residence in Mexico City, on Monday.

Currently, more than 1.2 billion people worldwide lack access to safe water, and 2.4 billion have inadequate sanitation. Lack of adequate water and sanitation leads to diseases that kill more than five million people each year around the world, more than two million of them children under the age of five who succumb to diarrhea-related illnesses. Unless action is taken soon, those without access to safe water could jump by nearly six times.

The Mexican National Water Commission (CNA, for its initials in Spanish), co-organizer of the IV World Water Forum, emphasizes that the week-long meeting planned for 2006 will contribute toward addressing the world water crisis by focusing on 'local actions for global challenges.' The CNA estimates that approximately 140 government ministers from all continents, along with 10,000 top global water experts, citizen groups, international organizations and the private sector, will come to Mexico to identify concrete local solutions to water problems.

"We know now that there is no single 'magic wand' solution to the ever-growing global water crisis," said President Fox, who declared water a 'national security' issue in his country long before the World Water Council chose Mexico to host its fourth triennial session. "Instead, thousands of people in villages, towns and cities all over the world are coming up with their own solutions. We believe that this event represents an opportunity for Mexico to share its own experiences and contribute toward the global dialogue on water, and at the same time we can learn much from others."

The **IV World Water Forum** will culminate a process to bring all of these successful efforts forward in an interlocking way, so that people all over can acknowledge what will work best in their local conditions.

"We can no longer think of the water crisis as the domain of poor, arid countries alone," President Fox continued. "It truly exists everywhere. Our country, as host of the Forum, has the great responsibility of opening up a pluralistic and renewed debate about the status and perspectives of the world's water resources and facilitating agreements with local actors to transform them into concrete actions."

As part of the preparatory process, a series of regional water conferences will be held over the two years leading up to the 2006 global meeting that focus on examining the most successful efforts to

correct water problems that have emerged locally. The organizers of the IV World Water Forum will participate in some of these conferences -- in Asia, Africa, North Africa and the Middle East, Europe, Latin America, North America, Oceania and others – both to promote participation in the IV World Water Forum and to gather successful experiences from other countries that can be used as contributions to the Forum.

“This irregular natural distribution of water confronts many other regions of the Americas and throughout the world,” says William Cosgrove, co-chair of the International Organizing Committee of the IV World Water Forum and President of the **World Water Council**, which has co-sponsored all four World Water Forums. “Countries around the world must advance a very careful planning of water use, often in conjunction with neighboring nations, if they are to avoid severe water scarcity in coming decades. While the Americas are illustrative of these problems, we have to stress that the upcoming Water Forum will address the major issues of the water-and-sanitation-deprived in Asia and Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Europe just as strenuously.”

“The main theme of the IV World Water Forum will be ‘Local actions for global challenge,’” President Fox added. “At the Forum, we will seek to turn local experiences into concrete actions that can be undertaken by governments, the private sector and civil society across the globe.”

By ‘local actions for global challenge,’ we see our mission as communicating an idea around the world that governments, businesses and individuals must take responsibility for the future in order to achieve water sustainability by transforming a global vision into local and concrete actions,” President Fox said. Because the world is facing such a dire future unless we can solve this global water crisis, Mexico will assume a great responsibility in convening the IV World Water Forum,” said President Fox.

President Fox emphasized that Mexico will seek to oversee a Forum at which decisions will be adopted for concrete actions and strategies at the local, regional and international level to achieve the sustainable development of the world’s water resources.

A Global Call for Water Access

A UN report in 2003 entitled *The World-wide Report on the Development of Water Resources* (WWDR) warned that unless leaders of governments, the private sector and international organizations halt their inertia in the world’s widening water crisis, “inhabitants in many developing countries will

face a growing water shortage.” The report cited rapid population growth, contamination and expected climate change as the main reasons for the accelerating 21st century water crisis.

In a United Nations report, scientists calculated that 20 percent of the increase of the worldwide water shortage would derive from climatic change. In the world's humid zones, scientists foresee probable precipitation increases, whereas in many zones prone to drought, and even in some tropical and subtropical regions, rainfall will diminish and become more irregular. The quality of the water will also worsen with the elevation of global temperature and the increase of the contamination indices.

In the worst-case scenario foreseen in the report, by the middle of this century, seven billion people will suffer from water shortage in 60 countries. Under the best possible developments, two billion people in 48 countries will face water shortages, which would still be nearly a doubling of those at risk.

Koichi Matsuura, Director General of UNESCO, has said: “Of all the social and natural crises that we must confront as human beings, the one of water resources will have more affect on our survival on this planet than any other problem.”

Mr. Matsuura warned “no region on earth will escape the repercussions of this crisis that will affect every facet of life, from the health of children to the capacity of nations to feed their citizens. The supplies of water are getting smaller, while demand is growing in an amazing and unsustainable rhythm. It is forecast that over the next 20 years, the average world water supply per inhabitant will be cut by one third.”

Specific water problems in different regions of the world include:

African Water Problems -- Most of the 40 worst water-famished countries in the world, in many of which people live on just two gallons a day for all uses, are in Africa, where people can never escape poverty and achieve sustainable development without first addressing their water scarcity, global water experts say.

This amount is far less than the 50-liter (13.2 gallons) per day level that the United Nations says constitutes the absolute minimum for water needs. The daily per capita water requirements include 5 liters for drinking, 20 for sanitation and hygiene, 15 for bathing and 10 for food preparation, per person.

Only about 60 percent of the 680 million people in Sub-Sahara Africa have access to safe water supplies. In nine African countries, people must try and live on an average of less than 10 liters (2.6 gallons) per day. Poverty and lack of water is inextricably linked for these people.

Asia Water Problems -- Japan, like other wealthy countries, offers its citizens easy access to sufficient water supplies, but does have water problems. The main water management problem in Japan relates to scarcity of per capita water resources. In terms of use, Japan's low position in relation to other wealthy countries reflects the low economic return on water use in agriculture, where the contribution of that sector to overall GDP is relatively low.

China, with its huge population, does well in relation to other nations in development on its water capacity, and moderately on use, but China experiences troubles in the areas of water resource, access and the environment. In **India**, a very low resource per capita ratio is counteracted by a relatively high access for use and capacity, but access and the environmental components are weak.

In **Bangladesh**, while access and use are relatively easy, the nation, in relation to other poor countries, fares badly on per capita resource of water as well as on the environment. In other countries in the region, **Nepal**, **Laos** and **Vietnam** all have very low rankings in relation to other poor countries on access, coupled with relatively poor ranking on the environment, but their capacity to manage water and their per capita resource estimates are moderate, with use scores relatively high.

The **IV World Water Forum** will equally address water problems on all continents. It will put a spotlight on the fact that despite its abundance of water, the Americas suffers from a wide range of water problems including poor water quality and distribution, inadequate sanitation, overuse of underground lakes, and polluted lakes and rivers.

Population imbalance contributes to much of this problem. Three of the region's principal water zones – the Gulf of Mexico, the South Brazilian Atlantic and the Paraná-Uruguay-La Plata Water basins – hold 40 percent of the region's population on 25 percent of the territory, but with only 10 per cent of total water resources. Many areas in Mesoamerica, the Andes, the Brazilian northeast and the Caribbean suffer from recurrent or chronic water shortages (WWC, 2000). The region's two most serious water problems are a reduction in available reserves and a drop in quality.

“Thirty percent of people in Latin America and the Caribbean have no access to safe drinking water, and millions of others lack adequate sanitation, even though we have adequate water resources in the

region,” says President Fox. “Water-related diseases kill 153,000 people in the Americas yearly, mostly children under five. The water crisis in the Western Hemisphere must be dealt with now, not in the future.”

The greatest water threat to Latin America is pollution. Much of Latin America’s wastewater receives no treatment, which has serious consequences for inhabitants of burgeoning cities and for other residents and water sheds further down the ecosystem. This poor water quality is caused by untreated sewage, excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides, and industrial, mining and energy pollution. Without improved water treatment, however, these pollutants will continue to cause disease and limit the economic development of the region.

While water treatment has remained unchanged, coverage of basic services such as drinking water and sanitation has improved during the past 30 years. In 1960, only 33 per cent of the regional population had drinking water, and 14 per cent drainage. These figures are now 85 and 79 per cent respectively, although these services continue to be untreated in most cases.

“The difficulty in providing clean water and sanitation derives from the irregular distribution of water in relation to concentrations of population and economic activity,” says Cristobal Jaime Jaquez, co-chair of the IV World Water Forum and Director General of the Mexico CNA, which is organizing the IV World Water Forum in conjunction with the World Water Council. “For example, in Mexico, the 21 percent of our landmass in the southeast receives 69 percent of the country’s annual rainfall. Some 23 percent of the population lives in this area, which produces only 14 percent of Mexico’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP).”

A Forum About Actions

The IV World Water Forum will be held in Mexico for one week during March of 2006. The Mexican CNA and the World Water Council will organize and participate in a series of regional meetings that will lay the groundwork for the IV Forum.

The main emphasis will be on practical and low-cost solutions to the water problems that draw on the work of the previous three forums. Regional conferences will be held to address both problems and successes in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas.

The CNA and the WWC will also operate a Virtual Water Forum on-line over the next two years that will allow the participation and input of hundreds of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as concerned private citizens around the world.

Structure of the IV World Water Forum

Thematic Forum -- The Thematic Forum will encompass four different Framework Themes that in turn will be comprised by a group of associated Topic-Sessions (to be defined by both a top-down and bottom-up approach).

There are four Framework Themes:

1. Providing Water Supply and Sanitation Services and Infrastructure to the Poor and for Economic Development;
2. Feeding the World while Maintaining Ecosystems
3. Revisiting Integrated Water Resource Management
4. Interlinking Water with other Policy Sectors for Environmental Sustainability

Providing Water Supply and Sanitation Services and Infrastructure to the Poor and For Economic Development

The way how water services interact with poverty alleviation strategies and development policies has to be reviewed in the light of new knowledge, experience and revised humanitarian goals. A thorough assessment of the progress towards the MDG's should be undertaken. Exploring the political, financial, regulatory, organizational, cultural and technological aspects in the provision of water supply and sanitation services and infrastructure that support basic human rights and the livelihood of all is the main objective of this theme.

Feeding the World while Maintaining Ecosystems

Food security is a major issue due to its contribution to poverty alleviation and other developmental objectives. Progress in irrigation policies towards greater efficiency and water use productivity has come a long way. Still the challenge is grave and there is a need to expand our knowledge and

commitment. Major issues have to do with balancing water for agriculture and for ecosystem functioning and protection.

Feeding the World while Maintaining Ecosystems protection; environmental flows, pollution prevention; green vs. blue water for agriculture and ecosystems, virtual water trade and its geopolitical implications, benchmarking, institutional innovation for participatory irrigation management, the transferring of public irrigation systems to local user organizations

Revisiting Integrated Water Resource Management

IWRM is still a contested framework to devise water resource strategies. Many efforts have been directed towards building strategies, institutions and processes for integrated water resource management. The main objective of this theme is to constructively review these intents.

Theoretical progress on different aspects and tenets of IWRM will be reviewed with a particular emphasis on specific policy oriented contributions.

Interlinking Water with other Policy Sectors for Environmental Sustainability

Achieving environmental sustainability requires advanced forms of social organization and coordination between different policy sectors and among a great variety of social actors. The existence of cross-cutting, interdependent, and complex policy problems requires for institutional designs and policy processes capable of procuring multi-disciplinary, trans-sectoral and multi-stakeholder input in order to achieve greater synergies and policy integration. Thus it seems important to reflect on the factors (political, social, institutional, cultural, etc.) that impinge on a political system's capability to procure inter-institutional coordination, synergy and policy integration.

The aim of the Thematic Forum will be to enable grass root organizations, local authorities, and other local actors to exchange their points of view with international experts and organizations, ministers and parliamentarians, donor and lending institutions, and other relevant actors in order to find mechanisms of cooperation and coordination that can enable, foster and empower local actors to address the global water challenge.

The Thematic Forum is policy-oriented and concrete outputs will be pursued. In order to achieve this type of horizontal communication, topic-sessions will be multi-stakeholder, multi-sector and multi-disciplinary and will be conducted by professional facilitators and logged for feedback purposes by

rapporteurs.

It is expected that out of each Topic-Session a specific output should be developed. The debate taking part in each of the sessions will be based on the previous work undertaken during the preparatory stage at the Regional Meetings, the Virtual Water Forum and other ad hoc Preparatory Workshops.

Ministerial Conference – Organizers of the IV World Water Forum believe that more than 140 ministers (government cabinet officers) will participate in this Conference. As one of the main objectives of the Forum is to have an impact on the political agenda, this requires a meaningful and effective Ministerial involvement during both the preparatory stages of the Forum and during the Forum itself. In this way priority issues and topics formulated for the Forum can find their way in time in the political agenda allowing politicians and governments to formulate their position and fine-tune these with their colleagues from other countries.

It is expected that during the Forum the Ministerial Conference should feed from the ongoing Topic-Session's debate by making sure that representatives from national delegations participate actively in the Thematic Forum and proceed to feed back into the Ministerial work. Because there is a need to cater for due protocol on matters related with the Ministerial Conference the organization of this process will be dealt by the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs in full coordination with the National Steering Committee (NSC) and in communication with the IOC.

Local Projects of the World -- The aim of this component is for local actors to present specific local projects and best- practice cases and share them with the international water community. A sought by-product of this component is to provide local actors including grass roots organizations, local authorities and parliamentarians with a networking platform that will allow them to learn from particular successful experiences and local best practices from around the world. Local actors and networks will be encouraged to participate in the selection process. Projects and best practice cases will be chosen by a multi-stakeholder committee and prizes will be given for outstanding projects. A call for projects will be announced during 2004.

Virtual Water Forum -- The Virtual Water Forum will be a forum on the Internet open to everybody with the same format of the Thematic Forum. The Virtual Water Forum's aim is to increase the opportunities for dialogue among participants and facilitate the process of topic definition and content creation.

The members of the Secretariat will organize and run the Virtual Water Forum. The virtual sessions will be coordinated by an appointed Virtual Dialogue Coordinator that will be responsible for leading the discussions and feeding-back into the preparatory process. It will have three different stages: the first will have the purpose of opening dialogue and participation in the definition of Topic-Sessions; the second will consist of a process of debate about issues related to each topic; and the third will be a wrap-up directed at the production of specific outputs. During the Forum a special slot will be given to inform on the process and outputs of Virtual Water Forum and how it contributed to the debate and the participation of present and non-present stakeholders.

Water Expo and Water Fair -- The Expo will take place in the Multi-Stakeholder Center, a flexible and inclusive space for the participation of all the organizations and business companies related to the water field that wish to present their products, services and work.

The Water Fair will be comprised of a cultural, social and educational program that will seek to encompass all forms of artistic manifestations and educational activities, in this case directed at building and rising water awareness and water resources stewardship. Different types of cultural and educational manifestations will be displayed and deployed throughout the venue and outside it.

The CNA stresses that the success of the Forum will rest on several interlocking strategies, which include:

- Senior government officials responsible for water and environmental policies from approximately 140 countries representing all continents are expected to participate in the Forum process. Their presence will allow the Forum to advance the United Nations development goals set for this millennium, which state that nations will have to have reduced by half the percentage of people who lack access to drinking water and the number of people without basic sanitation by the year 2015.
- Mexico has had a long history of diplomatic leadership that derives from its status as a major nation in the Western Hemisphere that has always allowed many voices to have their say. Through those voices, the Forum will allow Mexico to make a responsible call to attain social and human development that is in harmony with water stewardship.
- Since caring for water resources is a responsibility for all human beings of the world, the IV World Water Forum will have to reach the world's population with news of its actions, in order to help world community reach its goals. The IV Forum will also strive to raise awareness

about water problems at the highest political levels and throughout society, from people in wealthy nations to poor ones.

- Mexico sees its challenge as furthering the actions and commitments derived from the 3rd World Water Forum by truly involving local actors in the social construction of the **World Water Vision** and by translating international support from diverse institutions and networks of organizations into specific local actions.
- Mexico intends to give tremendous significance to regional water situations around the world, helping in the organization of regional conferences to address regional problems. Mexico believes that it can make a unique contribution to the international water debate by initiating and spurring this regional level approach.
- Mexico intends to foster messages from the Forum that can reach all types of stakeholders – anyone who uses water in any way -- and society at large. All these messages should foster and empower local actions and local actors to make the real difference.

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