

SECOND SOUTH EAST ASIA WATER FORUM: FORUM DECLARATION

2 September 2005 Bali, Indonesia

The Forum recognizes the importance of improving access to and the management of water for poverty reduction, economic development and human and environmental security. The Forum, comprising stakeholders from all sectors, recognizes the importance of regional cooperation as a driver for development and recommends to the representatives of ASEAN countries that actions be taken to enhance water management through public participation in the region.

This Declaration recognizes and builds on the principles and approaches of past international agreements on water, including the Agenda 21, the commitments in the Millennium Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Hague, Kyoto and Chiang Mai Declarations. This Declaration adds to these agreements through focusing on the needs and challenges of the South East Asia Region. South East Asia is experiencing rapid growth and has many important social, cultural and natural values. Water management plays a key role in sustainable development in the region through addressing four key challenges:

Poverty Reduction: improved access to water is essential for enhancing the livelihoods, health, nutrition and security of poor people in both rural and urban areas. Actions to provide improved sanitation and water for consumption and productive uses are a key to attaining all of the MDGs. This includes actions to ensure participatory and transparent decision-making in water management and the provision of affordable and sustainable high quality water infrastructure and services. It includes measures to target the specific needs and cultural values of poor people, women and minority groups.

Growth and Investment: improved water management is essential for maintaining the economic dynamism of both rural and urban sectors of the region. This includes the need for a significant expansion of investments in water infrastructure along with improvements to institutional capabilities and management systems. Diversifying mechanisms for financing investments and sustaining services are critical, as is expanding the role of community and local private sector service providers.

Environmental Sustainability: rapid development threatens the integrity of valuable and vulnerable ecosystems, including agricultural lands, across the region. These threats are compounded by the impacts of climate change and increasing vulnerability to natural disasters. This in turn jeopardises important environmental services and undermines to livelihoods of many poor people. Public awareness and participation, integrating environmental sustainability into national development plans, effective measures to reduce pollution and maintain minimum flows of water and actions to restore degraded lands, coasts, wetlands and forests are all essential. Ensuring sustainability entails recognising trade-offs within river basins between development and environmental integrity.

Partnerships and Cooperation. Water provides a structure for cooperation and effective partnerships at all levels: local, within river basins, national and regional. Mechanisms to enhance participation and improve coordination and accountability in water governance need to be enhanced. Cooperation at the regional level, through dedicated water organisations and wider mechanisms such as those of ASEAN, increases mutual understanding and is essential for better preparedness for and response to disasters such as droughts, floods and tsunami events.

The Forum endorses the Forum Call for Action. The Forum recognises the importance of increasing awareness and strengthening the knowledge base on water in the region. It stresses the importance of continuing efforts to meet the international target on the preparation national plans for and implementation of IWRM. The Forum encourages national governments and other stakeholders to create mechanisms to monitor progress and share experiences in relation to the key

challenges identified above. This should include actions to engage civil society and local communities in all levels of decision-making and planning for water resources.

The Forum agrees that, by working together, the people and organisations of South East Asia can ensure that the contribution of water to poverty reduction and sustainable development is realised. This includes ensuring that the MDG targets on safe and sufficient water supplies and improved sanitation are met, that the full potential of water as a driver of economic development is realised and that the sustainability of the unique environments of the region is guaranteed. The Forum encourages the governments of the region and other stakeholders to take the actions needed to increase investments in and improve the governance of water for all the peoples of South East Asia.