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## United Nations Water Conference, 1977 (Resolutions)

*in* Report of the United Nations Water Conference, Mar del Plata,  
14-25 March 1977 (United Nations publication, Sales No.  
E.77.II.A.12). (Excerpts)

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## United Nations Water Conference - Resolutions

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### RESOLUTIONS

#### *I. Assessment of Water Resources*

*The United Nations Water Conference,*

*Recognizing* that for the plans of action adopted by the Conference for the intensification and improvement of water use and development in agriculture and for providing safe drinking water and sanitation for all human settlements by 1990, a proper assessment is necessary of water resources in all countries of the world, and in particular in developing countries,

*Considering* that this assessment can be achieved only if all countries strengthen and co-ordinate arrangements for the collection of data in accordance with the recommendations of the Conference,

*Resolves* that:

- (a) All efforts should be undertaken at the national level to increase substantially financial resources for activities related to water-resources assessment and to strengthen related institutions and operational services as necessary and appropriate at the national and regional levels;
- (b) Training programmes and facilities for meteorologists, hydrologists and hydrogeologists should be established or strengthened;
- (c) National scientific infrastructure for water-assessment activities be strengthened or established, particularly in developing countries;
- (d) International co-operation aimed at the strengthening of water-resources assessment, particularly within the International Hydrological Programme and Operational Hydrological Programme be keyed to the targets set by the United Nations Water Conference and appropriately supported by national and international governmental and non-governmental institutions.

#### *II. Community Water Supply*

*The United Nations Water Conference,*

*In view of* the course taken by the discussions and the aspirations of the countries represented at the United Nations Water Conference and in view also of what was proposed at Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, and

*Considering* that:

- (a) All peoples, whatever their stage of development and their social and economic conditions, have the right to have access to drinking water in quantities and of a quality equal to their basic needs;
- (b) It is universally recognized, that the availability to man of that resource is essential both for life and his full development, both as an individual and as an integral part of society;
- (c) To a significant extent similar considerations apply to all that concerns the disposal of waste water, including sewage, industrial and agricultural wastes and other harmful sources, which are the main task of the public sanitation systems of each country;
- (d) The fundamental challenge facing all mankind can be met only with full international co-operation in all its aspects, entailing the mobilization of physical, economic and human

resources;

(e) It is imperative to facilitate ways of achieving this essential co-operation, so that water is attainable and is justly and equitably distributed among the people within the respective countries;

(f) Those countries which are in a position to provide assistance, as well as international or regional organizations, should undertake to do so until the objective is attained, seeking to simplify regulations and administrative arrangements;

(g) Organizations of the United Nations system and other international organizations are making progress towards possible establishment of a consultative group mechanism on community water programmes.

*Recommends:*

(a) That where human needs have not yet been satisfied, national development policies and plans should give priority to the supplying of drinking water for the entire population and to the final disposal of waste water; and should also actively involve, encourage and support efforts being undertaken by local voluntary organizations;

(b) That Governments reaffirm their commitment made at Habitat to "adopt programmes with realistic standards for quality and quantity to provide water for urban and rural areas by 1990, if possible";

(c) That with a view to achieving these ends, the nations which need to develop their systems for providing drinking water and sanitation should prepare for 1980 programmes and plans to provide coverage for populations and to expand and maintain existing systems; institutional development and human resources utilization; and identification of the resources which are found to be necessary;

(d) That the United Nations agencies should co-ordinate their work efforts to help Member States, when they so request, in the work of preparation referred to in subparagraph (c) above;

(e) That in 1980 the national programmes which have been implemented for that purpose, and the extent to which the countries concerned have succeeded in mobilizing local and national support should be reviewed by an appropriate mechanism to be determined by the Economic and Social Council and based on the use of existing machinery, with a view to attaining co-ordinated action toward agreed targets;

(f) That in accordance with the decisions of the existing structures of the Economic and Social Council, appropriate external assistance should be available in order to assist in building, operating and maintaining these systems;

(g) That the Plan of Action formulated below should be implemented in a co-ordinated manner at the national and international levels.

### **Plan of Action**

In order to be able to reach the targets of Habitat recommendation C.12, drastic measures have to be taken. This will need firm commitment on the part of countries and the international community.

#### *A. Priority areas for action*

1. Action must focus on promoting (a) increased awareness of the problem; (b) commitment of national Governments to provide all people with water of safe quality and adequate quantity and basic sanitary facilities by 1990, according priority to the poor and less privileged and to water scarce areas; and (c) larger allocation to this sector from the total resources available for general economic and social development.
2. Action must be taken to remedy constraints of manpower shortage (especially at the intermediate and lower levels), inadequacies in institutions and organization, and lack of appropriate and cost-effective technology.
3. New approaches should be developed which will result in larger flows of national, international

and bilateral funds on more favourable and flexible conditions, so as to enable countries to increase the speed of implementation and, more important, enable the more effective use of the additional resources.

4. Communities must be provided with effective education on domestic hygiene and must be motivated and involved as appropriate at every level of the programme, including the planning, construction, operation, maintenance and financing of services, and the monitoring and safeguarding of the quality of the water supplied.

*B. Recommendations for action at national level*

5. Each country should establish goals for 1990 which match as far as Possible the global targets adopted. In order to attain these goals, each country should:

(a) Develop national plans and programmes for community water supply and sanitation, and identify intermediate milestones within the context of the socio-economic development plan periods and objectives, giving priority attention to the segments of the population in greatest need;

(b) Immediately initiate engineering and feasibility studies on projects that are considered to be of the highest priority, and are based on a cost-effective technology appropriate to local conditions, with community participation, good management, and provision for operation and maintenance;

(c) Assess the manpower situation and, on the basis of this assessment, establish training programmes at the national level, to meet the immediate and future needs for additional professional staff, intermediate level technicians and, most important, village technicians;

(d) Promote massive national campaigns to mobilize public opinion regarding the provision of basic sanitary services, and develop appropriate procedures to ensure the active participation of communities in the programme;

(e) Establish appropriate institutions, if these do not exist, and assign to them specific responsibilities for the planning, implementation and monitoring of progress of the programme;

(f) Co-ordinate the efforts of all sectors active in rural areas, utilizing the manpower and other resources available, to ensure the provision of technically and socially acceptable sanitary facilities in rural areas;

(g) Develop a national revolving fund, in the first instance financed from substantially increased loans and grants from national and foreign sources, for water supply and sanitation which will encourage both the mobilization of resources for this sector and the equitable participation of beneficiaries; discourage wasteful consumption; and include a flexible combination of rates and, where necessary, explicit subsidies or other measures designed to achieve the economic and social objectives of the programme.

*C. Recommendations for action through international co-operation*

6. To achieve the Habitat targets, the international community must adopt new approaches to support increased national commitments with particular reference to the least developed and most seriously affected countries. It is, therefore, recommended that:

(a) Financial contributions be increased to strengthen the capabilities of international and bilateral agencies co-operating with Governments in the extension of community water supply and sanitation;

(b) At the request of national Governments, co-operation be extended to the formulation and implementation of high priority projects and programmes for community water supply and sanitation, with analysis of goals, methods and resources;

(c) Collaboration with the ongoing activity of the World Health Organization for monitoring and reporting on the status and progress of community water supply and sanitation be intensified.

7. The international community should give high priority to collaborating with Governments with regard to manpower surveys, the establishment of national training programmes (to meet immediate and future needs for professional staff, intermediate level technicians, and village technicians),

research, and the promotion of community participation.

8. There should be even greater emphasis on social benefits. Multilateral and bilateral financing institutions should recognize the need for a higher level of grants and low interest-bearing loans to community water supply and sanitation programmes and, where this practice is already accepted, increase the proportion of such loans. They should be prepared to shoulder a higher proportion of local costs when financing community water supply and sanitation, increase their total allocations especially to rural water supply and sanitation, and complement local efforts in the rehabilitation and maintenance of systems.

9. Developing countries should foster co-operation among themselves, *inter alia*, in the establishment of intercountry training facilities; the development of appropriate technologies and of methodologies for training and management, and the exchange of experts and information, so that experience available elsewhere can be adapted to local conditions.

10. An effective clearing-house mechanism should be developed through international co-operation, by strengthening existing mechanisms if available, at the national, regional and international levels, to provide for the communication of selected information concerning all elements of community water supply and sanitation. An interrelated communication function should be included at every stage in all community water supply and sanitation projects.

11. Regular consultations should be held among Governments, international organizations, the international scientific community and relevant non-governmental organizations to ensure co-ordinated and accelerated action in the area of rural water supply and sanitation.

12. Co-ordination within the United Nations system should be improved at country level in order to ensure (a) a multidisciplinary approach in the development of community water supply and sanitation services; and (b) that rural water supplies and sanitation form part of integrated rural development projects.