

EURO-LATIN AMERICAN PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY



RESOLUTION:

Water-related issues in EU-LAC relations

based on the report of the Committee on Social Affairs, Human Exchanges, Environment, Education and Culture

EP Co-Rapporteur:

Irena Belohorská (NI)

LA Co-Rapporteur:

José Guadarrama Márquez (EU-Mexico JPC)

EUROLAT – Resolution of 8 April 2009 – Madrid (Spain)

[based on the report of the Committee on Social Affairs, Human Exchanges, Environment, Education and Culture]

Water-related issues in EU-LAC relations

The Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly,

- having regard to the declarations of the five Summits of Heads of State and Government of Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union, held to date in Rio de Janeiro (28 and 29 June 1999), Madrid (17 and 18 May 2002), Guadalajara (28 and 29 May 2004) Vienna (12 and 13 May 2006) and Lima (16 and 17 May 2008),
 - having regard to the joint communiqué of the 13th Ministerial Meeting of the Rio Group and the EU, held in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) on 20 April 2007,
 - having regard to the joint communiqué of the Ministerial Meeting of the San José Dialogue between the EU Troika and the Ministers of the Countries of Central America, held in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) on 19 April 2007,
 - having regard to the joint declaration on implementation of the Latin American – European Union Strategic Partnership on Water and Sanitation Affairs, signed during the World Water Forum (Mexico) in March 2006,
 - having regard to the first EU-LAC Ministerial Conference on the Environment held on 4 March 2008 in Brussels,
 - having regard to the UNDP Human Development Report 2006, *‘Beyond Scarcity: power, poverty and the global water crisis’*,
 - having regard to the World Health Organisation (WHO) report on ‘Right to water’, 2003, and the WHO and UNICEF report on ‘Meeting the MDG drinking water and sanitation target: the urban and rural challenge of the decade’, 2006,
 - having regard to the Annual Report of the European Union Water Initiative Latin America Component, 2007,
 - having regard to its Declaration of 9 November 2006, adopted at its constituent session held in Brussels on 8 and 9 November 2006,
 - having regard to the Final Act of the 17th EU-Latin America Interparliamentary Conference, held in Lima from 14 to 16 June 2005,
 - having regard to Rule 16 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the resolutions adopted during its First Ordinary Plenary Session on 20 December 2007 in Brussels and during its Second Ordinary Plenary Session on 1 May 2008 in Lima,
- A. whereas the UN and the WHO recognise safe water as being a human right which is essential to life and health,
- B. whereas water is an essential resource and a public good and not solely a commodity,

- C. whereas, although the provision of water-related services has traditionally been entrusted to state enterprises, this does not exclude their provision and management from being confided to private-sector initiatives, which should be properly supervised by the public authorities – as the bodies responsible for public services – so as to safeguard access to water as a basic human right,
- D. whereas while Latin America is a continent with vast fresh water resources, water distribution is to a great extent inequitable,
- E. whereas the indigenous peoples and communities of Latin America have rights enshrined in law as regards the use and enjoyment of natural resources such as water,
- F. whereas the seventh Millennium Development Goal (MDG) seeks to halve, by 2015, the number of people without sustainable access to drinking water and basic sanitation,
- G. whereas the United Nations declared 2008 as the International Year of Sanitation to raise awareness and accelerate progress towards the seventh MDG,
- H. whereas the figures from the UNDP HDR 2006 report highlight that over one billion people in the world today do not have access to clean drinking water, that 2.6 billion have no basic human waste-water disposal systems and that unclean drinking water is the second cause of child mortality in the world today,
- I. whereas according to the WHO-Unicef report in 2006, an important disparity exists in terms of access to safe drinking water and sanitation between children and adults in Latin America, and the problem threatens the lives of nearly 21 million children under five years old in the region,
- J. whereas EU Member States are among the largest and most important donors in the water-development sector and can draw on a wealth of experience in international development cooperation and water management,
- K. whereas the EU Water Initiative (EUWI), launched by the EU at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg in September 2002, has been designed as an integrated approach to water resource management in order to meet the MDGs and WSSD targets for drinking water and sanitation,
- L. whereas the EU adopted in 2000 the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) in order to rationalise its approach to water issues and further to impose a general requirement for ecological protection and a minimal standard for all surface waters,
- M. whereas climate change has an influence on access to safe water and sanitation and, according to the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), climate change will reach dramatic proportions by 2050; whereas the countries of Latin America, mostly located at low latitudes and where temperature increases are estimated to reach 2.5° C, are likely to suffer enormous damage,
 - 1. Welcomes the Lima Declaration adopted at the Fifth EU-LAC Summit, which makes several references to water-related issues and explicitly refers to the need to make universal access to drinking water and sanitation services;
 - 2. Takes the view that water must be considered a public good, access to which must be guaranteed as a basic human right at fair ‘social and environmental prices’, taking account of the specific situation of each country, as equally to agriculture, in which sector a redoubled effort of technological modernisation must be made in order to improve

efficiency and put an end to an excessive water consumption which has no equivalent in other latitudes;

3. Considers that water must continue to be a public good and access to it a basic human right, whose management should be shared by means of bilateral or multilateral agreements between the legitimate authorities of the countries involved;
4. Considers that, given the importance of water as a vital resource, the population must be guaranteed secure access to good quality water for food preparation and hygiene purposes and as a basic production resource, e.g. for agriculture; and stresses that the private appropriation of water makes it difficult to achieve all those objectives; calls on all European and Latin American countries to upgrade their public water collection and supply service, and, should they confide the indirect management of this public service to private companies, to establish the monitoring systems that are needed to prevent possible abuse or discrimination and ensure access to water as a basic human right;
5. Stresses that, in line with the WHO report on 'Right to water', the governments should guarantee that the sufficiency, safety, affordability and accessibility of water are protected and further underlines that where the private sector is involved, the public authorities must wholly and properly ensure its supply;
6. Calls for the development and implementation of adequate and proper pricing management, in particular by setting fair and equitable prices that should, in any event, take into account the economic and social conditions of the local population, accurate consumption metering and efficient and transparent billing, recognising that they are key financial challenges for water resource management in Latin American countries and in the European Union;
7. Stresses that safe access to clean water and proper disposal of waste water as well as water sanitation are important prerequisites for public health, with the particular goal of reducing mortality rates, especially among children, due to water-borne diseases;
8. Calls on the countries of Latin America and the Member States of the European Union to address the alarming problem of rivers being contaminated with toxic chemicals and heavy metals, which are a major source of water pollution; calls, in this connection, for all possible measures to be adopted to ensure that industry, deforestation, mining, production of toxic substances or extensive use of pesticides in agriculture do not affect the quality and purity of water;
9. Stresses that healthy and sufficient water can be secured only through long-term sustainable strategies;
10. Stresses that water is a cross-cutting issue and should therefore be tackled with a multidisciplinary and multilateral approach;
11. Insists on the need to combat waste and balance water uses, in particular through re-use, bearing in mind its manifold values: biological, social, environmental, symbolic, cultural and in terms of landscape and tourism;
12. Welcomes the institutional and legislative innovations in the water sector already taking place in some of the Latin American countries and calls on those remaining countries whose legislation does not correspond to the newest developments to take steps for the revision and updating thereof, as progress will only be possible if proper regulatory systems are in place;

13. Calls therefore for specific measures to be integrated in all national plans or strategies in Latin American countries to help ensure that the drinking water supply and sanitation services indeed become established as universal and non-discriminatory services;
14. Stresses the importance of dialogue between the authorities and the local population throughout the decision-making process concerning water resources in order to facilitate the participation of all interested parties and further to fulfil the real needs of the users;
15. Notes that agriculture and forestry remain a major source of employment and income for most of the world's poorest people, particularly the indigenous populations of some Latin American countries, and therefore supports the rights of the indigenous peoples and communities of Latin America, as recognised in law, to the use and enjoyment of natural resources, including water, as a basic human right;
16. Stresses that, since the main cause of poverty is the difficulty of gaining access to natural resources, steps should be taken to ensure a life of dignity and access to water to meet the basic needs of all populations – including indigenous populations – by safeguarding access to natural resources, food production and food security, both in the context of relations between the EU and Latin America and in other international forums;
17. Stresses the need for cooperation, information exchange and strategic partnerships, with a view to contributing towards the sustainable use and management of water resources;
18. Advocates those synergies already existing between the European Union and Latin American countries in terms of water relations through development cooperation and further through research and technology cooperation; believes that those exchanges will contribute to improving the water quality and sanitation situation and also lead to economic growth;
19. Highlights the importance of the EUWI and welcomes the good results achieved by the EUWI Latin America component in 2007; supports therefore the future projects introduced by this initiative and notably financed through the Development Cooperation Instrument;
20. Stresses the important role to be played by parliamentarians in Latin America and Europe in boosting, in their respective spheres of action, a legal framework that adequately responds to the responsible and fair management of water resources at both national and international level;
21. Stresses the importance of carrying out awareness-raising campaigns for citizens in Latin America and Europe on the local, regional and global problems involved in the water issue and promoting proactive, democratic and inclusive participation in shaping public policies on water;
22. Underlines the need for the international community to study further the links between the rising global population and climate change, and in particular the potential impact on access to essential natural resources, such as drinking water;
23. Urges the international community to recognise the importance of tropical forest protection and to start tackling this as a priority issue, which is vital for the preservation of the planet's water resources as well as dealing with climate change;
24. Invites reflection on the possible establishment of a Bi-regional Centre for Disaster Prevention with the brief of devising common strategies and contingency warning and preparation measures aimed at reducing mutual vulnerability to natural disasters arising from climate change and technological disasters;

*

* *

25. Instructs its Co-Presidents to forward this Resolution to the Presidency of the EU-LAC Summit, the Council of the European Union, the European Commission, the parliaments of the EU Member States and the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, the Latin American Parliament, the Central American Parliament, the Andean Parliament and the Mercosur Parliament.