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ICC STATEMENT - UNEP GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM

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The International Chamber of Commerce welcomes the opportunity to make a contribution to the Ministerial Environment Forum. Business is actively supporting sustainable water and sanitation practices and policies in line with the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Across the business sector, companies operating internationally, regionally and at local level are helping communities to find ways to meet these vital goals in the broader context of poverty reduction and sustainable development.

The business community is an integral part of civil society. Business groups should be considered as civil society organizations whenever this term is used with regard to relationships between the UN and non-state actors. The fullest participation in the UN's work from all stakeholders will be fostered by an inclusive approach, rather than by devising separate procedures for different non-state actors. UNCED and WSSD validated the designation of "Major Groups", recognizing their individual and special contributions to sustainable development.

The **business sector contributes many solutions to the global water challenge** and has great opportunities and responsibilities to make a major contribution to freshwater availability and protection in a number of ways, for example:

- By reducing the amount of water it uses per unit of production;
- By reducing water effluents from its operations;
- By promoting the efficient and responsible use of its products with regard to water quality and quantity.
- By developing water protecting and water conserving technologies, including in the agricultural area

The business sector clearly also has a growing role to play in the supply and management of water resources. Many member companies of the International Chamber of Commerce (www.iccwbo.org) are adopting innovative approaches to protect water resources, reduce water consumption and recycle and reuse water.

For **example**, Nestlé Waters, the water business of Nestlé, applies robust water resource protection measures that extend to the whole catchment area – over 10,000 hectares in the case of the Vittel and the Contrex springs in France. Here an observation network continuously



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monitors surface waters in the catchment area, with the ultimate objective of avoiding any adverse impacts to the water resource and the ecosystem.

Similarly, RWE Thames Water actively manages water resources across whole catchments. For example, in the UK the company provides water and sewerage services to approximately 13 million people in the Thames Valley. To overcome periods of drought RWE Thames Water developed novel management techniques that recharge aquifers with treated water during periods of high availability.

Furthermore, many industries are increasingly mitigating the impact of their products during use - detergent manufacturers are seeking to remove phosphorus and the fertilizer and crop protection industry is seeking to minimize the impacts of its products on waterways by promoting good agricultural practices.

The plant science industry, as represented by CropLife International actively promotes improved land management systems, such as reduced or no tillage practices, that improve the land's ability to retain moisture – this system is often only practicable through the use of herbicides. Weed control also helps to increase the crop's access to water, by reducing the weeds that compete for moisture – and thus results in "more crop per drop". In the Philippines this has helped to reduce water consumption in rice – a very water intensive crop - by one-fifth. R&D through traditional and modern plant biotechnology is also underway by industry to develop plant varieties that require less water or use water more efficiently.

Another example relates to ESKOM – the energy utility company of South Africa. Since the 1970's the limitations of the water resources in South Africa have motivated ESKOM to find effective solutions to conserve cooling water during power generation. The most effective solution developed is dry cooling which uses 15 times less water than conventional cooling. This has resulted in saving over two hundred millions litres of water per day, which normally would have been lost through evaporation.

Public-private partnerships

However, industry is only one stakeholder in the management of water resources. Like governments, companies have recognized that they cannot solve these complex issues alone — progress can only be made if all stakeholders are involved in the process.

The challenges of achieving the sustainable development goals and targets that governments committed to in the Millennium Declaration, the Monterey Consensus, NEPAD (the New Partnership for Africa's Development), and the JPOI (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation), require collaboration across all sectors.

Business supports partnerships as one of the most practical means of delivering sustainable development outcomes. Partnerships are especially suited to address the interlinkages of water to health, commercial activity, eco-systems, food



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production and biodiversity. This approach is one which companies around the world have been developing for many years, sharing their expertise, resources and knowledge with governments, NGOs and local communities to build markets and better lives. No one can seek solutions in isolation, but should work in partnership with beneficiaries to reach the common goal.

Technology cooperation and capacity building

Equally – from a business perspective -the promotion of technology cooperation and capacity building in the area of water and sanitation are critical elements for the achievement of many sustainable development goals. Success here too is highly dependent on the involvement of a wide variety of stakeholders. Business is and will continue to be an important source of many technologies and management systems. In providing enabling frameworks for technology development, investment, capacity building and co-operation, government policies set the stage for domestic utilization and entrepreneurship. They are also key to encourage business to undertake the R&D necessary to fully develop and implement both existing and innovative technologies.

Institutional framework

The high costs involved in developing and disseminating water technologies requires companies to be able to realise a return on investments in such new options for them to be sustainable. Therefore, for such technologies to become a global reality, governments should promote short- and long-term enabling frameworks in both developed and developing countries to encourage the development, commercialisation and dissemination of technologies.

Ultimately, the future of every business depends on society's ability to balance growing human demand for land, water and sanitation with ecosystem protection in a way that supports equitable social and economic development. The engagement of all sectors - government, civil society, including business - is also essential to develop options that address the prevailing economic, social and ecosystem conditions that are different in communities around the world.

The recommendations of the Fifth Global Civil Society Forum generally reflect the consensus of the participating organizations. ICC is however not in a position to endorse the recommendations in their entirety.

Further details are provided in the business and industry background paper submitted to CSD-12, which is available on the Internet.