



PERMANENT MISSION OF PORTUGAL TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT
BY
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MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, SPATIAL
PLANNING AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

AT THE THIRTEENTH SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT

"TURNING POLITICAL COMMITMENT INTO
ACTION"

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Mr Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Dear Colleagues

Allow me first to express Portugal's support to the Statement made, on behalf of the European Union, by Luxembourg.

For the success of CDS13, it is important that we are able to identify real actions that governments and the international community can finance and implement in order to make a quantifiable contribution to development efforts.

In the context of sustainable development, and bearing in mind the essential and cross-cutting role that water plays within it, it is key to adopt an integrated water resource management as has been proposed by the UN and other organisations and advocated by many delegates.

In Portugal, the drawing up of the National Water Plan and 15 River Basins Plans was based on a process of characterising and diagnosing the current water resource situation, the challenges brought about by a new policy approach, socio-economic evolution scenarios and the main pressures on water resources. These Plans establish a set of goals and measures, a timescale for their enforcement, and mechanisms for their implementation and assessment.

The main aspects of this methodology are now incorporated and expanded in the process of implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive, which requires a better monitoring, a more sound economic approach and periodic updates.

The management of water resources of four transboundary water basins is co-ordinated with neighbouring Spain under a 1998 state-of-the-art agreement that includes river flow parameters and bilateral institutions.

As regards the specific component of water supply and sanitation, Portugal has drawn up a Strategic Plan for the 2000-2006 period. Under this plan we will increase and

improve the quality of water services and the percentage of the population with access to water and availability of wastewater treatment. This will be very beneficial for the population and it will also have a significant impact in the quality of our rivers, coastal waters and related ecosystems. In fact, the urban water cycle is part of the entire water cycle and should be tackled as such.

Taking into account the difficulties faced by developing countries, investment in water supply and basic sanitation services, both in urban and rural areas, is only feasible through the significant allocation of international funds for cooperation.

Public and private sectors definitely play a role in turning our political commitments into action. However, from our experience, strong public leadership is important for the establishment of strategic goals, for the ability of monitoring and updating the accomplishment of those goals and, last but not least, to provide the private sector with clear, stable and transparent rules that are sought by private investors.

In fact, technical solutions and funding availability are a necessary condition for sustainable development, but not a sufficient one. Social mobilization and appropriate governance are also necessary to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and, ultimately, sustainable development.

However, in order to achieve these goals, we need more than government budgets and official development aid. We should look at strengthening governance systems and promoting capacity-building. We should also look at involving private partners in a context of transparent and stable public regulation. Private partners will then provide access to improved management systems, new technical options and private investment funds.

We need to understand how to motivate private investors and create the conditions to assure their participation in partnerships of this kind. Part of the answer to this question is precisely related to appropriate governance and stable regulatory systems.

Private investors are necessarily driven by profit and are reluctant to invest in projects and areas where their investment might be at stake due to various factors, ranging from operational and investment risks to unpredictable regulatory changes.

We believe that these points should be taken into consideration when we are trying to devise ways of turning political commitments into action.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.