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STATEMENT

BY

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Mr. Chair, colleagues,

In Belgium it is generally accepted that water is a public good and access to water a basic human right. We consider policy autonomy in water management as central and it must not be undermined by global liberalisation or conditionalities imposed by the multilateral financial institutions and donors. We see that a lot of initiatives are being taken to meet the MDG's. Several UN-organisations contribute to that. On the other hand, we wonder if the many co-ordinating initiatives will be sufficient to fully meet the goals. We feel that nations and regions in industrialised countries should put specific goals for themselves in a strengthened bottom up approach, and that the top-down and bottom-up approach should converge. This of course must be worked out in the framework of sustainable development. In Belgium, we are in the second four-years cycle of our federal strategy on sustainable development, while other initiatives are taken on the regional levels. There is a need to put further steps to enhance this coherence, and therefore first steps are being made in view of a national strategy that has to integrate goals on sustainable development of the federal and regional levels. This would allow Belgium to meet the 2005 goal of Johannesburg regarding national strategies. Flanders is also active in promoting these initiatives within the Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development, which was launched in Johannesburg and was presented as a CSD-partnership yesterday.

In reflecting on how we could contribute to the achievements for water and sanitation, while involving our own population we came to the following ideas in the Flemish region:

In our small but densely populated region in Europe, a lot of different actors work in the field of water. A considerable know-how and expertise on the supply of drinking water, sanitation and integrated water resource management has been developed. Through enhanced co-operation stakeholders can make a considerable contribution to the realisation of the international goals.

The Flemish "Partnership Water for Development" which has been launched on World Water Day 2004 establishes a reinforced collaboration of all Flemish actors in the field of water and international cooperation. Involved actors are the Flemish government, drinking water companies, private companies, the academic world, local governments and NGO's.

Through the Partnership, Flanders, with its six million inhabitants aims at reaching the clear goal of helping an equivalent of six million people in developing countries to obtain safe drinking water and adequate sanitation by 2015. To fulfil international commitments worldwide, Flanders urges other states and regions to aim for a similar one-on-one relationship. Lots of small pieces make a great one. In this way a contribution can be given by nations, regions and even city-to-city co-operation in sustainable development to the so well known ambitious goals for drinking water and sanitation, while the overall co-ordination to reach those goals from the top can be fulfilled by the United nations, on condition that the coherence is ensured between the existing initiatives

So, let us, nation to nation, region to region, city to city apply this one-to-one relationship and draw up the pieces of the complicated, but oh so challenging puzzle that we hope to finish by 2015. And we would welcome the very needed and efficient co-ordination of the United Nations organisations involved.

I thank you.