



Resolution 1809 (2011)¹

Water – a source of conflict

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Water is essential for human survival, but 1 billion people in the world do not have access to drinking water.
2. In this context, the Parliamentary Assembly points out that the target set at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Summit, 2002) was to reduce by half the number of people without access to drinking water by 2015.
3. The Assembly also refers to its [Resolution 1693 \(2009\)](#) on water: a strategic challenge for the Mediterranean Basin, and to the proposals made by the parliaments at the 5th World Water Forum in Istanbul on 19 March 2009, where emphasis was placed, in particular, on the role of parliamentarians in drawing up rules concerning water management, water supply, generalisation of the principle of the right to water and the implementation of water policies.
4. The Assembly regrets, however, that in their statement of 22 March 2009, the governments failed to acknowledge that the right to water and sanitation is a human right.
5. The Assembly would also like to refer to its [Recommendation 1885 \(2009\)](#) on drafting an additional Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights concerning the right to a healthy environment.
6. The Assembly points out that on 28 July 2010, the United Nations recognised access to water and sanitation as a fundamental human right and that, on 30 September 2010, the Human Rights Council affirmed in turn that “the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation is derived from the right to an adequate standard of living and inextricably related to the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, as well as the right to life and human dignity”.
7. Unfortunately, population growth, the contrasting but increasing needs of the developing countries and the industrialised countries, as well as climatic vagaries, exacerbate the crucial nature of water, making it a political issue which often gives rise to conflict situations.
8. The Assembly points out that globalisation is undoubtedly one of the major contributing factors to the depletion of fresh water and drinking water, the others being irrigation, wastage and pollution.
9. This makes it essential to take measures to reduce the obsolescence of supply networks and manage irrigation systems more effectively.
10. Bearing in mind that fresh water is a limited, fragile resource, but one which is vital for humankind, the Assembly notes and regrets the fact that one in six of the world’s inhabitants still does not have access to water and that almost one person in two has to live without a waste water drainage system.
11. Climate change also compounds the problem of malnutrition in the world’s most arid regions, giving rise to millions of climate refugees.

1. Assembly debate on 15 April 2011 (18th Sitting) (see [Doc. 12538](#), report of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs, rapporteur: Mr Marquet). Text adopted by the Assembly on 15 April 2011 (18th Sitting).



12. In this connection, the Assembly calls attention to the fact that water shortages lead to acts of violence and conflicts which may threaten a state's political and social stability. Examples of this are seen in events in the Middle East, the Caucasus and China, which confirm the close links between water and security.

13. The Assembly has to conclude that water has increasingly become a military and political tool and a new weapon for terrorists.

14. The Assembly therefore recommends that the authorities of the member and non-member states of the Council of Europe:

14.1. recognise that access to water is a fundamental human right, in line with the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 64/292 of 28 July 2010 and United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 15/9 of 30 September 2010;

14.2. apply and, if necessary, revise the rules of international water law;

14.3. review the systems for the joint management of transfrontier rivers and aquifers;

14.4. take the necessary measures to manage river basins;

14.5. develop international waterways;

14.6. improve transparency and the flow of information between all stakeholders;

14.7. ensure that the activities pursued in their countries do not damage the natural resources in other countries;

14.8. apply to the International Court of Justice for peaceful settlement of disputes on resource sharing among several states;

14.9. promote fairer water charges and provide distribution services of drinking water of good quality and in sufficient quantities as well as acceptable, accessible and affordable sanitation services, as recommended in the Human Rights Council Resolution 15/9;

14.10. provide all citizens with means of calling their government to account and demanding compensation arrangements, where appropriate;

14.11. set up a programme of assistance and co-operation with countries which suffer from water shortages;

14.12. take measures to control the use of groundwater to promote savings and avoid waste;

14.13. introduce measures for the desalinisation of water to transform sea water cheaply into drinking water;

14.14. review agricultural practices and policies to ensure that they are viable, by encouraging investments in efficient irrigation systems and fostering technology transfers in this field between developed and developing countries;

14.15. set up strict monitoring of the risks of accidental pollution;

14.16. establish a database containing meteorological, hydrological and socio-economic information.

15. The Assembly also recommends that local and regional authorities ensure that their citizens are provided with a good quality water treatment system.

16. The Assembly encourages parliaments and all other interested parties to take part in the "Helpdesk" initiative, as recommended by the 5th World Water Forum held in Istanbul in 2009.