



## International Conference

Palais des Nations, Room XVIII, Geneva, Switzerland

21 - 22 October 2014

**“Public–Private Partnerships in the water and sanitation sector: an exchange of experiences between Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa”**

### Declaration<sup>1</sup>

1. The International Conference on water and sanitation Public-Private Partnerships, organised jointly by the UNECE, the World Bank Group, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Islamic Development Bank was held at the Palais des Nations, in Geneva on 21-22 October 2014. It attracted participants from more than 30 countries, over 30 water companies and from International Financial Institutions, intergovernmental organisations and civil society.
2. The meeting was opened by a High Level Panel moderated by Mr Christian Friis Bach, the UNECE Executive Secretary. The panel underlined the importance of the emerging Sustainable Development Goal on Water and the potential role of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to help countries to meet the new objectives.
3. Participants recognised the long experience and expertise in the water sector within the UNECE, particularly the Water Convention and the Protocol on Water and Health.
4. The Conference was organised in a number of sessions that presented specific cases from Europe, Central Asia, Middle East and North Africa. The cases revealed challenges and difficulties as well as a number of impressive successes. Participants identified renewed interest of governments in using PPPs. Indeed, countries mentioned the absence of or deficiencies in water supply, sanitation and irrigation services, and the need to develop PPPs as one of the financing, technology and know-how transfer and delivery mechanisms to improve the performance and quality of water infrastructure and services. In that respect, PPPs are a tool that can be used to reach the emerging Sustainable Development Goal on water and achieve the human right to water and sanitation.

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<sup>1</sup> The Declaration is adopted by silent procedure by Monday 3 November 2014.

5. The Conference concluded with a roundtable discussion on the potential contribution of PPPs in water and sanitation services and on the establishment of an international PPP centre on water and sanitation, with a global coverage, under the auspices of the UNECE International PPP Centre of Excellence (ICoE).
6. The Conference recommended on the following:
  - a) A special effort should be made to bring all viable financing and operational options, including PPPs, to the attention of low and middle income countries, whose populations' needs for adequate access to water and sanitation are great;
  - b) The Centre should focus on the identification of international PPP best practices and the development of relevant guidance tools that contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals with a focus on safe, efficient and affordable water and sanitation services.
  - c) In order to provide assistance to all interested countries, the UNECE secretariat should establish an International PPP Centre on Water and Sanitation that will (i) address the lack of verifiable information, and facilitate the exchange of information and international PPP practices (both pros and cons) and (ii) develop international PPP standards;
  - d) The Centre should be led by Member States and structured around a 'cluster' of members composed of governments, International Financial Institutions, international and regional organizations, and representatives of the private sector and civil society;
  - e) The Centre should initially be hosted by the UNECE ICoE in Geneva and its operations should be based on extra-budgetary funding;
  - f) Among its functions and responsibilities, the Centre should organise a yearly international conference on PPPs in water and sanitation.
7. The Conference also recommended the setting up of Project Teams composed of relevant experts for the development, under the UNECE PPP standard-development process, of international PPP standards with a focus on the prospective SDG on water and on: "PPPs in water supply systems for urban water", "PPPs in wastewater management systems development" and "PPPs in irrigation systems".
8. The Conference strongly recommended the continuation of cooperation among international and global stakeholders such as the UNECE, the World Bank Group, other International Financial Institutions, other UN system entities under the umbrella of UN-Water, other intergovernmental organizations, private sector representatives, and civil society organisations.