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Declaration by the High Representative, Catherine Ashton, on behalf of the European Union on the occasion of the World and European Water Day, 22 March 2013

On the occasion of World Water Day, the European Union underlines that safe drinking water and sanitation are crucial for a healthy and dignified life. Yet millions of people worldwide still lack access to clean drinking water and are therefore deprived of a basic human right. The EU affirms 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.

The theme of this year’s World Water Day stresses the importance of international cooperation. The EU’s substantial assistance to third countries to improve access to clean water and sanitation is a clear contribution to these efforts. The EU has spent more than €2.2 billion on water and sanitation programmes between 2007-2012.

Water security is also a strategic issue of growing concern. Increasing water shortages, poor water quality, droughts or floods accentuated by climate change, and the resulting economic and demographic changes can have a negative effect on peace and stability. The EU strongly encourages sustainable and collaborative transboundary approaches to water management across the world to promote economic and social development, political stability and peace and security.
The Acceding Country Croatia*, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland† and Serbia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA countries Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, align themselves with this declaration.

* Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

† Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.