

Statement by the High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini on the occasion of World Water Day 2016

Brussels, 22 March 2016

Access to clean water is not just a basic human right: in today's world, water is a security issue and the control of water resources is still a major driver of conflicts. Desertification has destabilized immense swaths of land. Droughts and floods are among the causes for the unprecedented levels of human mobility worldwide.

Sometimes we need to look at the numbers. One human being in ten does not have access to drinking water. One in three does not have access to adequate sanitation. 1.6 billion people currently live in regions of absolute water scarcity: a figure that will nearly double over the next 10 years. Over 34,000 children under the age of five die each year because of dirty water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene. Being able to drink clean, safe water; having access to proper sanitation: these are basic human rights for all, not just for those privileged enough to take them for granted.

Today, on World Water Day, our European Union recommits to the availability and sustainable management of water for all. We know we are not alone; last September the international community joined together in New York in adopting the 2030 United Nations Agenda. We all recognized water as a priority area to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development worldwide. Indeed, we as the European Union are already supporting those people hit by natural and man-made disasters by providing life-saving access to safe water.

With water scarcity and water stress on the rise, there is only one way to deal with this challenge: together, cooperating beyond borders and political divides. From Trans-national cooperation as well as transparent, rules-based solutions are essential. Climate change and our ever-growing population are global issues, which can only be dealt with through global solutions. In Paris, world leaders came together to protect future generations through a global agreement on climate change. It was an example of how multilateralism works, but it also was a reminder of how far we have to go. Now it is the time for action.