

\*\*\*\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\*\*\*\*



**Water Security Initiative Announced for Asia-Pacific Region**

Istanbul, 16 March 2009 – The Asia-Pacific Water Forum (APWF) is launching a new initiative for leaders to help the region adapt to a host of water challenges. The Ministers for Water Security initiative was announced at the start of the 5<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum by APWF's President Yoshiro Mori, a former Prime Minister of Japan.

The initiative aims to raise public awareness and encourage cooperation among leaders in government, private sector and civil society on policies, investments and innovation that will increase water security in countries of the region.

APWF expects ministers of finance, planning, health, disaster management, infrastructure, agriculture, energy, environment, water, and other water-related portfolios to join the initiative to demonstrate how water security can be increased by working jointly across these sectors. Leaders from the private sector and civil society will also be invited to join dialogues of the initiative.

"Water cuts across all development sectors, and success in resolving our water issues will depend on how we bridge our divides to take action jointly," said Mr. Mori. "Leaders at the 1<sup>st</sup> Asia-Pacific Water Summit in Beppu, Japan, made it clear that they are ready to take decisive steps in the area of water security."

Recent reports quoted by APWF showed that countries in Southeast Asia are losing an estimated US\$9 billion a year because of poor sanitation. Australia is experiencing the worst drought in a thousand years. Cyclone Nargis, which hit Myanmar in May 2008, was the recorded as the 2<sup>nd</sup> deadliest cyclone of all time. The Aral Sea, an ecological disaster of unprecedented proportions, continues to shrink as climate change is now threatening its glacial sources. Two-thirds of the Himalayan glaciers are reported to be retreating. Meanwhile, an estimated 500 million people in the Asia-Pacific region are still without safe drinking water and 1.8 billion without basic sanitation. Two-thirds of the world's hungry people live in Asia, where agriculture consumes up to 80% of the region's renewable water resources.

Mr. Mori explained that water management has become a priority to sustain the region's economic development and reduce poverty. "Water security is becoming a political priority of our leaders. We cannot afford to wait until a full-blown crisis hits us."

**For release on 16 March 2009**

According to the Japan Water Forum (JWF), several ministers from the region have already confirmed their interest to join the initiative. Ministers attending the World Water Forum will meet to discuss priorities for finding solutions. Japan is collaborating with UNESCAP, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the Network of Asian River Basin Organizations (NARBO) to support the initiative.

Created in 2006, the APWF is an independent, not-for-profit, nonpartisan, and nonpolitical network dedicated to improving sustainable water management by championing good practices, boosting investments, building capacity, and improving cooperation throughout the Asia-Pacific region. APWF was established in response to calls from ministers attending the 4<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum in Mexico City. APWF organized the 1<sup>st</sup> Asia-Pacific Water Summit in December 2007.

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