

• P R E S S R E L E A S E •

Contact: in Mexico – Secretariat of Japan Water Forum, Hotel Nikko Mexico, Tel: 55-5282-3792
Contact: in Japan – Japan Water Forum (JWF), 1-8-1 Kojimachi, Chiyoda,
Tokyo 102-0083, Tel: +81-3-5212-1645

Ministers from countries in Asia and the Pacific launch collaborative network dedicated to solving water problems in the region.

Mexico City (D.F.), March 21, 2006 – Ministers from seven countries in the Asia-Pacific region today announced the creation of the “Asia-Pacific Water Forum” (APWF), as part of the activities surrounding 4th World Water Forum.

The Ministers responsible for water resources from China, Bangladesh, Korea, New Zealand, Palau, Mongolia, and Pakistan issued the following joint declaration:

“During the regional process leading up to the 4th World Water Forum, it became clear that several water-related issues and challenges were common across the entire Asia Pacific region. Furthermore, with the increased interactions in the implementation of follow-up activities to the 3rd World Water Forum held in Kyoto in March 2003, stakeholders in the region quickly recognized that the region's diversity was not an obstacle but rather an asset to the identification and adoption of solutions to specific water issues. Based upon this common understanding, we will establish a new network, the Asia-Pacific Water Forum, to work in complete solidarity to identify and adopt solutions to water issues in the region.”

Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto, Former Prime Minister of Japan and President of Japan Water Forum, described the process that led to the creation of the APWF as “a remarkable example of regional cooperation” that illustrated the region’s “staunch commitment to solving our most pressing water problems”.

According to UNICEF and the WHO, over 675 million people in the Asia-Pacific region lack access to improved drinking water, and nearly 2 billion live without access to proper sanitation.

Addressing the Ministerial meeting held yesterday, Mr. Geert van der Linden, vice-president of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), said “this initiative comes at a critical time in the race to meet MDGs on improved drinking water and sanitation”.

In addition to the ADB, ten other international organisations came forward to support the APWF. The JBIC, UNESCAP, UNEP, UNICEF, UNDP, the Mekong River Commission, UNESCO, FAO, UNISDR and IUCN recognized the relevance and importance of the APWF, each noting the relevance of the initiative to advance water, environmental and developmental issues in the region.