

Prologue

In March 2003, at the Third World Water Forum held in Kyoto, Japan, I had the pleasure of introducing the first *World Water Development Report*, which is now being used as an educational tool and as a guide for decision-makers in many countries around the world. Its impact was such that it created a momentum at the international level for the creation of the International Decade for Action, 'Water for Life' (2005-2015).

It gives me great pleasure, therefore, to introduce the second in this series of World Water Development Reports – *Water, A Shared Responsibility*. Its publication is most timely, coming just one year after the launch of the Decade and in time for the fourth World Water Forum in Mexico City in March 2006. Subsequent editions of the Report are scheduled for production in 2009, 2012 and 2015, and will provide substantive content for the Decade's agenda. They will assist in monitoring progress towards achieving the targets set at the Millennium Summit and the World Summit for Sustainable Development, many of which have timelines culminating in 2015.

Water, of course, is everyone's business. Hardly a day goes by when we do not hear of another flood, another drought or another pollution spill into surface waters or groundwaters. Each of these issues has a direct or indirect impact not only on human security but also on livelihoods and development. The issues involved range from those of basic human well-being (food security and health), to those of economic development (industry and energy), to essential questions about the preservation of natural ecosystems on which ultimately we all depend. These issues are inter-related and have to be considered together in a holistic manner.

It is thus entirely appropriate that some twenty-four agencies and entities within the United Nations system are involved, with a shared purpose, in producing a comprehensive and objective global report on water issues and the measures being taken to address the related challenges that beset humanity worldwide.

I am very proud that UNESCO, by housing the Secretariat for the World Water Assessment Programme and providing a trust fund to help underwrite the costs of the production of the Report, is facilitating the process of bringing the UN agencies together in common cause. I firmly believe that understanding the many systems that underlie water issues – scientific and cultural, economic and social – will enhance our ability to better manage this precious resource and will help lead to poverty elimination and world peace.



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