

Press Release

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22 March, World Water Day

PACE President calls for access to water to be recognised as a basic human right

Strasbourg, 20.03.2009 – "Access to water should be recognised as a fundamental human right. A rights-based approach to water would be a very important means for civil society to hold their governments accountable for ensuring access to an adequate quantity of good quality water as well as sanitation," said the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), Lluís Maria de Puig, speaking today ahead of World Water Day on 22 March.

"The challenges to be tackled are numerous: chronic water shortages in the south, floods in the north and problems with water management and quality in central Europe. The continent is still failing to treat more than 50% of its urban water pollution. 41 million people in Europe do not have access to safe drinking water, and 85 million lack access to basic sanitation.¹ Proper water governance that offers sustainable access to water and sanitation is not possible without legislation," said Mr de Puig.

He made an urgent appeal to his parliamentary colleagues in the 47 member states of the Council of Europe, calling on them to act as "advocates" of the right to water and sanitation: "The right to sufficient quantities of high-quality water that is easily accessible for all population groups needs to be enshrined in our constitutions."

Mr de Puig ended with a reminder that one of the priorities of his presidency was to establish the right to live in a healthy environment as a human right via an additional protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights.

[Recommendation 1731 \(2006\)](#)

¹ Europe, Water and the World, 4th World Water Forum, 2006