

21 March 2005

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Jean Ping,
President of the 59th Session of the General Assembly,
on the Occasion of World Water Day**

Millions of people around the world die and still suffer because the water they use for their daily needs is unsafe.

Every year, children die of viral diseases arising from the bad treatment of water. Source of life, water is also, for many countries throughout the world, a political, economic and social stake.

Some regions are terribly affected by water shortages, particularly when it is about the needs of agriculture. Most of the time, thousands of women and children have to cover many kilometres on foot till they find the first water source.

To end this untenable situation, the international community must join its efforts to improve measures of fighting against water shortages, in particular in the agricultural sector. We must consider that improving the quality of water in poor countries is a public health priority.

Significant efforts have been made to cleanse water and limit conflicts arising from the lack of water resources in some regions, but much more is still to be done.

Having the right of access to safe drinking water, as well as water for basic use, is above all a matter of both sustainable development and human dignity.

That is why 2005, which officially marks the beginning of the “Water for Life Decade”, is a crucial year. We must manage to build an international consensus and be able to achieve by 2015 that this vital resource fully contributes to human development for all people on earth.