

Rome, May 22nd 2007

Dear participants,

The protection of environmental common goods is one of the most difficult issues in the contemporary globalised world. In particular, the issue of water is fundamental to the politics of international cooperation because of its close connection with the fight against poverty, the possibilities for development and the improvements for the living conditions of people in poor countries, especially women. But water is unfortunately also the basis of a large number of conflicts in the world.

It is known that the management of water is sensitive and controversial in many aspects. For this it is really important that discussion on these issues stays vibrant and participatory at the national and international levels by both governments and civil society. Today's forum is part of this vibrant international debate and it will help us to reflect deeply on some choices implemented by governments and international bodies.

I'm convinced that public development aid should lead to the reduction of poverty and that it should create real improvements in the living and social conditions of people and communities. Access to water, its protection, its use, its management are an integral part of this objective. Water is not a commodity and we have to work to remove it from the logic of privatisation. I think it is crucial to have an international debate on the negative consequences of the push for privatisation in sectors so sensitive that touch upon our common goods. For this, I thought it appropriate in this moment to withdraw the participation of the Italian Development Cooperation from the Public Private Infrastructure Advisory Facility. I hope that this political signal will, together with that of other governments, reopen international debate on these issues. These discussions should be courageous enough to look at the effects on the ground of international policies in a world which is more and more our common world. And I hope that most of you will be open to support a broader objective such as agreeing on a universal declaration of water as a human right within the framework of the United Nations.

I wish you success.

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