

Declaration of the 2023 High-Level Dialogue Conference China-Europe Water Platform

New York, 21st of March 2023

We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegation, assembled in New York, United States of America, on the 21st of March 2023, on the occasion of the China Europe Water Platform (CEWP) High Level Dialogue Conference;

Conscious that organizing this Conference on the margins of the UN 2023 Water Conference, is a recognition of the commitment of the European States involved in the CEWP and the People's Republic of China to water resources management in the changing climate we find ourselves in;

In this context, the emphasis lies with the need for enhanced water cooperation by applying a holistic and nexus approach, which will boost the implementation and achievement of the interlinked water-related SDG's, especially SDG6;

The CEWP has a robust track-record of 10 years work and cooperation in critical fields, such as, river basin management and ecological restoration, rural water and food security, water and urbanization, and water and energy security, delivering concrete Recommendations from our common work;

Recalling that during these 10 years we were able to develop activities around the three main pillars of the CEWP, namely, to reinforce the dialogue on water at high political level; to cooperate in research; and to exchange and interact with the water business sector, through a practice-oriented partnership;

We recognise the work carried out and the momentum maintained, during the past ten years, especially under the significant challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, we celebrate the concrete and relevant outcomes of this common work, in particular, to take note of the Policy Guidances endorsed by CEWP members;

Stating the firm conviction that the CEWP is now ready to move forward through broadening and elaborating the scope and implementation of the cooperation in a more innovative way, based on the outcomes and lessons learned from the 10 years of cooperation.

We hereby declare the following:

Climate change is strongly impacting water resources management worldwide, putting additional pressure on **water quality and quantity**, and emphasizing the urgency of accelerating the transition towards climate and water resilient **ecosystems**.

Water security is at the top of our concerns, as it is critical for ecosystems, **food production, economy**, and for providing adequate water and sanitation services in urban and rural areas.

The integrated management of water resources at the scale of **river basins**, with the involvement of all users, as well as the ecological restoration of rivers or the groundwater quantity and quality has been part of the work carried out within CEWP since its origin, informed by the conviction that there is no water security without ecological security, and vice versa.

Groundwater, the hitherto invisible water resource, we have made visible enabling management that , ensures a balance between consumption and extraction to prevent over-exploitation, **anthropogenic and geogenic pollution**, and salt intrusion, guaranteeing its sustainability.

Bridging freshwater and **marine water management**, in a holistic source-to-sea approach, and integrating urban areas with their basins, to guarantee the full water cycle management.

With the aim of reducing the risks of flooding and improving urban water cycle management to mitigate effects of water shortage, infrastructure and urban design need to be adapted. Green and blue Nature-Based Solutions shall be introduced with the overall aim of climate and water resilience, improving liveability in urban areas.

Additionally, drought periods are becoming more frequent and intense. A holistic approach is needed to bring together the **often fragmented** strategies and approaches to **flood/drought risk management**, urban water management, ecosystem functioning and extreme weather events.

The approach for the urban environment shall also be better aligned with the management of river catchments and their objectives within the fields of flood and drought risk management, water quality and ecology.

Hydropower continues to play a critical role in renewable energy transition and enhancing water and energy securities, **subject to appropriate environmental assessment.**

Green hydropower standards are important tools for data-based decision making, ensuring **a balance** between water-, ecosystem- and energy- interests, crucial for river health and management.

Changing operational schemes, developing innovative power market design, and incentivizing public and private investments are needed for both conventional and pumped storage hydropower to enhance flexibility of the existing power system and accelerate the renewable energy transition.

A successful response to climate change mitigation, striving for climate neutrality and energy efficiency very much depends on a joint research and innovation agenda in close cooperation with actors from the public sector, **research and the private sector.**

Water utilities need to be involved in this holistic approach, providing solutions, developing, and implementing technologies, creating long-term value.

The outcomes of CEWP 10-years track record can contribute to accelerate the implementation of water-related goals and to raise the water dimension in the international agenda, as the Platform work is being sculpted by its results.

Climate Change COP27 attributed a significant role to water in its agenda, recognizing the relevance of the water-climate *nexus*;

The Biodiversity COP15, under the presidency of China, adopted an ambitious agreement to better protect biodiversity and ecosystems, including a target devoted to restoration and specific recognition of inland waters, echoing the European Green Deal launched by the European Union in 2019;

The upcoming UN Water 2023 Conference is a watershed moment uniting the world for water.

And decide:

- After 10 years of cooperation, there is a strong will to continue working in the fields of **integrated water resources management at river basin level and ecological security**, rural water and food security, water and urbanization, water and energy security, following a holistic and nexus approach, strongly needed to address interlinked challenges in these fields, strengthen cooperation in **climate adaptation**, flood and drought disaster management, **smart water management**, and mitigate effects of the changing climate and the biodiversity crisis.
- To mandate the Joint Steering Committee of the CEWP to develop and approve, in 2023, a bi-annual work programme for 2023-2024, identifying the priority areas and projects to be developed, bearing in mind the alignment of funds needed between both regions to achieve a broader impact.
- To take note of the Recommendations of the Policy Dialogue Process and to keep them into consideration, when designing and implementing water policies and instruments.
- To express gratitude for the support and priority attributed by the European Commission, China and European countries to this Platform, as well as for the commitment of the Ministry of Water Resources of China and water-related departments of European States that have performed the Secretariat function during these 10 years.

Endorsed in New York, on the 21st of March 2023.

H.E Mr. Duarte Cordeiro

Minister for Environment and Climate Action of Portugal

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H.E Li Guoying

Minister of Water Resources, People's Republic of China

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