

Memorandum at the occasion of the International Year on fresh water

Even nowadays, the vital good water still gets not enough attention. In order to increase awareness about the precious substance, the United Nations have declared 2003 as the year on fresh water.

Europe is in a privileged situation as permanent water shortage as in many other parts of the world, is not a subject. In other regions of the globe quantity and quality of water have become conflicting issues. But even if such conflicts do not exist in Europe we have to use increasingly technical means to prepare drinking water and treat used waters. High nitrate values in the groundwater are well-known problems to be dealt with by water suppliers with causes being multiple and complex as they range from industry to agriculture and to individual consumers. It is of course possible to deal with such issues by technical means but for how long can we finance these means? It therefore seems obvious to have everyone participate in order to preserve the quality of this vital substance.

In summary, water protection in Europe has become better and the awareness of the inhabitants as to an active participation has also increased, in particular with the younger generations. Furthermore, the general opinion is that all human beings should have access to water everywhere on earth, an objective that can only be achieved if more money is invested in the preservation of the water reserves and into improved ways of consumption.

Heidemarie Wiejorek-Zenl stated on the water conference in Berlin in 2001 that an amount of 180 billions US\$ per year would be necessary to reduce by half the number of people which today have no access to water by the year 2015. We know that in some parts of the world, having sufficient and clean water is one of the most precious achievements. According to reports by the United Nations about 6,000 people, most of which are children, die every day because of contaminated water.

Based on the efforts for a sustainable development and the awareness that water means life, the International Office has in solidarity with everyone who does not have access to this good, set the following targets for the European allotment and leisure gardeners:

- 1) Economic use of water in the daily household as well as in the allotment and leisure garden
- 2) Reduction of the use of fresh water by the use of alternative water sources (rain – and grey water etc)
- 3) Prevention of contamination of sources and groundwater by a careful handling of harmful substances.

4) Guarantee the preservation of important water reserves by an adequate treatment of used water

5) Sensitisation of the legislator to integrate the allotment and leisure gardens in the urban planning schemes in order to compensate in this way the sealed surfaces by the creation of green spaces.