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Relevant to the Priority Theme of the Commission:

Social Integration

Statement Prepared and Submitted by The Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Council to the Commission for Social Development, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

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Meeting the Human Need for Water as a Means to Social Integration

Social integration/inclusion is a dynamic enshrouded in multifaceted dimensions ranging from capacity to meet basic human needs to addressing complex cultural, religious, language and educational barriers. Since its inception the Member States of United Nations have set in writing, from the UN Charter onward, the call to respect the rights and dignity of every individual human being. At the completion of the World's Summit for Social Development in 1995 promises were made to, "...give the highest priority in national, regional and international policies and actions to the promotion of social progress, justice and the betterment of the human condition based on full participation by all. To this end, we will create a framework for action to:

a) Place people at the centre of development and direct our economies to meet human needs more effectively." (The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, 1995, B. Principles and Goals, #25, #26, a).

In his address on September 23, 2009 to the UN General Assembly, President Obama made the following statements, "Now is the time for all of us to take our share of responsibility for a global response to global challenges... if we are honest with ourselves we are not living up to our responsibility...I say this not to sow fear, but to state a fact: The magnitude of our challenges has yet to be met by the measure of our actions."

Persons who lack access to safe water and sanitation remain excluded from the most elementary opportunities for social integration/ inclusion. It is well documented that women and children especially, living where water is not provided and protected by local, regional or national policies, spend their days walking to gather sufficient water for the family. They are denied, due to this investment of time and energy, the right to attend school, maintain employment, and often suffer from preventable water borne diseases. The World Health Organization estimates that 884 million people globally live without safe drinking water, which is one person in eight. However, it is predicted that this number will rise due to the effects of climate change. Another 2.5 billion are without sanitation. 85% to 90% of diarrheal diseases are preventable with safe drinking water and hand washing with soap. In a world which has sent people to the moon, developed smart cars and robotic surgery it is unconscionable to allow this situation to continue.

Due in some measure to commitments Member States made to the achievement of the MDGs, and the Monterrey Consensus, there has been some progress in the provision of water. Increased ODA, trade for development, investments and debt relief have assisted developing countries to use their monies in improving their own infrastructure. However, with the onset of the fuel, food, and financial crisis leaving countries scrambling to stabilize their own financial systems, the focus has shifted from international commitments to national interests.

The interface of Social, Financial and Sustainable Development is well recognized. Models designed to promote sustained cooperation and collaboration among the various stakeholders need to be forth-coming at local, regional, national and international levels. The UN should provide a single forum for dialogues on issues of common concern with the goal of moving toward regular and substantive sessions.

Professor Jeffrey Sachs, in his Key Note Address to the UN General Assembly Second Committee (October 12, 2009), gave credit to the many successful working models that have been developed to assist in achieving the MDGs. He was both positive and hopeful that it is possible to make the goal of halving those living in extreme poverty by 2015 because of these tried and proven methodologies. The missing components have been *political will and finances*.

We are recommending that having basic human needs satisfied, specifically the provision of safe drinking water and sanitation, will promote social integration/inclusion. The governments of Panama, Ethiopia, Uganda, Gambia, South Africa, Uruguay, that have incorporated the right to water in their constitutions are to be commended. For some it has been an ongoing struggle to provide for the implementation of this right. It was heartening to learn of Denmark's recent gift of \$94 million, over the next five years, to Uganda to assist the country in keeping up its efforts to provide water and sanitation for its citizens.

We take heart that several UN meetings have named **Partnerships** as an essential in redressing the inequalities that divide our world. Structural Adjustment Programs, International Cooperation

and Partnerships (*Copenhagen Commitments 8&10*) are a means to relieve the misery of almost 1/3 of our sisters and brothers living in extreme poverty.

Some models of effective partnerships for the provision of water and sanitation include:

- WaterAid whose vision is “a world where everyone has access to safe water and sanitation. Their mission is to transform lives by improving access to safe water, hygiene and sanitation in the world’s poorest communities. They partner with, and influence decision-makers to maximize an effective impact.” WaterAid equips women, children, and marginalized groups to petition governments, to build, maintain and repair their local water supplies. Successful projects are located in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific region. In Ghana, WaterAid has signed a formal agreement with eleven district assemblies which sets out responsibilities for planning and implementing water and sanitation plans. WaterAid will provide technical and financial assistance to local governments; another NGO partner will support the preparation and implementation of the water and sanitation plans; and the local government will provide oversight and leadership in the planning and delivery of the services. The district assemblies believe the agreement will enable them to carry out their legal responsibility of developing water and sanitation services for their communities. (www.wateraid.org)
- ProNet Accra introduced Community Led Total Sanitation to the Accra Region of Ghana. The people of that region were totally hygiene and sanitation illiterate. ProNet entered the community on a very informal, “getting to know you basis” and then proceeded to instructing the people on appropriate hygiene and sanitation practices in very easy to understand ways. Literacy education was culturally and language sensitive and appropriate to the people of the community. Latrines were constructed by the people themselves. According to the people the latrines have helped keep flies away; fewer diseases occur; and less contamination seeps into bodies of water.
- WomenAid International is another development partner whose work is to provide people with drinking water pipes, irrigation networks and water reservoirs. (www.womenaid.org)
- The Millennium Villages Project involves village people using simple solutions to bring about their own development, including water projects. (www.millenniumvillages.org)

Policy recommendations for governments:

1. Place people at the center of development by inviting them to be equal partners at the decision-making table and through every step of the process.
2. Promote on-going reform of the unfair conditionalities imposed on developing countries by the International Financial Institutions.
3. Choose well established, credible partners with whom to collaborate in efforts to provide water and sanitation for all.
4. Specify clear limits on private ownership and control of water resources. All public/private partnerships in the delivery of water and sanitation must be monitored to ensure that in their structure there is a pro-poor component.
5. Member States must allocate domestic resources and finances for the provision, management, maintenance, and sustainability of water and sanitation systems.